

ELEAZER WILLIAMS, HEIR OF THOMAS WILLIAMS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 508.]

APRIL 17, 1858.

Mr. PENDLETON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Mary Ann Williams, report:

That Thomas Williams, the husband of the petitioner, was an Iroquois chief of the St. Regis tribe of Indians in Canada, possessed of great influence and authority in his tribe, and holding in his own right and participating in, as a member of the tribe, a very considerable property.

When hostilities were threatened between the United States and Great Britain, prior to the war of 1812, it was deemed of much importance to secure the neutrality of the Indians living in Canada; and accordingly Mr. Jefferson addressed to some of their principal men a letter urging upon them the propriety of remaining neutral, and in case they should find this impossible while remaining in Canada, inviting them to come over to this country with the promise that they should find here new settlements, and kindness and protection from our people.

When the war actually commenced General Dearborn was in command of the troops in western New York, and induced the said Thomas Williams, with other influential chiefs, to quit their homes and families and join the fortunes of the United States, under the assurance that they should be taken care of and receive a reasonable compensation. The services rendered were of the most efficient and valuable character, and were continued without intermission until the close of the war. Two sons of the said Thomas Williams as well as himself were engaged actively in military operations, and received the commendations of their officers for their zeal, bravery, and fidelity. In consequence of leaving the territory of Great Britain he was deprived of the property which he held in his own right and as a member of the tribe; and being forbidden to return he was compelled to remain and take up his residence in the State of New York.

The amount of property which he owned in Canada, including that

in which as a member of the tribe he participated, is proven by many affidavits to have been at least fourteen thousand dollars (\$14,000;) by some it is stated to have been as much as sixteen thousand dollars (\$16,000.)

In 1815, soon after the peace, the case was laid before the government, and on the 23d of January, 1816, an order from the War Department was issued to the commanding officer at Plattsburg, in New York, to furnish Williams with six rations per day for support of himself and family until further orders. The rations were furnished for some time and were then discontinued only because of the evacuation of that military post. The "further orders" were never given.

After these rations were in this way cut off, Williams lived for some years in great poverty, and finally dying, left his widow, the memorialist, at an advanced age, without property, and dependant upon the charity of her son.

Since the filing of this memorial she has died, leaving as her sole heir and devisee her son, the Rev. Eleazer Williams, who is likewise the sole surviving son and heir of the said Thomas Williams.

These facts are abundantly proven by the evidence submitted to the committee, the most part of which is attached hereto.

Your committee are perfectly satisfied with the coterporaneous construction of the contract between General Dearborn, on behalf of the government, and Williams, as evidenced by the order to furnish "six rations per day for the support of himself and family until further orders," and is of the opinion that the good faith of the government is pledged to carry it out fully and fairly, by paying to the representative of the said memorialist the value of six rations per day from the date of the abandonment of the military post at Plattsburg until the 1st day of May, 1856, the date of her death, and continuing to the said Eleazer Williams, the surviving member of the family, during his life, the payment of a yearly sum equal to one-half the amount allowed by the said order for the support of the whole family, and report a bill accordingly.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *January 16, 1857.*

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

The memorial and petition of Mary Ann Williams, of the St. Regis tribe, in the county of Franklin, in the State of New York, respectfully showeth:

That your memorialist is the widow of the late Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief of the aforesaid tribe; that he was a native of Canada, and of the Iroquois nation of Indians; and that in consequence of the menacing aspect of affairs between the United States and Great Britain, the government of this country became solicitous to gain the co-operation or secure the neutrality of the various tribes of Indians in the vicinity of the northern frontier. With this view President Jefferson,

in 1808, addressed an earnest letter to those Indians, the original of which is in the possession of your memorialist, (marked A,) in which, after recommending to them to maintain a neutral attitude in case war should occur between the two countries, he says: "Should the English insist on their taking up the hatchet against us, if they choose rather to break up their settlements and come over to live in peace with us, we will find other settlements for them, and they shall become our children."

Your memorialist further represents that it was well known to the American government that the husband of your memorialist, Thomas Williams, was one of the chiefs of the Iroquois nation, and that he possessed a very great influence with his own and other tribes within the British dominions. In fact, he was regarded as capable of determining the part which they should take in the anticipated war; and it became important, therefore, to engage his efficient co-operation and good wishes. He was consequently, when hostilities commenced, especially invited to join the American standard, and to repress, by his influence and efforts, any warlike movements which might be contemplated by his own or other tribes against the United States.

For the services which he was asked to render he was assured that he and his family should receive a support during the war, and a full indemnity for any losses he might sustain in consequence of connecting himself with this country. Feeling entire confidence in these assurances, he came to the United States in the beginning of 1813; engaged warmly in the American cause, and exerted, with great success, his influence with his own and neighboring tribes in Lower Canada. It is well known to the inhabitants on the northern frontier that those nations took no part against the United States in that war.

