



*Early Congressional Private Claims  
in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–1817*

Since the establishment of the Federal Government in 1789, American citizens have exercised the right, as guaranteed by the First Amendment, to petition Congress regarding any public or private matter. Private claims typically involved the redress of grievances, payment of monetary compensation, or solicitation of government sponsorship for a private cause or enterprise. Many of the early private claims submitted to both the Senate and House of Representatives have been microfilmed as part of a preservation project to film all of the unbound records of Congress from 1789 to 1817.

Private claims are part of Records of the United States House of Representatives (Record Group 233) in the custody of the Center for Legislative Archives in the National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

**Records of the U. S. House of Representatives (RG 233)**

U.S. House records are arranged by Congress according to several categories that reflect the business of the House, including records of legislative proceedings, impeachment proceedings, and records of the Office of the Clerk. Private claims comprise part of the records of legislative proceedings. Records submitted directly by claimants are arranged in the series called “Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents that were referred to Committees.” Records created by the committees that considered private claims are located in the series titled Committee Reports and Papers. Claim files usually include the claimant’s original petition, supporting affidavits, committee reports, and correspondence.

\_\_\_M1705, *Unbound Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Fifth Congress, 1797–1799*. 1 roll. DP. This publication contains reports and papers of the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by the name of the petitioner, as well as a single document in the Petitions and Memorials Referred to Committees.

\_\_\_M1707, *Unbound Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Sixth Congress, 1799–1801*. 4 rolls. DP. **Roll 1** contains papers and reports of the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by claimant. **Roll 2** includes petitions and memorials submitted to the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by petitioner.

\_\_\_P2000, *Records of the Seventh Congress, 1801–1803*. 11 rolls. This publication contains records of both the House and Senate. House records appear on **rolls 6–11**. Reports and papers of the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by name, are included on **roll 6**. **Roll 9** contains petitions and memorials submitted to the Committee on Claims, also arranged alphabetically by name.

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\_\_\_M1404, *Unbound Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Eighth Congress, 1803–1805*. 5 rolls. **Roll 1** includes papers and reports of the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by name. Petitions and memorials referred to the Committee on Claims appear on **roll 3**, also arranged alphabetically by the name of the claimant.

\_\_\_M1709, *Unbound Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Ninth Congress, 1805–1807*. 10 rolls. DP. Papers and reports of the Committee on Claims appear on **roll 1**, arranged alphabetically by name, while **rolls 5–6** contain petitions and memorials of the Committee on Claims, also arranged alphabetically by petitioner. **Roll 7** includes petitions to the Committee on Public Lands relating to the confirmation of land titles, arranged alphabetically by name.

\_\_\_M1711, *Unbound Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Tenth Congress, 1807–1809*. 9 rolls. DP. **Roll 1** includes papers and reports of the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by name. Petitions and memorials referred to the Committee on Claims, arranged alphabetically by name, appear on **roll 4**; claims referred to the Committee on Public Lands, also arranged alphabetically by petitioner, appear on **roll 6**.

\_\_\_M1266, *Petition Books of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–1817*. 14 rolls. DP. This publication reproduces the petition books maintained by the House of Representatives in which the Clerk of the House recorded information on the introduction and disposition of private claims presented on the floor of the House. The petition books generally list the name of the petitioner or memorialist, the date of referral to a House committee or executive branch department, the date of reports submitted by committees or departments, indication of additional proceedings by the House, and the final disposition of the private claim. The volumes are arranged numerically by Congress, then by session. Entries within each session are arranged alphabetically either by the first letter of the petitioner's surname, place of residence, or occupation, then chronologically by the date of introduction on the floor of the House. This particular publication references many petitions and memorials that no longer exist.

For more information, see the following reference reports:

- *American State Papers: Public Lands and Claims*
- *Records of the U.S. Congress Relating to Private Claims*
- *Early Congressional Private Claims in the U.S. Senate, 1797–1811*
- *The Accompanying Papers of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1865–1877*

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