

PRISCILLA DECATUR TWIGGS.

APRIL 24, 1882.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. STEELE, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill H. R. 5998.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the petition of Priscilla Decatur Twiggs, widow of the late Major Levi Twiggs, report the same back, with the accompanying bill, and recommend its passage.

In support of this recommendation, your committee call attention to the letter of the petitioner herewith and made a part of this report, marked A; also to the official statements B and C, made a part of this report.

A.

FEBRUARY 27, 1882.

SIR: I noticed a few days ago a resolution had been introduced by Senator Gorman, asking an increase of pension for Mrs. Dulany to \$50 a month, upon what grounds I am ignorant, but imagine I have equally strong claims for asking a similar increase.

During the war with Mexico, Major Twiggs and Major Dulany were in the same brigade, Major Twiggs being the senior. My husband fell, at the head of his command, at the storming of Chapultepec.

At the commencement of the war with Great Britain, in 1812, Major Twiggs entered the service, and was appointed a lieutenant in the Marine Corps; was with my uncle, Commodore Decatur, on board the United States frigate President during the engagement with the British fleet, and whose services are thus mentioned by Commodore Decatur in his official letter to the Secretary of the Navy: "Lieutenant Twiggs, of the marines, displayed great zeal; his men were well supplied, and their fire incomparable, so long as the enemy continued within musket-range." In 1836-'37, Major Twiggs was again engaged in active service in the Seminole war in Florida.

I imagine few have stronger claims upon the liberality of the government than I have, every male relative having been in the United States service; my grandfather, Commodore Decatur, sr., having been in the French war; his two sons also held commissions in our Navy. Commodore Stephen Decatur, jr., distinguished himself by recapturing and burning the frigate Philadelphia, in the harbor of Tripoli, in which engagement his brother, James S. Decatur, was killed. Again during the war with Great Britain, in 1812, he further distinguished himself by capturing the British frigate Macedonian.

My father, Captain James McKnight, was in the Marine Corps at the time of his death. Both my brothers were lieutenants in the Navy; the elder, Lieutenant Stephen D. McKnight, was with Commodore Porter on board the Essex, and was afterwards lost at sea on board the United States sloop-of-war Wasp. As before stated, my husband fell at the storming of Chapultepec, and my only son, George D. Twiggs, was killed in an engagement one month previous, he being on his way to join his uncle, General D. E. Twiggs, as his aid.

Under these circumstances I feel I may with justice ask an increase of pension, having been in the receipt of only \$25 a month since my husband's death; and being now in my eighty-first year, it must be quite apparent it can only be required for a very brief period.

Very respectfully, &c.,

PRISCILLA D. TWIGGS,  
239 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, Md.

Hon. ROBERT M. MCLANE.

B.

HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS, COMMANDANT'S OFFICE,  
Washington, D. C., March 20, 1882.

SIR: In obedience to the department's request, I forward an official statement of the services of Major Levi Twiggs, in the United States Marine Corps, from date of entry to death.

It affords me great pleasure to add my testimony as an eye-witness to his gallant conduct at the moment he was killed, while bravely leading his men to the assault of the works at the base of the Castle of Chapultepec.

I was within a few feet of him at the moment, and witnessed his instantaneous death. He bore the character of a brave and zealous officer, and his services in the war of 1812, and in Florida and Mexico, in my opinion, entitle his widow, not only to an increase of pension as asked, but to arrears for the years since his death. She was deprived in a month of her husband and only son, both killed while bravely fighting for the honor of the flag; and, with the long record of other near relatives in the Navy and Marine Corps, which I know to be correct, she truthfully states that no one has stronger claims upon the liberality of the government than herself, which her exemplary character through life greatly strengthens.

I trust her petition may be granted.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. G. McCAWLEY,  
Colonel Commandant.

Hon. W. H. HUNT,  
Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.

C.

HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS,  
ADJUTANT AND INSPECTOR'S OFFICE,  
Washington, D. C., March 21, 1882.

SIR: In reply to the request of the honorable Secretary of the Navy for a full report of the service of the late Major Levi Twiggs, United States Marine Corps, referred by you to me, I have the honor to state as follows:

Major Levi Twiggs was commissioned second lieutenant United States Marine Corps 10th November, 1813; promoted first lieutenant 18th June, 1814; captain by brevet 18th June, 1824; captain, 23d February, 1830; major, 15th November, 1840; killed in battle 13th September, 1847, at storming of Chapultepec, Mexico. He was continuously in service from the date of his first commission to the date of his death, and took part in three wars of the United States. His total sea service was about three years.