In consequence of thus abandoning the cause and leaving the territories of Great Britain, the husband of your memorialist was deprived as well of his own property as that in which he participated as one of the tribe; and, at the termination of the war, his conduct having awakened the resentment of the British functionaries, and particularly those connected with the Indian department, he was prohibited from returning among them. Thus compelled to fix himself in the State of New York, where he resided but a short time before his death, greatly advanced in years, and was for many years wholly incapable of maintaining himself, his own property has been sacrificed in furthering the views and advancing the interest of the United States.

Your memorialist would further represent that, in confirmation of the foregoing statement that the deceased chief and his family were to be sustained and supported by the government, an order was issued by the War Department on January 23, 1816, to the commanding officer at Plattsburg, "to issue six rations per day to Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief, for the support of himself and family, until further orders," (marked B.)

Under this order the deceased chief received rations only one year after the date of the said order, and this in consequence of the military post at Plattsburg being evacuated; and from that period up to the time of his death he received no more rations from the government, although the order was "never revoked," (paper C.) Your memo-

rialist conceives that the accompanying letter (marked D) from Mr. Graham, the Secretary of War, to Thomas B. Gold, esq., sufficiently showeth that the chief and his family "have still a well-founded claim to compensation from the government." And your memorialist, being greatly advanced in years, and wholly incapable of maintaining herself, therefore, in her own behalf and family, prays that she may yet be fully allowed the rations according to the aforementioned order of the War Department, and that she and her family be liberally remunerated for the services rendered by her late deceased husband to the United States.

Your memorialist and petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MARY ANN ^{her} + WILLIAMS.
mark.

Signed in presence of—

ELEAZER WILLIAMS.

HOGANSBURG, *September*, 1849.

A.

To Colonel Louis Cook and Jacob Francis, of the St. Regis Indians.

MY CHILDREN: I take you by the hand, and all the people of St. Regis within the limits of the United States, and I desire to speak to them through you. A great misunderstanding has taken place between the English and the United States; and although we desire to live in peace with all the world and unmolested, yet it is not quite certain whether this difference will end in peace or war. Should war take place, do you, my children, remain at home in peace, taking care of your wives and children. You have no concern in our quarrel; take, therefore, no part in it. We do not wish you to spill your blood in our battles; we can fight them ourselves. Say the same to your red brethren everywhere; let them remain neutral and quiet, and we will never disturb them; and should the English insist on their taking up the hatchet against us, if they choose rather to break up their settlements and come over to live in peace with us, we will find other settlements for them, and they shall become our children. The red nations who shall remain in peace with the United States shall forever find them true friends and fathers; those who commence against them an unprovoked war must expect their lasting enmity.

My children, I wish you well and a safe return to your own country.

TH. JEFFERSON.

MAY 5, 1808.

B.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
January 23, 1816.

SIR: You will please to direct that six rations per day be issued to Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief, for the support of himself and

family, until further orders. The rations may be delivered to him from time to time, as he shall be able to carry them to his residence, which I understand is too distant to be received daily, or even weekly. You are also authorized to present to him three suits of clothing, such as are supplied to the soldiers of the United States.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

WM. H. CRAWFORD.

OFFICER COMMANDING AT

Plattsburg, New York.

C.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

Office of Indian Affairs, December 12, 1835.

SIR: Your letter of the 3d ultimo, to the Secretary of War, has been referred to this office.

After diligent search, it cannot be found that the order in 1816, authorizing the furnishing of rations to Thomas Williams, has ever been revoked.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ELBERT HERRING.

Mr. ELEAZER WILLIAMS,

Hogansburg, New York.

WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK,

April 25, 1817.

SIR: Mr. Thomas Williams, possessing extensive influence over the Indians in Canada, and there resident at the commencement of the late war, was induced by General Dearborn to restrain the Indians from aiding the British in the war, General D. pledging himself to provide for him, Williams. Williams was finally obliged to abandon his property, about \$13,000, and to remove to the United States. He repaired to Washington in the winter of 1816, and presented his claims, which were referred to the Secretary of War. The claim was suspended for the proofs as to his property in Canada. Proof was afterwards furnished. I am requested to ask what determination has been made on his claim, and what may be expected from the government. Please, sir, inform me.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. B. GOLD.

Hon. GEORGE GRAHAM,

Acting Secretary, &c.

D.

An extract from a letter from George Graham to Thomas R. Gold, esq.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
August 16, 1817.

SIR: Your letter of 25th April was duly received. The papers in the case of Thomas and Eleazer Williams had all been before Mr. Crawford, but were not acted upon by him while Secretary of War. On the receipt of your letter, I had the papers collected, with the intention of laying them before the President previous to his departure on his tour; but the account of Eleazer Williams and agreement with General Dearborn, which he states to have been forwarded to this department by Mr. Savage, are not with the papers, nor have I since been able to find them, and there is no memorandum of their having been received.

