NAH.

FRANK A. VANDERLIP,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY.

Treasury Department,
Washington.

May 2 1900.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

I have been looking carefully into the matter of the experience of Mr. Victor Smith, who was wrecked on the Roncador Reef in 1865, while in charge of a certain amount of United States money and bonds. It seems that Mr. Smith was at one time Collector of Customs. I have had a thorough search made of the old files of the "Commissioner of Customs," with a view to ascertaining if any record of the case had been made during Mr. Smith's term as Collector. No reference is made to the matter, however, in those records.

The case has been searched for in the files of the Auditor for the Treasury Department, with reference to a possible claim in the matter, but without result. I have also had a thorough search made of the files of the Register's Office, and of the Secretary's Office. In the former no reference whatever is made to the matter.

In the latter there is a reference to a letter from Victor Smith, Colon, N. G., dated July 10, 1965, and receceived August 19th, 1865. The letter referred to a voucher "account services," and there is record of its having been deposited with "Birchett, Clerk." I am, however, unable to find further trace of the letter.

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Mr. Smith was a Treasury Agent at the time, and any claims for services or damages would be made by him as an official of the Government. There is, however, no record of any claim of that character made by him. I am now having the old files of the Secretary's Office searched through, however, as it is barely possible the claim, if any was made, might have been made some time later and have been a personal claim.

I enclose herewith a memorandum prepared in the Division of the Revenue Cutter Service, which shows the steps taken in the matter by the Secretary of the Treasury at the time.

I regret that I am not able to find anything more definite regarding the matter.

Very truly yours,

F A Vanderlip

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
Washington.

Enc.

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Memoranda in the case of Victor Smith and vessel stranded on Rancador Reef, Caribbean Sea.

I. Revenue Steamer WAYANDA ordered to Rancador Reef by Collector of Customs at New Orleans, July 20, 1865 - order not on file.

2. WAYANDA sailed in obedience to said orders, her intended course being via Key West.

3. Under date of August 6, 1865, Captain Merryman, commanding WAYANDA reports to Collector of Customs at New Orleans his return to that place, having been unable to reach Rancador Reef on account of the incapacity of the vessel "to make so long a voyage against strong prevalent winds and currents"; encountered after leaving Key West.

4. August 11, Collector of Customs at New Orleans advised that another vessel had been sent to Rancador Reef - the WAYANDA to remain at New Orleans.

5. On same date the Collector at New York was instructed to direct Captain Faunce, commanding CUYAHOGA, to proceed immediately with his command to Rancador Reef and assist "Victor Smith, Treasury Agent, in recovering the safe containing money wrecked on board Steamer GOLDEN RULE".

6. It appears that the CUYAHOGA failed to sail in obedience to the orders of August 11th, and it does not appear that any further action was taken by the Department regarding this matter with vessels of the Revenue Cutter Service.

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