51ST CONGRESS, 1st Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { EX. DOC. No. 379.

CLAIM OF MRS. SUSANNAH GEORGE.

LETTER

FROM

THE ACTING SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A copy of a communication from the Light-House Board, with accompanying papers, relative to the claim of Mrs. Susannah George for compensation due her husband for services and expenses incurred by him while light-house keeper at Plum Island light-station, Massachusetts.

MAY 15, 1890.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
May 14, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, copy of a communication from the Light-House Board of the 12th instant, together with accompanying papers, relative to a claim of Mrs. Susannah George for compensation due her husband for services and expenses incurred by him while light-house keeper at Plum Island light-station, Massachusetts.

Respectfully, yours,

GEO. S. BATCHELLER,
Acting Secretary.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD,
Washington, May 12, 1890.

SIR: The Board has the honor to inclose herewith copies of certain papers on file in this office relative to a claim of Mrs. Susannah George for compensation due her husband for services and expenses incurred by him while light-house keeper at Plum Island light-station, Massachusetts.

At the request of Hon. William Cogswell, M. C., of Massachusetts, the Board has the honor to ask that, if approved by you, the papers inclosed be sent to the honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives, to be referred to the chairman of the Committee on Appropria-

tions, in order that measures may be taken to afford Mrs. Susannah George Congressional relief in the matter of her claim.

The Board has to state that, in its opinion, Mrs. George has an equitable claim for relief, but there is no appropriation available under the control of the Light-House Board from which she could be paid, and it has no power to act in the matter further than to approve the claim as shown upon the records of this office.

Respectfully, yours,

GEO. W. COFFIN,
Commander U. S. Navy, Naval Secretary.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD,
Washington, November 20, 1889.

MADAM: Your letter of July 7, 1889, to the President of the United States relative to your claim for compensation for the services of your husband, Mr. Phineas George, while light-house keeper at Plum Island light-station, Massachusetts, was referred to this office for the proper action in the case.

In reply the Board regrets to state that the evidence in its possession is not sufficient to warrant it in asking for an appropriation for the settlement of the claim. Cases of this kind can only be properly settled by the Court of Claims or by an act Congress for relief.

Respectfully, yours,

GEORGE W. COFFIN,
Commander U. S. Navy, Naval Secretary.

Mrs. SUSANNAH GEORGE,
Newburyport, Mass.

NEWBURYPORT, *July* 7, 1889.

To the Father of our great Republic, Benjamin Harrison:

When William Wellman was superintendent of the lights in the State of Massachusetts, he said Mr. George had the smallest pay and more work than several. He further stated that for his extra services he fix it so to get it. He did such as repairs on boats, embankment of the towers and dwelling-house; he had to dig mud, cut brush to keep the sand from blowing away. He had only charged 25 cents per load and hire a horse for most of the time. He got his pay as long as Mr. Wellman held the office; after that he got no pay five years. The bills amounted to $365.15. He bought 5 gallons of oil for lights, being advised by the merchants of Newburyport not to let the lights go out. Before he got the oil he was brought twelve wax candles to place in the towers, no convenience to place them in whatever. He had a sail-boat and a small boat to bring our things from town, as we had no horse a good part of the time. The bills were sent to Washington by Richard Spofford, who has passed away. Since the keeper could not get sight of Spofford he went several times but never could find him.

Right is might. I am a widow and helpless.

Respectfully, yours,

SUSANNA GEORGE.

RING'S ISLAND, *Salisbury, March* 10, 1889.

HON. SIR: As my case is urgent and my health feeble I am compelled to lay my case before you early; my age is eighty-six. In 1833, the 4th of July, I moved to Plum Island as light-keeper with Mr. Phinehas George. We staid there almost a quarter of a century. On our first landing his pay was 75 cents per day—no way for conveyance but by boat to the city. A large family of fourteen children. After several years had passed we found the pay did not feed us. Mr. George made an effort and got his pay raised a whole dollar—about one-half enough to feed us. The work was very hard for me: when we left we were not able to be turned out on the world to provide for a family. Mr. George got ruptured carrying one of the pilots on the

sand, and I got lame, so I am dependent on a crutch. Mr. George saved the lives of three men; no pay for any such work. He also traveled the beach alone to find a sufferer—never received one cent compensation; now see what the Government is doing for twelve men.