In the engagement between the President and the Endymion (war of 1812-14) Lieut. Levi Twiggs, commanding the marines of the former vessel, particularly distinguished himself. (Aldrich, History United States Marine Corps, p. 58.)

Capt. Levi Twiggs was an officer of the battalion of marines which bore an honorable and highly important part in the battle of Hatchee-Lustee, and participated in arduous campaigns under General Jesup in the Indian war in Florida in 1836-'37, and received from him the highest commendations.

Major Twiggs was selected, to my personal knowledge, to lead the storming party at Chapultepec, Mexico, on account of his well-known gallantry and devotion to duty, and fell in the performance of that duty, in my presence.

Major-General Quitman, United States Volunteers, in his report dated at the National Palace, city of Mexico, September 29, 1847, gives the following account of the work accomplished by the marines, under the lead of Major Twiggs, in that action:

"During the day I succeeded, under cover of our batteries, in making an important reconnaissance of the grounds and works immediately at the base of the castle. The supporting party on this reconnaissance was commanded by the late Major Twiggs, of the marines, and sustained during the observation a brisk fire from the batteries and small arms of the enemy, who, when the party were retiring, came out of the works in large numbers, and, although repeatedly checked by the fire of our troops, continued to advance as the supporting party retired, until they were dispersed with considerable loss by several discharges of canister from the guns of Captain Drum's battery, and a well-directed fire from the right of the Second Pennsylvania Regiment, posted on the flank of the battery for its support. During the day my command was re-enforced by a select battalion from General Twiggs's division, intended as a storming party, consisting of thirteen officers and two hundred and fifty men and non-commissioned officers and privates, chosen for this service out of the Rifles, First and Fourth

Regiments of Artillery, Second, Third, and Seventh Regiments of Infantry, all under the command of Capt. Silas Casey, Second Infantry.

"At dawn on the morning of the 13th the batteries again opened an active and effective fire upon the castle, which was returned by the enemy with spirit and some execution, disabling for a time the eighteen-pounder in Battery No. 1, and killing one of the men at the guns. During this cannonade active preparations were made for the assault on the castle; ladders, pickaxes, and crows were placed in the hands of a pioneer storming party of select men from the volunteer division, under command of Captain Reynolds of the Marine Corps, to accompany the storming party of one hundred and twenty men, which had been selected from all corps of the same division and placed under the command of Major Twiggs of the marines.

"Perceiving that all the preliminary dispositions were made, Major Gladden with his regiment having passed the wall by breaching it, the New York and Pennsylvania regiments having entered over an abandoned battery on their left, and the battalion of marines being posted to support the storming parties, I ordered the assault at all points.

"The storming parties, led by the gallant officers who had volunteered for this desperate service, rushed forward like a resistless tide. The Mexicans behind their batteries and breastworks stood with more than usual firmness. For a short time the contest was hand to hand; swords and bayonets were crossed and rifles clubbed. Resistance, however, was vain against the desperate valor of our brave troops. The batteries and strong works were carried, and the ascent of Chepultepec on that side laid open to an easy conquest.

"In these works were taken 7 pieces of artillery, 1,000 muskets, and 550 prisoners, of whom 100 were officers, among them one general and ten colonels. \* \* \*

"The command of the storming party from the volunteer division devolved on Captain James Milles, of the Second Pennsylvania Regiment, by the death of its chief, the brave and lamented Twiggs, of the Marine Corps, who fell on the first advance at the head of his command.

"Captain Roberts, of the rifle regiment, who had led the advance company of the storming party at Chepultepec, and had greatly distinguished himself during the preceding day, was detailed by me to plant the star-spangled banner of our country upon the national palace. The flag, the first strange banner which had ever waved over that palace since the conquest of Cortez, was displayed and saluted with enthusiasm by the whole command.

"The palace, already crowded with Mexican thieves and robbers, was placed in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Watson, with his battalion of marines. By his active exertions it was soon cleared and guarded from further spoliation."

Adjutant Baker is mentioned by the general "as conspicuous for his bravery and efficiency."

The letter of the honorable Secretary and accompanying papers are returned herewith.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

AUG. S. NICHOLSON,  
*Major, United States Marine Corps, Adjutant and Inspector.*

The Colonel Commandant UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS,  
*Headquarters, Washington, D. C.*

Your committee find that there is a precedent for this in the case of the widow of Maj. Robert Anderson, and perhaps there are others, which, taken with the facts that the petitioner is past eighty-one years of age, and is poor, and that few families have done so well in furnishing our country with defenders—none better—leads your committee to make a favorable report.