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“TO MISSISSIPPI, ALONE, CAN THEY LOOK FOR ASSISTANCE?”

CONFEDERATE WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI

by

Lisa Carol Foster

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Letters,
and the Department of History
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

August 2017

“TO MISSISSIPPI, ALONE, CAN THEY LOOK FOR ASSISTANCE:”

CONFEDERATE WELFARE IN MISSISSIPPI

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ABSTRACT

“TO MISSISSIPPI, ALONE, CAN THEY LOOK FOR ASSISTANCE.”

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In 1860, few destitute white citizens lived in Mississippi, and they were supported by their home counties. The Civil War drastically increased county indigent levels due to the high service and casualty rates of Mississippi soldiers. This thesis explores how Mississippi provided for its soldiers and their families during and immediately after the war (1861-1868), through post-war pensions (1888-1992), and through the Beauvoir Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers' Home (1903-1957). This thesis challenges the existing historiography, showing that Mississippi began aiding indigent soldiers and families as early as 1861, and the 1888 pension law operated outside the Lost Cause movement, providing for veterans and African-American camp servants at equal rates, in addition to widows. Finally, this study argues that, unlike other Confederate soldiers' homes, the residents of the Beauvoir Soldiers' Home were not the poorest of the poor prior to the Civil War and came from diverse economic backgrounds.

Few historians have written about the concept of Confederate welfare, especially in Mississippi. This study challenges James G. Hollandsworth's work on black Confederate pensioners, and builds on Elna Green, Kathleen Gorman, and James Marten analysis of pensions and the political process. This study directly challenges the work of R. B. Rosenberg in regards to the socio-economic

status of Confederate veterans' home residents. Primary sources used in this work include census records, county wartime destitute lists, pension applications and records, newspapers, Beauvoir Soldiers' Home records, and the 2016 results of the Beauvoir Veteran Project at the University of Southern Mississippi.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the Civil War began in 1861, Simeon T. Sanders enlisted in the Mississippi Greys, Company A of the 22nd Mississippi Infantry.¹ Only twenty-one years old and the third son of a Lawrence County yeoman farmer, Sanders served the Confederacy until the end of the war.² Slightly wounded in the arm at the Battle of Peach Tree Creek outside of Atlanta in July 1864, he nearly made it through the war unscathed. However, less than a month before the war ended, he was shot in the shoulder, leaving him hospitalized in North Carolina until May 1865.³ Upon his return home, Sim Sanders married and started a family on a farm near Monticello, Mississippi.⁴ Unfortunately, he continued to suffer from the shoulder injury and by 1910 he had fallen on hard times. His wife had died, he

¹ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 22nd Mississippi Infantry, Simeon T. Sanders.

² 1850 U.S. Census, Lawrence County, Mississippi, population schedule, p. 400 (stamped), dwelling 38, family 38, Benjamin Sanders, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U.S. Census, Lawrence County, Mississippi, Monticello, population schedule, p. 25, dwelling 173, family 173, B. T. Sanders, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U.S. Census, Lawrence County, Mississippi, slave schedule, p. 13, B. T. Sanders, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016. In 1850, Simeon Sanders's father, Benjamin T. Sanders, owned only \$300 in real estate and had no personal estate. However, by 1860, he owned \$800 in real estate and \$10,000 in personal estate, which likely included nine slaves found on the 1860 Slave Schedule. While the amount of Sanders's wealth drastically increased over a decade, only one slave was over the age of sixteen. Therefore, though Sanders owned nine slaves, he would still be considered a yeoman and a "self-working farmer." See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 47-48.

³ Mississippi Office of the State Auditor – Series 1201: Confederate Pension Applications, 1889-1932, S. T. Sanders, 1910, 1915, 1916, 1922, 1924, MDAH.

⁴ Evedene Bennett, *Bennett Book: Descendants of Benjamin & Delila* (Albany, OR: Whirlwind Press, 2001), 21; 1870 U.S. Census, Lawrence County, Mississippi, Monticello, population schedule, p. 112, dwelling 807, family 807, Simeon Sanders, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

owned no property, he had “no regular home,” and was living with children or friends.⁵ The injured shoulder limited the use of his hands, and along with steadily declining health, left him unable to make a living.

Sanders was just one of the estimated 78,000 to 80,000 Mississippi soldiers who left their homes to fight a war that would ultimately turn southern society upside down. Of those soldiers, only 51,000 returned home.⁶ According to the United States Census, there were 70,295 white men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five living in Mississippi in 1860.⁷ With nearly every able bodied man gone to war, Mississippi’s women, children, and the elderly were left with limited means of support or subsistence.