I feel that a pension is my due as much as though I had been in the Army. If I should live long or short I don't want to suffer any necessary. My family are all gone to the spirit world.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

SUSANNA GEORGE.

Please hand this to Mrs. Harrison.

NEWBURYPORT, *December*, 1885.

To the Father of our country and the widow's friend in sadness and want:

I appeal to you to see Esq. Stone for the small bill sent to him by Capt. Luther Dame, the amount of which was three hundred fifty-two dollars fifteen cents ($352.15).

Mr. Phineas George was keeper of Plum Island light-houses twenty-four years and six months, for the small sum of $1 per day; a family of fourteen children; not enough to feed us; a more just bill never was sent to Government. This bill was always allowed and paid as long as Mr. Wellman was superintendent.

There was always extra work to be done, as the sand was always shifting, to secure the buildings. I had two smart boys who went to California that went to Central America with General Walker; one was shot in the first battle, the other was never heard from. I have only one son left, he not well. I do hope you will send me some relief that we may rejoice in the other life that we made this acquaintance here and obeyed the example Jesus taught.

Respectfully, yours,

SUSANNA GEORGE.

I am in my eighty-fourth year; written by my own hand.

United States, Dr., to Phinehas George.

January, 1853. To the hauling 175 horse-loads of marsh mud, to protect the buildings from undermining, from January 6 to December 31, 1853	$43.75
1854. To hauling of 243 loads of ditto and spreading the same	60.75
Together with 150 loads of eel grass to place round the light-houses, from January 4, 1854, to December 31, 1855.....	37.50
Total	142.00
Repairs on boat.....	12.00
Coal.....	35.50
	189.50
To boarding Mr. Wiggins one week while repairing light-house	3.00
	192.50

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD,
Washington, June 10, 1886.

SIR: Referring to your letter of February 20, 1886, relative to the claim of Susanna George for re-imbursement of expenses incurred on account of the public service by her deceased husband Phineas George, formely keeper of Newburyport Harbor (Plum Island) light, you are now informed that the evidence before the Board is not sufficient to warrant it in asking an appropriation for the settlement of the claim. Cases of this sort can only be properly settled by the Court of Claims or by Congress. You are requested to convey this decision of the Board to the claimant.

Very respectfully,

HENRY F. PICKING,
Commander, U. S. Navy, Naval Secretary.

Commander G. H. WADLEIGH, U. S. N.,
Inspector Second Light-House District, Boston, Mass.

Regarding claim of Mrs. George, of Newburyport, for services rendered by her late husband when keeper of Plum Island light.

OFFICE OF LIGHT-HOUSE INSPECTOR, SECOND DISTRICT,
Boston, Mass., February 20, 1886.

SIR: Referring to the Board's letter of January 6, inclosing copy of a letter from Mrs. Susanna George, of Newburyport, in regard to a claim for $352.15 for services rendered by her late husband Phineas George while light-keeper of Plum Island light, Mass., I have the honor to report that I have visited Newburyport and called on Mrs. George, but could ascertain very little in addition to what is mentioned in her letter. She states that her husband was light-keeper from 1833 to 1857; that during that time, but previous to the establishment of the Light-House Board, Mr. George at different times was obliged to purchase oil in order to keep his lights burning, the supply having given out; that he, on one or two occasions, had the boat belonging to the station repaired at his own expense; that for a number of years he, by hauling sand and sods, saved the towers from being undermined and falling down; that a party of men employed in repairing the towers were boarded by the keeper and the board never paid; that when Mr. Welling was superintendent such services were paid for; but that under the next superintendent, whose name she can not remember, but who, as near as I could ascertain, served after Mr. Welling, and before the Light-House Board was established, the services were not paid for.

