To the Honorable the President and House of Senate.

The humble petition of Elizabeth P Townsend

Sheweth That your Petitioner was heretofore the wife of William Bellinger deceased of Saint Bartholomew’s Parish who by his last Will and Testament made your Petitioner the whole and sole legatee of his Estate real and personal and Executrix of the same, in conjunction with two Executors her Brother William Cotesworth Pinckney and William Webb.

That the said William Bellinger, your petitioner’s late husband, was a minor at the conclusion of the late Revolutionary War; but did nonetheless turn out with the militia of that part of the State where they first began to take Arms for the recovery of their country from the British, and afterwards continued to do good service with the said militia against the common enemy. – That in the latter end of the year 1781, and in the year 1782, divers Cattle, the property of the said William, were then in the possession of his Guardian John Bellinger, were impressed for the use of the American Troops by different persons acting under public authority, who gave receipts or Certificates for the same.

That these Certificates or receipts afterwards came into the possession of the said William; but, in consequence of some unfortunate circumstances, were never carried by him to the proper office or Officers, appointed for settling such demands against the Public.

That after the decease of said William, the said receipts or Certificates were suffered to be further neglected by the person or persons most actively employed in the management of his Estate; the consequence probably of an ignorance of the time first limited for the settlement of Public Accounts having been afterwards prolonged by the Legislature – That your petitioner now finds herself in possession of three of the aforementioned Certificate; viz. one from John Meals dated 31st December 1781 for three Beeves, two, four and one five years old; Another from John Ward dated March 9th, 1782 for 1350 weight; and a third from William Hort dated 31st December 1782 for 1903 pounds at 5 ½ dollars per Cent [? percent?]. – Your petitioner begs leave further to represent that the Estate of the said William Bellinger would have been insolvent, had it not been greatly favored by the long indulgence of some of its Creditors; And that she is now truly [?] distressed in consequence of debts of said Estate which still remain unpaid.
Although the time is now past when compensation might have been obtained in the way pointed out by law; and though the goods of Society in order to bring all action between Individuals to some final close may point out the necessity of a prescription which must not be shaken by any plea of omission or of ignorance; Yet, as an absolute prescription does not appear equally necessary with the Public is one of the parties, and is always capable of protecting itself against every unjust claim, because [it is] the only and final judge in every such case; and as a demand Originally just cannot become unjust merely because it was not brought forward within a certain time; And as the time is not yet passed, when the Authenticity of the Certificates before mentioned can be clearly ascertained beyond the possibility of deception; Your petitioner therefore hopes, and humbly petitions your Honorable house to take into consideration the matters herein before mentioned; and make such order for the relief of your Petitioner, as shall be thought just and consistent with the public good. – Your Petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray &c &c

S/ Elizabeth Pinckney Townsend

November 22nd, 1798

[p 8: an identical petition addressed to the SC House of Representatives]

[p 10]
The committee to whom was Referred the petition of Elizabeth P Townsend

Report,

That they have considered the same & find that the claim of the Petitioner is barred by Law; and that the prayer thereof cannot be granted.

[p 12]
House of Representatives December 5, 1798

The Committee on Public Accounts to whom was referred the Petition of Elizabeth Pinckney Townsend, respecting sundry Certificates, given to the Executor and Guardian of her late Husband, William Bellinger, for Cattle impressed in the year 1781 and 1782, by different Commissaries: Report, that they have investigated the same, but such a considerable time has elapsed since they were given, & your Committee not having the proper documents of Treasury, before them, to enable them to determine with propriety upon the above claims, they therefore recommend that it be referred to the Commissioner for Settling Public Accounts, & that he be directed to Report thereon to the Legislature at their next Session

Resolved that this House do agree to the Report

Ordered

[pp 14-17: The Petitioner renewed her petition in 1804]

[pp 18-21: John Townsend renewed the petition on Nov. 23, 1822. It too was rejected.]