Beginning in 1861, Mississippi faced a crisis like none it had ever seen. The war took a toll on every resident of the once prosperous state and would continue to affect many of them for the rest of their lives. Mississippi’s leaders created a social welfare system to meet the needs of Confederate soldiers and their families during the war, and Confederate veterans thereafter. This study challenges the conventional picture of Mississippi’s wartime and postwar efforts to care for the state's Confederate veterans and their families. It will address

⁵ S. T. Sanders Pension Applications, 1910, 1915, 1916, 1922, 1924, MDAH.

⁶ William C. Harris, “The Reconstruction of the Commonwealth 1865-1870,” in *A History of Mississippi*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore (Hattiesburg: University & College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 542; John F. Marszalek and Clay Williams, “Mississippi Soldiers in the Civil War,” *Mississippi History Now*, April 2001, <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/articles/175/mississippi-soldiers-in-the-civil-war>.

⁷ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), xvii.

the establishment and implementation of these efforts in three parts: wartime aid (1861-1868), postwar pensions (1888-1992), and the Beauvoir Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers' Home (1903-1957).

Even before statehood, the Mississippi Territory took care of its indigent citizens. Based on the English system of poor relief, paupers' needs were handled locally. County Boards of Police were in charge of food, clothing, shelter, medicine, burial, and collecting taxes to pay for those items. While poor relief in the North began to shift mid-century into an "indoor" relief system that included poorhouses and centralized care, Mississippi's welfare system remained static, preferring an "outdoor" relief system where paupers were farmed out to individuals within the community who were then reimbursed for any expense associated with the pauper by their county's Board of Police.⁸

Antebellum Mississippi's pauper population was small, fewer than four hundred in 1860, only .1 percent of the white population. Northern rates were significantly higher, 4.2 percent in Massachusetts and New York.⁹ Most of Mississippi's "paupers" were widows or single and childless elderly men. As Christopher S. Johnson has noted, "it was age, death, and disability that made

⁸ Christopher S. Johnson, "Poor Relief in Antebellum Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 49, no. 1 (Feb 1987): 1-21; Daniel C. Vogt, "Poor Relief in Frontier Mississippi, 1798-1832," *Journal of Mississippi History* 51, no. 3 (August 1989): 181-199; Christopher L. Stacey, "The Political Culture of Slavery and Public Poor Relief in the Antebellum South," *Journal of Mississippi History* 63, no. 2 (July 2001): 129-145. Christopher S. Johnson, "Poverty or Dependency: The Paupers of Antebellum Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 71, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 343-74.

⁹ Johnson, "Poverty or Dependency," 353.

paupers.”¹⁰ Paupers were those men and women unable to support themselves who were deemed worthy of assistance. Since farming, the dominant occupation in Mississippi at the time, required manual labor, it is no surprise that nearly half of all paupers found in Johnson’s study were farmers.¹¹ Disabled Mississippians were often kept off the pauper list by adult children or other family members who took them in, unlike in the North where immigration often left paupers without family to care for them. This could explain the low numbers of paupers in Mississippi before the Civil War.

It is important to note the difference between the poor and the destitute for reasons of this study. Historian Christopher S. Johnson defines poverty as “the socioeconomic condition of persons who suffer an enduring deficiency of funds and resources for adequate sustenance, but.... who continue to be able to survive on their own.” The destitute, on the other hand, are defined as “individuals [who] are so bereft of capacity and recourses that they are at risk to perish.” Mississippi’s poor, a much larger group, subsisted with inadequate resources but were not on the brink of death. Mississippi’s destitute, on the other hand, were at risk of starving, freezing, or otherwise perishing due to lack of resources. These were people such as Thomas Haynes of Chickasaw County who was blind or William DeGray, an aging Coahoma County raftsmen who

¹⁰ Ibid., 361.

¹¹ Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 273. Johnson, “Poverty or Dependency,” 359.

could no longer work to support himself.¹² The situation of the destitute could easily be remedied by the county, usually by benevolent neighbors.

Poor relief as commissioned by the state of Mississippi and carried out by individual counties continued throughout the Civil War. Each Board of Police maintained a paupers fund, but the destitute rolls grew exponentially as the war raged. They were filled with young women and children not considered destitute prior to the war. According to historian Stephanie McCurry, this led to a new form of social welfare, one that centered around the soldier's wife and was "entirely unprecedented in terms of budget commitments, numbers of clients, and administrative function."¹³ A military relief fund was established by the legislature early in the war in each Mississippi county to be distributed by the Boards of Police to worthy families in the same manner as pauper funds.

