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Catharine Arnold

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S. Rep. No. 395, 33rd Cong., 2nd Sess. (1854)

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

DECEMBER 18, 1854.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. JONES, of Iowa, made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany bill S. No. 254.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the documents relating to the claim of Mrs. Catharine Arnold, (widow of Ripley A. Arnold, late an officer of the United States army,) for pension, beg leave to report:

In order to give a full and reliable statement of the facts in this case, the following report of Lieut. R. H. Anderson and letter from the Adjutant General of the United States army are here inserted:

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, April 13, 1854.

SIR: In reply to your inquiry of the 10th instant, I have the honor to submit the following transcript, taken from the official records of the military history of the late Brevet Major *Ripley A. Arnold*, captain of the 2d regiment of dragoons,

Ripley A. Arnold was graduated from the Military Academy, July 1, 1838, and commissioned as 2d lieutenant in the 2d dragoons, and shortly afterwards joined his regiment in Florida, where he continued to serve till the close of the war against the Indians in that country. His services in this war were active and efficient, and he was brevetted a captain "for gallant conduct in the war against the Florida Indians, to date from April 19, 1842," the day of the affair at "Pilaqlikahal" against Halleck Tustennuggee, in which he was particularly distinguished.

On the breaking out of the Mexican war, the 2d dragoons, in which Brevet Captain Arnold then held the rank of 1st lieutenant, was encamped opposite Matamoras, and it formed part of the small force under General Taylor that sustained so nobly the first conflicts on the Rio Grande. On these occasions Captain Arnold was again distinguished, and won the brevet of major, to date from May 9, 1846, for his "gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma." He was promoted a captain in his regiment August 18, 1847, and continued with it till the termination of the war, when he accompanied it to Texas, where he was serving at the time of his death, September 6, 1853. Of the unhappy circumstances which

led to this event I do not feel at liberty to express any opinion, or to do more than enclose you a copy of the report made to me on the subject by Lieut. R. H. Anderson, the successor of Brevet Major Arnold in the command of Fort Graham. The transaction is about to undergo a judicial investigation, and in advance of a legal verdict you will perceive that it would not be proper in me to prejudge the case.

The letter of Mr. Thomas S. Bryant is, agreeably to your request, herewith returned.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. COOPER,
Adjutant General.

FORT GRAHAM, TEXAS,
September 7, 1853.

SIR: It is my painful duty to report to you the death of Brevet Major R. A. Arnold, 2d dragoons. He was killed in an encounter with Assistant Surgeon J. M. Steiner, U. S. army, at this post, at half-past 10 o'clock a. m., yesterday, the 6th instant. The following are some of the particulars attending this fatal affray. There have existed for about a year some causes of disagreement between Dr. Steiner and Major Arnold. On the night of the 5th inst., a quarrel between Dr. Steiner and Lieutenant Bingham was the cause of a great deal of noise and disturbance in the garrison. The officer of the day and others were endeavoring to stop the noise when Major Arnold came to the spot and said that such quarrelling and noise could not be allowed and that the officers must retire to their quarters. Dr. Steiner asked Major Arnold whether he intended to arrest him. Major Arnold replied that he did not deem it necessary to do so at that time if he (Dr. Steiner) would retire at once to his quarters. Dr. Steiner replied in an infuriated manner, and amongst other things he said that Major Arnold must not attempt to arrest him, for he would kill him if he did so. No one believed that this threat was made with any deadly intention, but attributed it to the state of furious excitement into which Dr. Steiner had been thrown by drinking and quarrelling.

Major Arnold did not then arrest either Dr. Steiner or Lieut. Bingham for the reason that they were in such a condition and mood that the application of the arrest would have been of no avail. With much difficulty these two officers were at length taken to their own rooms and quiet was restored. The next morning at about 10 o'clock, Major Arnold send for me and placed in my hands three papers—one was an order assigning me to the place of adjutant whilst the sickness of Lieut. Tyler the post adjutant should continue, another was an order for the arrest of Lieutenant Bingham and Dr. Steiner, and the third was a copy of some instructions from head quarters 8th military department to Dr. Steiner. I found Dr. Steiner and Lieutenant Bingham together in the quarters of the latter, and they appeared to be about renewing the quarrel of the previous night. I exhibited the orders and

arrested them. Dr. Steiner read the order for his arrest and threw it on the floor saying that no man should arrest him and that he would see Major Arnold about it. He left the room in a high state of excitement. I followed him to the door and said to him, Doctor, do not see Major Arnold, you will commit yourself by doing so. It never entered my head that he would commit himself in any other way than by using violent words and in failure to obey the arrest at once. I went back into the room to receive the two orders I had let Lieut. Bingham have to read, and whilst in the act of taking them I heard pistol shots in very rapid succession at the quarters of Major Arnold. I ran to the spot as rapidly as I could, but although the distance was not more than thirty yards, six shots had been fired before I reached the spot. Major Arnold had fallen and was lying in the passage between the rooms of his quarters; Dr. Steiner went off at once. He had fired four shots, each of which took effect, two very near together in the lower portion of the abdomen of Major Arnold, one in his right groin and the fourth broke his left arm midway from the shoulder to the elbow. Major Arnold had fired two shots without effect. He expired within fifteen minutes from the time when he fell. I was proceeding to secure Dr. Steiner when I met him on horseback. On my re-arresting him he dismounted and I went with him to his quarters. He solemnly pledged himself to me to obey the arrest—said that he was prepared to abide his trial and that he meant to surrender himself to the civil authorities. Upon a writ of habeas corpus he will be delivered into the custody of the proper officers.

I have not forwarded an inventory of Major Arnold's effects, as his widow is here to administer upon them. Inventories of the public property for which Major Arnold was responsible will be forwarded as soon as they can be made out.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. H. ANDERSON,

Lieutenant 2d dragoons.

Colonel S. COOPER,

Adj't Gen. U. S. Army, Washington, D. C.

True copy :

W. G. FREEMAN,

Ass't Adj't Gen.

ADJUTANT'S OFFICE, *April 13, 1854.*

There is no existing law which gives to the widow of officer or private of the regular army either pension or half-pay, unless the soldier died of wounds received or diseases incurred in the Mexican or some previous war. The laws respecting naval pensions, however, grant five years' half pay to the widows of all who die in the service of wounds, injuries, or diseases incurred, or casualties happening while in the line of duty. The committee, under recommendation from the Commissioner of Pensions, have reported a bill placing widows of the army upon the same footing, in this respect, with widows of the navy. Having recognized the justice of this class of claims in that bill, (S.

347, report 229) the committee regard the peculiar and painful circumstances attending Mrs. Arnold's bereavement, and the previous meritorious services of her deceased husband, as justifying the special action of Congress in her behalf, and herewith report back the bill with a recommendation that it pass.