

Susan Dougherty. February 9, 1842. Read, and laid upon the table.

Date: 1842-02-09; Publication: Serial Set Vol. No. 407, Session Vol. No. 1; Report: H.Rpt. 203;

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Mr. HALL, from the Committee on Revolutionary Claims, submitted the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Revolutionary Claims, to which was referred the petition of Susan Dougherty, submit the following report:

This claim was first presented to Congress December 29, 1828, and on the 16th of January following an unfavorable report was made upon it.

Susan Dougherty claims pay for two thousand five hundred and twenty dollars of continental bills of credit, which she says she received during the revolutionary war; and, also, for a certificate given for four hundred and eighty dollars for a wagon and team of Moses Oldham, then of Hillsborough, North Carolina, which she alleges was impressed into the public service, and lost at Gates's defeat. She says the certificate was given by the "pressmaster," and was kept by the said Moses Oldham, who was the petitioner's father, until after the war, when he lost it, and then got a certificate of its loss from a justice of the peace. That she purchased the certificate from her father, and kept it until about the year 1809, when she had the misfortune to have her house burned and the certificate, together with the continental money before mentioned, was destroyed by the fire.

If the continental bills and the original certificate of the impressment of the wagon and team were now produced, they could not be allowed on any principles which have been adopted by the committee. At the close of the revolutionary war, immense amounts of continental bills were outstanding, which, under the funding act of 1790, were allowed to be redeemed at one dollar for every hundred. After the time for funding them at that rate expired, they were considered of no value. It would now be impossible to do justice to the holders of them, because it would be impossible to ascertain what value was given for them. For, any thing that appears, the petitioner might have received the amount which she claims at a depreciation of 50 or 100 to 1, or even as a gift, after they had depreciated so as to become of no value. Claims for these bills have uniformly been rejected since the expiration of the time for funding them.

The certificates which were given by officers of the army and public agents, for property purchased or impressed for public use, were often redeemed by the persons giving them, after being supplied with funds for that purpose, and, in some instances, without even having the certificates returned. There were generally also commissioners attending the army,

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whose business it was to adjust such claims; and, after the close of the war, commissioners were appointed, who went into all the States for the purpose of adjusting them. At that time, the commissioners were possessed of the returns of the officers issuing the certificates, by which the claims of individuals could be checked, and the justice and propriety of paying them ascertained. The lapse of time and the destruction of the books and papers of the revolutionary period now render it impossible to ascertain any thing about them. As the public creditors of this description had ample opportunity to present their claims, and to establish them by proof, at the time when proof on both sides was accessible, there is every reasonable presumption that most if not all just claims were then presented and allowed.

But in this case the proof of the petitioner's claim is wholly insufficient. The existence of the continental bills in the hands of the petitioner is shown by very slight evidence; and, by her own showing, she was never possessed of any evidence of the impressment of the wagon and team, except the certificate of a magistrate that the original was lost; and the destruction of the whole by fire rests upon her own affidavit. If this claim were allowed, it would afford a precedent by which the Treasury might be made bankrupt, with but a slight probability of satisfying, thereby, the claims of any of the real creditors of the Government.

That the losses of individuals by the depreciation of continental bills were immense, is undoubted. But it is now impossible to ascertain who were the sufferers. That some just claims were left unrepresented, through the neglect of the claimants, is not impossible. But their neglect has been so long continued that it is impossible to distinguish their claims from those which were adjusted and paid. They must, therefore, suffer the consequences of their own default.

The committee recommend that the claim be rejected.