To address the growing needs of families on the home front, the Mississippi Legislature created the Military Relief Fund in December 1861, just over six months after the war began.¹⁴ General Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan had called for a blockade of all Confederate ports in order to cut off supplies from around the world. Many items such as coffee, tea, spices, wine, pineapple, grains, and, most importantly, salt were imported into antebellum southern states

¹² Ibid., 343, 345, 348.

¹³ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 207.

¹⁴ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in the City of Jackson, November & December 1861, and January, 1862* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1862), 53.

from Europe, the Midwest, the North, and the Caribbean. Most of Mississippi's imports came through New Orleans or Mobile. When U.S. President Abraham Lincoln officially declared a blockade on Southern ports on April 19, 1861, Mississippi soon began feeling the effects.¹⁵ By that fall, "real concern was evident" regarding the food supply all over the South, not just within the Army but also on the home front.¹⁶ Women all over the Confederacy, especially soldier's wives, complained to their respective governors. Governor John Pettus and his successor, Charles Clark, are both credited with listening to the complaints of Mississippi women, and both "pursued a policy of aggressive expansion of the welfare system."¹⁷

The Military Relief Fund of 1861 specified that a tax of 30 percent of the regular state taxes of the prior year would go to "the support of destitute families, dependent wholly or in part upon the volunteers" in service to either Mississippi or the Confederacy.¹⁸ The first year alone, nearly \$200,000 in taxes was collected for the destitute families of soldiers.¹⁹ By 1863, \$500,000 was raised

¹⁵ Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 11-13, 28-29.

¹⁶ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy: Shortages and Substitutes on the Southern Homefront* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952; reprint, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 7.

¹⁷ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 202.

¹⁸ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in the City of Jackson, November & December 1861, and January, 1862* (Jackson: Cooper & Kimball, 1862), 53.

¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862, and November Session of 1863* (Jackson: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 17-18.

for the Fund.²⁰ It should be noted that Mississippi was not alone in providing aid to destitute families. All eleven Confederate states passed laws to help destitute families of soldiers, making it the only law related to the food shortages passed by all eleven states, with Alabama being the first on November 29, 1861.²¹

Mississippi also attempted to provide salt for its citizens. At the time, salt was extremely important, not only as a seasoning, but also to preserve meat and to keep livestock healthy, as well as preserve leather, dye fabric, and make butter. Before the blockade, most salt used by Mississippians came from either Europe or the North, but once the blockade drove prices up, state leaders were forced to develop other options. Eventually, after all other options had been exhausted, most of Mississippi's salt came from the salt wells just over the eastern border in Clark County, Alabama.²²

Salt distribution was handled by the Board of Police of each county in a manner similar to the paupers fund and the military relief fund. Counties were required by law first to provide salt to soldiers' families at cost. From any surplus, they could sell a one year's supply to any family or to the "most needy person of the county at cost."²³ Several salt agents were hired to make sure each county

²⁰ Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History*, vol. VII, *Mississippi*, by Colonel Charles E. Hooker (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899), 61.

²¹ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, 47.

²² Ella Lonn, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* (New York: Walter Neale, 1933; reprint, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965).

²³ *Ibid.*, 115.

received its allotment, but by the end of the war, the state completed only two distributions of salt to destitute families.

In order to make sure all destitute families of soldiers were taken care of, each county was required to compile lists naming each family. Many of these lists still exist and will be used to analyze a sampling of families to learn more about how they were affected by the war at the time and for the rest of their lives using census records, pension applications, and other documents. The papers of both Governor Pettus and Governor Clark are filled with letters from wives, county officials, and military officers begging for help for themselves or members of their community. These documents will not only give voices to the destitute but also illuminate the problems and opinions of people on the Mississippi home front. County Board of Police records will also be used to show who was helped and how the Confederate welfare system operated on the local level.

Though the United States government began giving Union veterans pensions in 1862,²⁴ it was twenty-three years after the war ended that the Mississippi legislature created the next program in the evolution of Confederate welfare by approving pensions for Confederate veterans, widows, and camp servants. In 1890, there were roughly 27,000 Confederate veterans and nearly 4,000 Confederate widows still living in Mississippi.²⁵ Over 40 percent of these

²⁴ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 106.