She is unable to produce any papers in support of her claim, stating that all the records, papers, etc., were burned when the tower was destroyed by lightning in August, 1856. She also states that Mr. George, who died several years ago, put the matter, with all evidence he had, in the hands of Mr. R. S. Spofford, of Washington. The records at the custom-house in this city show that Mr. George was paid his salary to include August 31, 1857, the dated of his removal.

The claimant is eighty-four years old and quite feeble, but I should judge her memory to be good, and I understand that she is considered reliable, also that she is in needy circumstances. I would recommend that the records of the Fifth Auditor's office previous to 1853 be examined, and that Mr. R. S. Spofford, of Washington, be requested to furnish all papers and information that he may have on the subject. Transmitted herewith is a statement forwarded by the friends of Mrs. George in regard to the claim.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. H. WADLEIGH,
Commander, U. S. Navy, Light-House Inspector Second District.

CHAIRMAN OF THE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD.
Washington, D. C.

STATEMENT OF FACTS WITH REGARD TO PHINEAS GEORGE AND FAMILY.

On or about the 4th of July, 1833, Mr. Phineas George took charge of the light-house at Plum Island, Newburyport Harbor, with a salary that amounted to about 75 cents per day, that was afterwards increased to $1 per day, which was the largest amount per diem that he ever received from the United States Government. He had a very large family, numbering sixteen in all, fourteen of whom were his own children, and the income above stated was all he had for their support. The duties of his position required his constant attendance at the island, therefore there was no opportunity for him to engage in any other employment to supplement his scanty income.

The bill that at this late day has been presented to the Department was for labor rendered to make the Government property more secure, for the light-houses were so situated that the strong winds were constantly undermining them by blowing the shifting sand from their foundations, and in order to prevent damage a large quantity of sod was teamed from a distance and packed about the buildings to hold the sand in position, and in this way they were prevented from falling and from being otherwise damaged.

You will see by the bill that the price for labor rendered was very low. Mr. George served the Government as light-keeper from 1833 to, I think, about 1857. Twenty-four years he was a very faithful officer, and while connected with Plum Island light he saved several lives by his watchfulness and bravery. On one occasion a brig struck on the bar and Mr. George, with his wife and child twelve years of age, launched a heavy boat that lay 300 yards from the water, and they succeeded in saving the lives of two men and the body of a third that they were unable to resuscitate, but in their efforts to launch the boat, the wife, Mrs. George, being with child, injured herself, which brought on an attack of insanity, and she was confined in the Worcester Insane Asylum for five months, and to pay her expenses Mr. George was obliged to hire $700, which embarrassed him to the day of his death, which occurred September 6, 1882. Mr George was a faithful and efficient officer, and his widow, who is now

almost eighty-four years of age, is an invalid and in destitute circumstances; and from this statement of facts it would seem that it would be only simple justice that her bill for the labor of her husband, amounting to $362.15, should be paid.

N. B.—Mrs. George will make affidavit to the entire truth of the above statements, and other evidence of the same can be furnished if necessary.

BOSTON, *February* 20, 1886.

Respectfully forwarded,

G. H. WADLEIGH,
Commander, U. S. Navy, Light-House Inspector Second District.

PLUM ISLAND *Nov. 7th* 1853.

RESPECTED SIR: Not haveing recived any instrucktions respecting the situations of the Light-Houses from you or the Department my duty calls me to make known to you the exact situations as thay now stand, wich can be explained more perticular by the Bearer of this My Son, as he know the conditions of Light-Houses and can explain the matter to you as well as it could posible by me. I will only state things as thay as thare condition is and he will explain the matter to you more to your satisfaction.