From the answers of General Dearborn and General Mooers to the letters addressed by this department to them in relation to these claimants, it appears that they *have a well-founded claim to compensation from the government*; but how far the executive government can grant them compensation for the property lost in Canada is doubtful.

With sentiments of great respect and esteem, &c.,
GEORGE GRAHAM.

THOMAS R. GOLD, Esq.,
Whitestown, New York.

E.

PLATSBURG, *September 8, 1815.*

We hereby certify that Thomas Williams, a chief of the Iroquois nation of Indians, known by the name of Cahnawaga, in consequence of his attachment to the United States during the late war, left his residence, in the province of lower Canada, and came to the United States, where he now remains; the consequence of which, it is said, was the loss of considerable property, large expenses, and other personal inconveniences.

BENJ. MOOERS,
PETER SAILLY.

I, Eleazer Williams, of Lawrence, in the county of Brown and State of Wisconsin, testify and say: That I was in the secret service of the United States in the war which commenced in 1812, and that I had the charge and commanded the secret corps of observation on the northern frontier during the said war; and that it was through me that my father, Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief, was especially invited, in behalf of the general government, by Major General Dearborn, of the United States army, and Major General Mooers, of the New York

division, to join the American standard, and to repress, by his influence and efforts, any warlike movements which might be contemplated by his own and other tribes against the United States. For the services which he was asked to render he was assured that he and his family should receive a support during the war, and a full indemnity for any losses which he might sustain in consequence of connecting himself with the United States. Having a great confidence in these assurances, he came to the United States in 1813, engaged warmly in the American cause, and exerted, with great success, his influence with his own and neighboring tribes in the Canadas.

And further, I testify that instead of receiving his support and family's from the government, as he was promised, it was only occasionally some rations were issued to him, and these were obtained, with much difficulty, from the commissariat department; and to prevent their suffering for want of food and clothing I was compelled to sustain them; and that the War Department had such a strong evidence of his claim upon the government for the promised rations, it issued an order on January 23, 1816, "*six rations per day, for the support of himself and family, until further orders.*" Which order was intended, and so understood at the time by the War Department and Thomas Williams, that it should continue for a series of years; but, instead of this, its continuance was but for a short time, in consequence of the post at Plattsburg, whence he drew his rations, being evacuated by the troops; and that, according to the best of my knowledge, said Thomas Williams was never indemnified for his losses of property, or remunerated by the United States for his services, as he was promised by the government through me, as one of its secret agents, when he was invited to join her standard in 1812; and that the sacrifices and losses he sustained in property for so doing were estimated to be between seven and eight thousand dollars, and besides the annuity of two hundred and fifty dollars which he was allowed, and received, from the British government.

In confirmation of the value of the above property, *affidavits* were made by persons of probity and honor, from Canada, before the Honorable Pliny Mooers, of Champlain, in the county of Clinton and State of New York, in March, 1816. The same were forwarded to the War Department by Mr. Savage, then a member of Congress from the State of New York. It is to these papers that Mr. George Graham, Secretary of War, in his letter to the Honorable Thomas R. Gold, (of 16th August, 1817,) refers, when he says: "The papers in the cases of Thomas Williams and Eleazer Williams had been all before Mr. Crawford, but were not acted upon by him while Secretary of War. I had the papers collected, with the intention of laying them before the President previous to his departure on his tour."

ELEAZER WILLIAMS.

Personally appeared Eleazer Williams, to me well known, and made oath to the truth of the foregoing deposition, by him subscribed before me this 18th day of January, 1850.

EDWARD OUTHWAITE,
Notary Public, Brown county, Wisconsin.

A letter from the Hon. John Savage, the late Chancellor of the State of New York, to D. L. Vanderheyden, Esq.

SALEM, July 1, 1816.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 25th ultimo is but just received. All I can say in answer is, that the Secretary of War, to whom the petition of Thomas Williams was referred, made no report. I presented to him the affidavits sent me by Mr. Williams, but he gave me no intimation on the subject from which I can give an opinion as to the probable result. My own opinion is, that compensation ought to be made him upon principles of justice as well as policy. Whether the Secretary entertains the same opinion I know not. Much will depend upon his report.

I am, dear sir, very respectfully, yours, &c.,

JOHN SAVAGE.

D. L. VANDERHEYDEN, Esq.

Extract from letter of General Dearborn, dated February 18, 1816, to the War Department, and now on file there.

“His father (Thomas Williams) was an influential chief, and was unwilling to take up arms against the United States; and in the course of the year he and two or three other chiefs quitted their families and wives and came over to us. I assured them that they should be taken care of, and receive a reasonable compensation.”