²⁵ Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C., 1897), 577.

individuals were age fifty-five or over.²⁶ Veterans like Simeon Sanders, who had received wounds during the war, were beginning to feel the effects of their injuries, perhaps more so than they had in 1865. Even those who had not been physically wounded began to feel the effects of aging, and many were running out of the strength and agility needed to earn a living. The young men who had gone off to war for the Confederacy were becoming elderly and disabled, just as the paupers were in antebellum Mississippi.

Studies of Civil War pensions tend to focus on the North due to the magnitude of the program, but by the turn of the twentieth century, southern states were also providing veterans and their dependents with pensions. According to historians James Marten and R. B. Rosenberg, Confederate veterans were revered in the South just because they were veterans, “living monuments” to the Lost Cause, unlike Union veterans whose images lacked, ironically, such powerful protection in postwar memory. Therefore, citing the fact that Confederate pensions were rarely debated in newspapers at the time, Marten claims that subjects like pensions and soldiers’ homes were “nonissues” because of their heroic image.²⁷ While Union pensions were much more politicized, Confederate pensions in Mississippi were not a given. The issue was hotly debated in Mississippi politics for several years before the law was actually

²⁶ Ibid., 579.

²⁷ James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union & Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 21; R. B. Rosenberg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers’ Homes in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xiii.

passed. As Elna Green has shown, politics played a tremendous role in the granting of Confederate pensions in Florida, and the Democratic Party throughout the South used pensions to maintain political control of poor whites who would otherwise be likely to become Populists.²⁸

In Mississippi, the post-Reconstruction Democratic Party, controlled mostly by supporters of railroads and industry, found itself at odds with poor white farmers. In order to maintain control of the party, Democratic politicians supported legislation that catered to agrarians in order to keep the party from splitting. Just as in Florida, it is likely that these same tactics lead to the initial creation of the pension system in Mississippi.²⁹

Other historians demonstrate how the adoption of Confederate pensions were challenged, although admittedly on a much smaller scale than Union pensions, and how many Confederate veterans identified with the same virtues, such as honor and manhood as Union veterans. In *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Homes in the New South*, R. B. Rosenberg gives many examples of how some ex-Confederates spoke out against social welfare for veterans and were humiliated by having to apply for a pension or enter a soldiers' home, with some calling it an "assault on his manhood."³⁰ Still, as historian

²⁸ Elna C. Green, "Protecting Confederate Soldiers and Mothers: Pensions, Gender, and the Welfare State in the U.S. South, a Case Study from Florida," *Journal of Social History*, 39, No. 4 (Summer 2006), 1095.

²⁹ James G. Revels, "Redeemers, Rednecks, and Racial Integrity" in *A History of Mississippi*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore (Hattiesburg: University & College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 591.

³⁰ Rosenberg, *Living Monuments*, 31.

Jeffrey W. McClurken points out in *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia*, more veterans applied for pensions as time passed. While this was likely due to the aging process, he argues that many of them may have waited as long as possible “out of concern about the impact on their perceived status as independent men.”³¹ They were expected to take care of their households and the inability to do so “challenged their masculinity.”³² In “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare,” Kathleen Gorman also shows how being an honorable member of the community and upholding the values of the Lost Cause gave veterans an advantage in having their pensions approved. Only “worthy” veterans were granted pensions.³³ Unfortunately, as she also points out, the system was subjective, often dependent on unreliable memories and witnesses. A detailed examination of Mississippi pension applications and correspondence, which has never been done before now, reveal the exact same issues.

While the masculinity of veterans was called into question when it came to the Confederate pension systems, women also had to match the “ideal Confederate woman” in order to be deemed worthy of a pension according to Elna C. Green. Green shows how women in Florida could easily lose their

³¹ Jeffrey W. McClurken, *Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 169.

³² *Ibid.*, 170.

³³ Kathleen Gorman, “Confederate Pensions as Southern Social Welfare,” in *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South, 1830-1930*, ed. Elna C. Green (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 31-32.

pensions due to rumors and accusations of adultery or immorality.³⁴ Jeffrey McClurken also points out that the state of Virginia acted as a “surrogate husband” for widows since they did not allow women who remarried to continue to receive pensions under their former husband’s service.³⁵

Few studies of Confederate pensions mention Mississippi at all. James G. Hollandsworth’s *Journal of Mississippi History* article on black pensioners is the only work to date to include details about the Mississippi Confederate pension system. It focuses on black Confederate pensioners and how pension records can illuminate the role of black Confederate noncombatants in the Civil War. While other Confederate states did not give African Americans pensions until the 1920s, Mississippi deemed them worthy of pensions from the very beginning in 1888.³⁶ Elna Green even points out in “Protecting Confederate Soldiers and Mothers,” that Florida used its pension system to uphold white supremacy in the state, since African Americans paid property taxes that would be used to pay pensions to ex-Confederates.³⁷ Yet, Hollandsworth never explains why blacks were worthy of Confederate pensions in Mississippi in 1888, when fusion politics kept African Americans in political office and segregation was just beginning.³⁸

³⁴ Green, “Protecting Confederate Soldiers and Mothers,” 1095.