Firstly the tops of the Lanterns or ventilateing Chambers are in a critical condition and are very leakey Secondly the sills at the bottoms are decayed makeing the Light Houses in a dangerous condition Thirdly I am wanting three doz. tube glasses 10 in.

Captn. Springer of the supply vessel not haveing the above named glasses said I could get them at Boston.

Yours Respectfully
(Signed)

PHINEHAS GEORGE,
Keeper of Plum Island Light Houses.

To S. K. KNOX Esq.

PLUM ISLAND *December* 8*th* 1'53.

SIR: I feal it my duty to call on you for advise respecting the Light Houses as they are badly situated at present and as I have called on Mr. Knox several times to no purpose. The one in charge of them I can get no information what ever or find out where he is. I have been expecting him for the last three months every hour. I have not been adsent but twice since June my Patience is completely exausted. The Light Houses are in a dangerous state they cause me two hours extra work every day besides going into them three times every night. I think your Influance with the rest of the Merchants of N. P. can lead me or help me out of this difficulty. If you will come and see me on receipt of this I will give you full explanation of the matter. I have faithfully done my duty and if no one will or can assist me if they go down on whom do the blame fall. If you can not come immediately please drop me a line through the Post Office as my boys are there every day.

Respectfully Your Obt. Servt.
(Signed)

PHINEHAS GEORGE,
Light Keeper.

ISAAC H. BOARDMAN Esq.

It ought to be attended to immdiately.
(Signed)

JAMES BLOOD,
Coll.

PLUM ISLAND *December* 26*th* '53.

SIR: I had no intentions of giving Offence to any one in writing to Mr. Boardman. As I had written to you twice & had sent my Son to Boston on express purpose to see you & could get no answer, I considered it safe to inform one of our best citazens of the situation that no blame should rest on me after exposing myself to the wet weather.

There was several experienced Gentlemen looked at the Light Houses & pronounced them unsafe. In moving the Houses last fall it cracked the Cement & it was late in the fall when the Lanterns were painted & the rains come on washed of paint that made them leaky. When I come to examin the ventilator the peice that keeps the weather out was completely rusted out then the was nothing to keep the water from coming down though on to the apparatus.

The coal bills I have sent. I bought the coal as usual & as I had no orders to do

anything diffirant I thought I was doing wright. You will see it is important to keep a boat here & that it should be kept in order it got stove in the gale and I got it repaired as well as I could as you will find in the bills.

Respectfully your Obt. Servt.

(Signed) PHINEHAS GEORGE,
Light Keeper.

Capt. SAMUEL R. KNOX
Light House Ins. District No. 2.

NEWBURYPORT, *February* 6, 1854.

DEAR SIR: I had occasion to visit the lights at Plum Island a few days since, in order to correct a proof sheet of the "new survey." While there Mr. George stated to me that he was fearful he had been misunderstood in regard to some coal. If he is liable to censure pray let me have my share for not attending more thoroughly to to your order last fall. I called on Mr. Brown and requested him to deliver to Mr. George 84 bushels of coal, and sent to Mr. George by two persons to come and say where or how he would have it; it seems he never heard about it, and Mr. B. neglected to send it until Mr. George, getting out of patience, came to town and bought it himself. Now, if he had got it as you intended he should, and if some of it should have proved to be C. coal instead of sea coal it would have ignited all the better and no fuss. I dare say you have a large fund of patience and forbearance and this is just a small draught upon it.

Mr. George and wife say they find it very hard to make both ends meet at the present rate of provisions, and really 97 cents per day and no rations or privileges does seem rather short commons; if the pay is the same as it was thirty years ago it certainly will not procure half the necessaries of life.

Pray take the poor man's case into consideration, and if you find he has less than others doing the same duty, and can conscientiously recommend the Board to increase his salary, I am sure you will do it, nothwithstanding you have so many other things to think of.

I tell Mr. George that your duties require every moment of your time, and that if you do not visit him very often it is a sign that you know he may be trusted to keep his lamps trimmed and burning. When you do find time to come this way I shall be pleased to see you.

