

ANTHONY G. WILLIS'S HEIRS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 468.]

FEBRUARY 18, 1851.

Mr. G. A. CALDWELL, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of the heirs of Anthony G. Willis, deceased, praying remuneration for the services of a wagon and team of their said ancestor, which was pressed into the service of the United States during the war of 1812, report as follows:

The petitioners state that in the year 1814 Anthony G. Willis was the owner of a wagon and team in Kentucky, where he lived, and that he had one Benjamin T. Rowe employed in driving said team. That at Lexington, Kentucky, whither said wagon and team had been driven with a load of hemp, one Captain George Stockton, an officer of the United States army, being in great need of the means of transportation for his troops, pressed said wagon and team and driver into service, and that the same were carried beyond Dayton, in Ohio, towards the Canada line, and subsequently back to Nashville, Tennessee, laden with wounded soldiers of the regular army. They further state that said wagon and team and driver were kept in the active and constant employ of the government till the services amounted, according to the rates of pay then established and allowed, to the sum of two hundred and fifty-one dollars, (\$251,) and that Captain Stockton gave a certificate for that sum. That said certificate was sent on to Washington for payment by Mr. Zane, the representative in Congress from the district in which Willis lived, and that the accounting officer rejected it because it contained an interlineation. They file the receipt of said Zane for said certificate or voucher. They further state that every effort was made to have the voucher corrected, but that, owing to the distance at which Willis lived from Captain Stockton, and the fact that Stockton was absent from home when the agent of Willis went to see him, it was not done till Willis died, leaving his children all minors and wholly incapable of transacting business. The administrators subsequently endeavored to get a proper voucher, but with like want of success. The family and their friends have been endeavoring from that day to this, through the various representatives from that district in Congress, to get the claim allowed and paid, but all in vain. They state, further, that said Willis was poor; and having a large family,

the denial of this just demand was a peculiar hardship. It is also fully proven that the voucher was lost by being left at the house of Stockton for correction.

Your committee would state that all the material facts in the petition are proven to their entire satisfaction. The proof is clear and satisfactory that the wagon and team were the property of Anthony G. Willis, and that Rowe was employed by him to drive it; that it was pressed into the service of the United States in time of war by any officer of the army, and rendered the service for which compensation is claimed, and that the service was certified by the officer to be worth the amount claimed. It is not pretended that one cent of the claim has ever been paid. The difficulty is simply this: one officer of the government, after appropriating the property of a citizen to the public use without his consent, and by a hard military rule, carelessly made an interlineation in the voucher; and another officer of the government seized upon the interlineation as an objection to it, and refused payment.

Thus the uninformed but innocent citizen is driven back and forth from one of the government agents to another, as wholly unable to reconcile their action, or get his money, as he was to prevent the forcible appropriation of his property in the first instance.

The writer of this report is intimately acquainted with all the parties and witnesses in this case, and most cheerfully bears testimony to their entire credibility and integrity.

Your committee are of opinion that the prayer of the petition ought to be granted, and recommend that under the peculiar hardships of the case the sum of five hundred dollars (\$500) be paid the petitioners, in full satisfaction of the principal and all claim for interest thereon.

They report a bill accordingly.