³⁵ McClurken, *Take Care of the Living*, 150, 153.

³⁶ James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., “Looking for Bob: Black Confederate Pensioners After the Civil War,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, 69, No. 4 (Winter 2007), 307.

³⁷ Green, “Protecting Confederate Soldiers and Mothers,” 1085-86.

³⁸ Revels, “Redeemers, Rednecks, and Racial Integrity,” 618.

Hollandsworth also claims that it was difficult to file a fraudulent claim in Mississippi due to the pension board setup. He argues that since the pension boards were specific to each county, board members, usually veterans themselves, often knew the applicants and their stories. If a potential pensioner was lying or trying to defraud the system, Hollandsworth concluded, the pension board would be aware and deny his or her claim. Kathleen Gorman, however, counters his claim with compelling examples of how the pension boards often had no idea of the history of the applicant. For example, if a pensioner moved from another state, or even another county, as veterans often did when they were no longer able to support themselves, he was not likely to be known in the new county, and it was the discretion of the pension board whether or not to believe his story, which may or may not have documented proof of a man's service. She also points out that the county official handling pensions had a "disproportionate amount of power," meaning a man could be denied approval simply because he was not well liked in the community or did not meet the Lost Cause standards of masculinity and honor.³⁹ This explanation makes much more sense in Mississippi than the theory put forth by Hollandsworth. Correspondence from the pension files of the Mississippi State Auditor will be used as evidence to show how little pension boards really knew about their pensioners.

³⁹ Gorman, "Confederate Pensions as Social Welfare," 30-31.

Hollandsworth also cites a 1922 Mississippi Division United Confederate Veterans (UCV) broadside calling for an investigation into the cases of widows and black pensioners who were not entitled to pension benefits but were drawing them anyway. He dismisses this by arguing that the author “resented the fact that African Americans were eligible for pensions” and had no proof that any of the pensioners were frauds.⁴⁰ This may be so for the African American pensioners, but Hollandsworth never addresses the widows called out in the broadside as well. Did the UCV commander resent the widows too? There were definitely Confederate imposters, as proven by historian William Marvel’s discovery that the last twelve remaining Confederate veterans in the 1950s were all frauds. He argues that most of them probably began their deceit when times were tough during the Great Depression and ended up outliving the real veterans.⁴¹ Unfortunately, the total number of imposters that existed will probably never be known, but claims of fraudulent activity cannot be simply dismissed.

The Beauvoir Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers Home officially opened in 1903 and housed over 1,800 veterans, wives, and widows over the years. Aside from R. B. Rosenberg’s *Living Monuments* and Rusty Williams’s *My Old Confederate Home: A Respectable Place for Civil War Veterans*, no other major monograph has been written regarding Confederate soldiers’ homes. Rosenberg argues that most men who entered Confederate soldiers’ homes were poor

⁴⁰ Hollandsworth, “Looking for Bob,” 312.

⁴¹ William Marvel, “The Great Imposters,” *Blue and Gray*, 8, No. 3 (Feb 1991), 32-33.

before the war and only became poorer after. They were “men who had always lived on the margin, with a bare minimum of land, education, and worldly goods.”⁴² This was not true in Mississippi. Most of the veterans living at Beauvoir were the twentieth century version of the paupers found in antebellum Mississippi. Deemed too worthy for the poorhouse due to their veteran status, Beauvoir veterans and widows were often well educated, literate, and were not necessarily poor prior to their Confederate service. Unfortunately, they were too old and disabled to continue to support themselves. Many lacked children or other family to take them in. Often those who did, were so sick that their children could not take care of them. Many veterans entered the home while seriously ill, not because they were poor and uneducated, but because their families were unable to care for them and Beauvoir had medical facilities to do so adequately. Rosenberg does point out that veterans entering soldiers’ homes later in their lives were often wealthier and well educated.⁴³ Since Beauvoir opened several years later than the other homes Rosenberg studied, it is possible that other Beauvoir veterans fall into this category.