In the meantime I remain yours, with respect,

N. S. OSGOOD.

SAMUEL R. KNOX.

PLUM ISLAND, *January* 13, 1855.

SIR: I consider it my duty to inform you respecting things in Plum Island, together with a bill of my extra labor and back bills that has not been paid or allowed me as usual. I am aware that you will require more explanation than the mere bill itself, therefore I shall be as brief as possible. In the first place, it is a common occurrence on this island for the face of the sand-hills to be so much altered in a heavy gale of wind from any quarter that even those best acquainted with its locality could not see any likeness left in the form of the hills and valleys as they were previous to a heavy gale, and there is no ways to protect the buildings from being undermined but to cover the sand with mud and straw and the like. I have had much more to do this last two years than heretofore, owing to the newly occupation of the buildings, it being more bleak than the old, and by this time I have all so well covered that probably for the future the expense will not be half so great as has been for the past two years. I have ever had more or less to do of the above like services ever since I have been on the isle, for more than twenty years, and my bills have always been paid until now, the average of which has been about $50 per year. Likewise my boat bill has been paid till the last two years. I have paid $12. The boat is not hardly fit for use.

My coal bill is wanting one-half. I have always been allowed the value of 4 tons per year, till the last two years the amount is $35.50.

There was a man sent from Boston to new sill light-house about one year ago and staid one week. I never got anything for it.

The light-houses are very cold; they stand about 3 feet from the sand, with heavy iron tops. There is a toll-bridge leading onto the island about one mile to the southward, is the only way by which we can get to town only by boat. You can refer to United States Attorney Geo. Cushing, or Mr. Upham, the Representative of the district, respecting me or the island.

I have the smallest salary of any one that has two lights to tend.

I have had to take my children out of school the last two years. It makes it very distressing for me to get along under the present circumstances. Please to write me at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

PHINEHAS GEORGE,
Keeper.

THORNTON A. JENKINS, Esq.,
Secretary of Light-House Board.

United States to Phinehas George, Dr.

January 6, 1853, to hauling 175 horse-cart loads of marsh mud and eel grass to the buildings of light-keeper and light-houses, to protect them from undermining, at 25 cents per load		$43.75
1854. To 243 loads		60.75
To 150 loads		37.50
1853 and 1854. Repairs on boat two years		12.00
To coal used for two years		35.50
1854. To boarding Mr. Wiggins one week while repairing light-house		3.00
1855. 165 horse-cart loads of mud		41.25
Repairs on boat		3.90
To coal used		12.00
1856. To 187 loads of eel grass and mud placed as above		46.75
Repairs on boat		3.00
Coal used		15.00
1857. To 155 loads		38.75
To 5 gallons sperm-oil, $1.50		7.50
		$360.65

(Copy from orignal.)

(Indorsed.)

OFFICE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD,
May 12, 1890.

Of the amount of the within bill the Light-House Board has upon its records only an itemized statement of the amount, $192.50, as submitted by Mr. Phineas George.

Respectfully, yours,

GEO. W. COFFIN,
Commander, U. S. Navy, Naval Secretary.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD,
Washington, January 22, 1855.

Your communication of the 13th instant was duly received and submitted to this Board.

In reply I am directed to inform you that you are not only not authorized to make alterations, repairs, or expenditures of any kind at the light-station under your charge, but that the printed regulations of the Department positively prohibited your so doing.

I am further directed to state that no bills of unauthorized expenditures will be paid, and that if you fail to conform to the printed directions and instructions your immediate removal will be recommended to the Hon. Secretary of the Treasury.

Your accounts of expenditure of oil and other supplies during the past year are now under consideration in connection with the other matters of complaints of oil, etc., etc., connected with the light-station under your charge.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THORNTON A. JENKINS,
Secretary.

Mr. P. GEORGE,
Keeper Plum Island Lights, Newburyport, Mass.