

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1845.

AUGUSTA:

WM. T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1845.

TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 10.]

[HOUSE.

To the Speaker of the House of Representatives :

IN compliance with an order of the House of Representatives passed on the 29th ultimo, requesting the "Governor to lay before the House a copy of all claims made upon the United States government by this State, under resolve of March 24th, 1843, specifying those which have been allowed and those which have been rejected; and also to communicate what amount, if any, has been paid by this State to citizens of New Brunswick for losses or damages sustained by them in consequence of proceedings of the State in building booms on the Aroostook, and to citizens of this State for same cause; also copies of all correspondence between the Executive of Maine, and Samuel L. Harris, Esq., relating to the claims of this State upon the General Government," I transmit a report from the Secretary of State, embracing all the information touching the subjects enumerated in the order, which the files and records of the Executive Department afford.

In a personal interview with Mr. Harris in the month of November last, I was advised, that unexpected objections had been interposed by the accounting officers of the Treasury, to several classes of claims under the Treaty of Washington, which had been provided for by the appropriation of \$80,000, made at the last session of congress, and referred to in his report of July 1st, and that considerable delay was thereby occasioned in the final settlement of the accounts.

As the appropriation referred to was made by Congress upon a full statement of the several classes of claims under the treaty, for

which it was intended to provide, and upon a deliberate examination of the principles upon which they were grounded; and as claims of precisely similar character had been allowed under former appropriations, the delay in passing them at the proper accounting office was wholly unexpected, both to the agent and the executive.

But a very inconsiderable amount, however, had been rejected; and with the additional testimony in support of the principal items, which the agent has since been enabled to procure, it is hoped, that the necessity of an application to the appellate authorities of the Treasury, will be avoided.

In an unofficial letter under date of 24th December, 1844, in reply to a letter suggesting the propriety of an early report, the agent writes as follows:

“In order to present in a suitable manner the several points of information indicated in your letter, two or three weeks time would be required, and the statement after all, would be inaccurate and unsatisfactory. The time thus occupied would be more advantageously employed in looking after the interests of the State at the Departments, where my personal attention at this stage of the business is constantly required. I cannot but hope, that you may deem it expedient and proper to concur in the views I have suggested, and make as favorable reference to my progress in prosecuting our claims against the General Government, as the facts will warrant.

“Since writing you yesterday, a portion of our military accounts has been reported upon by the Second Auditor, and the statement and vouchers transmitted to the Second Comptroller for his decision.”

Being satisfied that the agent was using his best endeavors to expedite the settlement of the claims, I did not deem it proper to withdraw his attention from that important object, by insisting upon an immediate report.

H. J. ANDERSON.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, }
Feb. 4, 1845. }

STATE OF MAINE.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE, }
Augusta, February 4, 1845. }

SIR:—The undersigned, Secretary of State, to whom was referred the order of the House of Representatives, under date of the 29th ultimo, requesting the Governor “to lay before the House a copy of all claims made upon the United States government by this State, under a resolve approved March 24th, 1843, specifying those which have been allowed, and those which have been rejected; and also to communicate what amount, if any, has been paid by this State to citizens of New Brunswick for losses or damages sustained by them in consequence of proceedings of this State in building booms on the Aroostook, or to citizens of this State for same cause; also copies of all correspondence between the Executive of Maine and Samuel L. Harris, Esq., relating to the claims of this State upon the General Government,” begs leave to state, that in pursuance of the resolve referred to in the order, the claims of several individuals were presented for examination and allowance, preliminary to their being transmitted for final liquidation at the Treasury at Washington—that, in compliance with an order of Council, all the papers in relation to these claims were delivered to Mr. Harris, agent of this State, to be used in prosecuting said claims before the accounting officers of the Departments, and that no copies thereof were retained in this office; and no report having since been submitted by Mr. Harris, I am unable to state what parts of said claims have been allowed and what rejected.

It does not appear by the records in this Department, that any amount has been paid to the “citizens of New Brunswick, or of this State,” for purposes mentioned in the order.