As James Marten explains, it is often difficult to get past the “... UCV halls and the holiday parades and sentimental songs” when examining the Confederate veteran.⁴⁴ It was those men, who left letters, diaries, and other mementos, that are easily discovered when studying the Confederate veteran.

⁴² Rosenberg, *Living Monuments*, 21-22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁴ Marten, *Sing Not War*, 30

This thesis will identify veterans, wives, and widows who are not easily found in the stereotypical images of the Confederate veteran and their families while also studying the evolution of Confederate welfare in the state of Mississippi. This study uses census records, pension applications and rolls, newspaper clippings, destitute lists, Board of Police records, Beauvoir institutional records, and governors' papers to understand better who the recipients of Confederate welfare were and how that Confederate welfare affected their lives. A random sampling of 10 percent of the individuals listed on the Greene County Destitute Lists were used to compile the data on the Greene County veterans and families. Data used for the Beauvoir Veterans' Home residents was compiled by the Beauvoir Veteran Project researchers in the summer of 2016. It includes a random sampling of fifty-six residents that includes data compiled from the Beauvoir register, census records, military records, newspaper articles, and other information about the lives of the Beauvoir veterans and widows.

Chapter 2 of this study will deal with wartime and immediate postwar aid, between 1861 and 1868. It will explain the urgency and challenges faced by the wartime government of Mississippi and its counties to care for the dependents of Confederate soldiers left behind to fend for themselves. Chapter 3 will explain how Mississippi's Confederate pension program was established and carried out over its existence beginning in 1888. It will explain how Confederate camp slaves came to receive pensions "equal" to those of indigent soldiers missing no limbs or widows of Confederate soldiers. Chapter 4 will focus on the Beauvoir

Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers' Home. It will challenge the assumption that soldiers' home inmates were the uneducated, poorest of the poor.

Prior to the Civil War, social welfare in Mississippi was minimal, though it did exist on the county level. The Civil War sparked a social welfare system that ultimately helped thousands of veterans and their dependents and lasted, as a whole, over a hundred years. It is important to understand whom this system helped and why.

CHAPTER II – WARTIME AND IMMEDIATE POSTWAR RELIEF

Half of the time we have not bread to eat every body say I must be taken care of by the Confederate States they did not tell my deare husband that I should beg from door to door when he went to fight for his country; no he sacrificed every thing he had deare to him on Earth for our sake thinking that he left us in a Land of Humanity with out thought or feare give up his life in defense of his country. Kind sir if you can assist me in any thing I will [be] veary thankfull to you.⁴⁵

A little over a year after the war began, Mary Alabama Jones wrote these words to Governor Pettus begging for his help. A desperate widow in a desperate time, Jones has been called a “leading indicator of soldiers’ wives’ politics in the Confederate South,” and the perfect example of the circumstances faced by hundreds of women in Mississippi during and immediately after the Civil War.⁴⁶ Yet, little else is known about her, or any of the wives, widows, and families of Confederate Mississippi, other than the words left behind in correspondence with those who they believed could help them. Who was Mary Alabama Jones? How could she be in such dire circumstances so early in the war? Did the Jones family receive the help they so needed? And, what was the fate of Mary Jones and her children? This chapter will examine and attempt to answer these questions not only for the Jones family, but also for the hundreds of other veterans, wives, and widows who found themselves unable to provide for their families due to the unfortunate circumstances of war.

⁴⁵ Mary A. Jones to Governor J. J. Pettus, 16 April 1862, Series 757: Correspondence and Papers, Governor Pettus, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

⁴⁶ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 143.

United States President Abraham Lincoln declared a blockade of the Southern states almost as soon the war began.⁴⁷ A few months later, its effects were being felt, and the people of Mississippi were “destitute of money” due to the lack of supplies and inability to sell their cotton. One candidate for governor even proclaimed that unless the blockade was lifted, just the taxes the state collected would “produce an amount of suffering and sacrifice of property never before witnessed in this State.”⁴⁸

On August 2 1861, the Legislature passed an act “to extend the powers and to confirm the acts of the Boards of county Police [sic] in certain cases.” This legislation gave each county Board of Police the power to collect a special military relief tax, whose proceeds could be used to supply and equip the county’s soldiers or used to “relieve the wants of destitute needy families and dependents of such volunteers.”⁴⁹ Some counties quickly took action. For example, ten days after the law was passed, the Madison County Board of Police established a Special Military Relief Tax of 50 percent of the 1859 taxes to be paid on or before June 1 of the following year. They also appointed commissioners to oversee the funds and specifically designated the money to companies raised in the county for clothing and other supplies. At the same

⁴⁷Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy: Shortages and Substitutes on the Southern Homefront* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 11-12.

⁴⁸ “Address to the People of Mississippi,” *Weekly Mississippian* (Jackson), 18 September 1861.

⁴⁹ “An Act,” *Weekly Mississippian* (Jackson), 7 August 1861.

time, DeSoto County established its military relief fund specifically for destitute and dependent families of volunteers, not the volunteer companies themselves.⁵⁰

By December, however, the Mississippi Legislature also approved “an act to create a fund for the support of destitute families of Volunteers.” This law placed a tax of 30 percent on the regular state taxes of the previous year for support of the destitute families of state or Confederate soldiers, establishing a Military Relief Fund. The Board of Police of each county would be in charge of providing a current list of all volunteer soldiers to the Auditor of Public Accounts office. Once the military relief tax was collected by each county sheriff and sent to the Auditor’s office, the Auditor would make payments to the county Boards of Police proportional to the number of soldiers from each county for support of their soldiers’ families. The money could either be dispersed directly to indigent families or be used to buy provisions or other “such indispensable articles” that may be needed.⁵¹ The Military Relief Fund should not be confused with the Military Fund that was set up by the Secession Convention in January 1861 to “raise means for defense of the State.” A special tax of 50 percent was levied on

⁵⁰ *Board of Police Minutes, 1858-1868, Desoto County, Mississippi*, abstracted by Mildred M. Scott, indexed by Ozell D. Scott, (Hernando, MS: GSDC Publishing, 1994), 104-5.

⁵¹ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in the City of Jackson, November & December 1861, and January, 1862* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1862), 53.

the regular state tax for use by counties to provide for the troops raised in their area.⁵²

In December 1862, the Auditor's office reported to the Legislature that \$198,985.91 had been collected for the Military Relief Fund with only two counties not included in the total.⁵³ However, counties had been receiving and issuing Military Relief Fund money to destitute families since at least April. For example, the first payments in Desoto County were issued to roughly thirty families on April 7, 1862, the second day of the nearby Battle of Shiloh.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, these funds would not go far enough.

Also, in his address to the state legislature in December 1862, Governor Pettus claimed that the "most pressing want of our people at the present time is a supply of salt."⁵⁵ Almost all of Mississippi's supply of salt was cut off by the blockade. Between the blockade, poor transportation, and speculators and extortionists, salt was nearly unobtainable at times in wartime Mississippi.⁵⁶ During the summer of 1862, Governor Pettus had sent agents to Alabama,

⁵² *Journal of the State Convention and Ordinances and Resolutions Adopted in January 1861, with an Appendix* (Jackson, MS: E. Barksdale, 1861), 126-32.

⁵³ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862 and November Session of 1863* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 16-18.

⁵⁴ *Board of Police Minutes, 1858-1868, Desoto County, Mississippi*, abstracted by Mildred M. Scott, indexed by Ozell D. Scott, (Hernando, MS: GSDC Publishing, 1994), 128-29.

⁵⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862 and November Session of 1863* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

Virginia, and Louisiana to procure. Only the agent to Louisiana was successful, and even he was able to secure only a small quantity.⁵⁷ Counties began to receive their pro rata portion of salt by November 1864.⁵⁸

Therefore, on January 1, 1863, an “act to procure salt for the indigent families of soldiers, and for other purposes” was approved. This law appropriated \$500,000 from the military fund to finance a salt agent for Mississippi. Since salt was nearly impossible to find, the act was amended in December to authorize the agent to “manage and direct the making of salt in this State or elsewhere.” While soldiers’ families received priority in the distribution of salt, the law allowed for surplus salt to be sold to others as needed. As with the Military Relief Fund, each county Board of Police was in charge of distributing the salt procured under this law.⁵⁹

By the spring of 1862, Governor Pettus was already receiving letters from wives and widows across the state, including Mary A. Jones, asking for assistance. Mary Alabama Mead Jones grew up in Blount County, Alabama, the daughter of a local probate judge. Of five children, only three remained under her guardianship in 1862: Isabella (Belle), eleven, Florida (Floyd), nine, and

⁵⁷ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862 and November Session of 1863* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 10-11.

⁵⁸ *Board of Police Minutes, 1858-1868, Desoto County, Mississippi*, abstracted by Mildred M. Scott, indexed by Ozell D. Scott, (Hernando, MS: GSDC Publishing, 1994), 141-42.