I herewith lay before you, "copies of all correspondence between the Executive of Maine and Samuel L. Harris, Esq., relating to the claims of this State upon the General Government," on file in this Department, which are not to be found in the printed public documents.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

P. C. JOHNSON.

To Hon. H. J. ANDERSON,

Governor of Maine.

CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Hon. Governor and Council
of the State of Maine :*

As the adjustment of the claim of the State of Maine against the United States, for military expenditures incurred for the protection of the northeastern frontier, in 1839, the settlement of which was provided for by a special act of congress, passed 13th June, 1842, has occupied a longer period than was anticipated by the executive, at the time I had the honor to receive the appointment of agent to attend to the liquidation of these claims with the accounting officers of the Treasury, perhaps it may not be inappropriate for me to present a brief statement exhibiting some of the prominent causes of delay. Although I am not aware that any dissatisfaction has been expressed, yet, as it would seem to be highly proper that the governor and council should be advised of the progress of the business, I have prepared the present communication.

The act of congress just referred to, requires that our accounts should be adjusted on the same principles that have governed the settlement of those of other States. This being the case, great apparent delay is necessarily experienced, arising from several reasons, which do not operate in the examination of accounts of army officers, in the regular service ; as reference must be had to what has heretofore been decided and acted upon in State accounts, not only in regard to the general expenditure, but also in relation to those expenses which are peculiar to State disbursements, oftentimes involving laborious research ; and in order that a proper comparison may be had, many notes, memoranda and reference are required, which unavoidably consumes much time, and retards the final adjustment.

Expenditures, equitable enough in themselves, and in a certain

sense necessary, occur in militia accounts, which are unknown in regular service, because such are otherwise provided for by regulation, and the general and extensive supply of military necessaries by the government; or else should they be incurred by an officer of the United States army, are accompanied by such documents as exhibit the necessity of an irregular proceeding, and competent authority to direct it.

The unavoidable mixture in one bill, of purchases or expenditures of various character, by the disbursing officers and agents during the Aroostook campaign, has been a great incumbrance to rapid progress, as certain disbursements are audited in one office of the Treasury, and others in a different branch of the department.

There is a very important regulation which prevails at the departments, and which is considered indispensable to the public service, and the protection of the public interest, which also occupies much time—that is, so to note in a mode easy of reference the various payments, in order that future claims for supplies or services alleged to have been rejected, or not preferred, unattended to, or underrated by the State, may hereafter be compared with what has been acted upon, admitted or rejected, in the adjustment of the accounts.

In addition to the propriety of every expenditure, the disposition of all the property of every description, which was purchased during the campaign, is required to be shown; consequently, much time is consumed in tracing the supplies and various quartermasters' and other stores through the hands of the different officers and agents, to the final consumption or disposition, which, in many cases it is impracticable to do satisfactorily, and the deficiency must be made a matter of compromise.

In the United States service there are regular issues of rations to troops, the component parts of which are fixed by the regulations, which are rarely deviated from. While the militia was in service, in 1839, it was found necessary to exceed the usual army rations, and furnish the men with sufficient for their comfortable subsistence. Hence the adjustment of this portion of our account is attended with some difficulty, as the accounting officers do not

recognize any contingency that authorizes the issue of an excess of rations, and will not admit more than would have been issued, had the troops been regularly mustered into the service of the United States ; and, as in the case just mentioned, in relation to the property accounts, a compromise must be effected.

It unfortunately happened in the first rendition of our accounts for military expenditures, that a plan was pursued, under what was considered at that time most competent authority to advise, which was carried out with great care and labor, and it was rationally conceived that it would have the effect of placing the claim in the course of the most rapid adjustment, when, in fact, the result has shown that the arrangement adopted has of itself proved a serious detriment to that consummation, as the subdivisions of expenditures in one and the same vouchers, noted on different abstracts, under heads not agreeing with the regulation heads of expenditure, and the manner of preparing the abstracts of issues of subsistence and other stores, property accounts, &c., not being in conformity to the usual forms, has caused much confusion and embarrassment.

Some allowance should be made for interruptions, when it is considered that the force of the offices is calculated on the annual operations of the United States service, and that business which passed through the hands of any one person in the office, must necessarily be again referred to him for explanation or correspondence at subsequent periods. As it cannot be supposed that all persons in the office can be acquainted with every and each branch of duty in an extensive department, business of a peculiar character must be referred to him who is conversant with it, and consequently the examination of State accounts must give way from time to time to pressing claims of either the more established services, or those cases where delay would be grievous to those who are little able to sustain it.

It is difficult to show to the conviction of a looker on, by any enumeration of the differences between the adjustment of State accounts, as regards the mere liquidation of the account and vouchers presented, and that of an account of an officer of the United States army, the various causes which retard the final settlement,

and I will not attempt to go further in detail, although I might advert to many other points. I will add that the adjustment of the account of a regular United States disbursing officer, of the same magnitude as a State account, would require a considerable length of time, notwithstanding its being rendered according to regulation, and the entire familiarity of the examiner with the names of all officers appearing in it, and the limits or extent of their authority to order or execute any service or purchase, as well as the mode and quantity of allowances and issues of every description.

I have the pleasure of stating that the testimony which I was engaged in procuring last fall and winter, in order to substantiate these claims, has been for the most part, quite satisfactory to the accounting officers, and but little additional evidence is required. Unless some obstacles occur, which are not now anticipated, we may hope for an early and final settlement of the account.

I shall necessarily be employed for a few weeks previous to my return to Washington, in obtaining some further testimony and vouchers in relation to the military accounts, and the additional claims under the Treaty, for which Congress has recently made provision, by an appropriation of \$80,000.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL L. HARRIS.

Augusta, July 1, 1844.

WASHINGTON, 23d Dec., 1844.

SIR:—I am informed by a recent letter from Mr. Johnson, Secretary of State, that you wish me to furnish you with a statement of the present condition of our claims against the United States, in order to make proper mention of them in your annual message to the Legislature.

I should have attended to the request at an earlier period, but have been in daily expectation of procuring final action on that portion of our military claims comprising expenditures for munitions of war, camp equipage, tents, blankets and miscellaneous services incident to the Pay Department, which have been in the course of examination at the office of the Second Auditor of the Treasury, but the settlement is now unavoidably delayed for two or three weeks.

In the present situation of our claims, it is impracticable for me to submit a detailed report; and it would perhaps be injudicious, if not improper, to present a premature statement of the action of the accounting officers, and indeed, such an exhibit would be entirely unsatisfactory to the authorities of Maine.

In a communication which I had the honor to submit to the Executive on the first of July last, I stated briefly, the reasons which had operated to retard the settlement of the military claims; and I will now add, that the examination has proved much more tedious and laborious than was even then expected.

It gives me pleasure to state, however, that the prompt and diligent attention of the accounting officers has been devoted to the business in all its details, and that no obstacles have occurred inconsistent with the regulations of the Department, and the principles which have governed during the progress of the adjustment.

I am unable to state definitely the period when a final settlement of the claims may be expected, but I have reason to believe that it may be in my power to consummate the business in season to present a report previous to the adjournment of the Legislature.

The situation of our claims under the Treaty of Washington, is known to you, and perhaps in the present position of the negotiation, it would not be advisable to make particular mention of them.

The amount received from the General Government last year, on account of the claims of the State of Maine, (of which a particular statement is made in my report of the 12th October, 1843,) was \$433,721.52.

The amount of claims now in the course of liquidation, are as follows :

Claims under the act of Congress of 13th June, 1842,	106,854	16
Claims under the Treaty of Washington,	78,593	56
Aggregate,	\$185,447	72

I have the honor to be, sir,

With sincere respect,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed,) SAMUEL L. HARRIS.

To Hon. HUGH J. ANDERSON,
Governor of Maine, &c. &c. &c.

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 5, 1845. }

Laid on the table, and 350 copies ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature.

SAMUEL BELCHER, *Clerk.*