⁵⁹ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Called and Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in Jackson and Columbus, Dec. 1862 and Nov. 1863*, (Selma: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 79-81, 163-66.

Henry, six. Her husband, Alfred A. Jones, a Yazoo County overseer, had joined Company K (The Anding Hussars) of Wirt Adams's 1st Mississippi Cavalry, most likely at the company's formation in September 1861. They traveled to Memphis to join the rest of Adams's cavalry that fall and then on to Kentucky for winter outpost duty. Their first major engagement came at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862, but, Jones was not with them. By March, at roughly the age of fifty-two, Alfred Jones had died, leaving Mary in a "sad condition" with three young children to feed and clothe. The exact cause and date of his death remain a mystery.⁶⁰

Mary Jones had already written Governor Pettus begging for help prior to her April 16 letter from Natchez. It is unclear why she was now living in Natchez, though she may have sought assistance from her older daughter and her husband, James and Sarah Jones Brackett, but Governor Pettus instructed her to return home to Yazoo City for help. Alfred Jones's name should have been listed as a soldier on the Yazoo County soldiers list used by the Board of Police to provide aid to the families of soldiers, and Mary Jones should have been able to receive aid under the Military Relief Fund. However, when she arrived in

⁶⁰ Mary A. Jones to Governor Pettus, 6 September 1862, Series 757: Correspondence and Papers, Governor Pettus, MDAH, Jackson; Dunbar Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi 1803-1898* (Jackson, MS: [n.p], 1908; reprint Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Company, 1978), 384-87 (page citations are to the reprint edition); 1860 U.S. census, Yazoo County, Mississippi, population schedule, p. 29, dwelling 276, family 222, A. A. Jones; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016. It should also be noted that Alfred Jones does not show up in any of the unit records for the 1st Mississippi Cavalry and has no Confederate Service Record on file. Therefore, the exact circumstances of his death are unknown.

Yazoo City, W. H. Mangum, the county sheriff, told her that “the law has not allowed anything for soldiers widows.” Since Governor Pettus obviously understood that there should have been money available so it is unclear why Jones was turned away.⁶¹

Still begging for help, she wrote Pettus again in September 1862, again from Natchez. She explained that she had no witness in town to sign an affidavit proving that she was the widow of a Mississippi soldier. She asked Pettus to see Dr. Barnett, the doctor her husband had served under in the 1st Mississippi Cavalry, who had been sent to Jackson to attend to patients in the hospital there, pleading, “. . . you or [sic] all that I can call on for protection[.] I hope you will act a Father’s part towards me.”⁶²

Mary Jones likely died in Natchez in 1864. Two of her children, Isabella and Florida, now war orphans, went to the home of James Brackett, the husband of their older sister, Sarah. Their brother Henry was also living with the family in 1870 and working as a clerk in a store.⁶³

⁶¹ Mary A. Jones to Governor J. J. Pettus, 16 April 1862, Series 757: Correspondence, MDAH, Jackson.

⁶² Mary A. Jones to Governor Pettus, 6 September 1862, Series 757: Correspondence, MDAH, Jackson.

⁶³ Karen Hamilton, “A Journey Through Time,” Rootsweb.com, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=alaskalady&id=I151>; “Mississippi, Confederate Records, 1889-1942.” Images. *FamilySearch*. <http://FamilySearch.org>: 14 June 2016. MDAH, Jackson; 1870 U.S. census, Adams County, Mississippi, population schedule, p. 339, dwelling 4206, family 4206, James W. Brackett; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

Mary Jones's case was not rare in wartime Mississippi. Elizabeth C. Haley of Camden, Mississippi, also wrote to Pettus, "a Gentleman of ... sympathetic feelings," in the summer of 1862. Her husband, Henry, worked as a ginwright building cotton gins for a living, so when he was drafted into the Madison County Militia, it left the family "entirely destitute of means of subsistence." Elizabeth Haley was left at home with seven small children, all girls except one, the oldest only eleven years old. She begged Pettus to send her husband home, explaining that without him, "me & my little ones will be bound to perish." Haley could offer only the "prayers from a distressed wife & mother" to the governor in return for his assistance. While likely not Pettus's doing, Elizabeth Haley got her wish when Henry Haley's entire company was furloughed on October 4, 1862. When the furlough was revoked eight days later and they were ordered to return for muster on October 20, Henry Haley did not rejoin his unit.⁶⁴

While Pettus continued to receive letters from wives and widows from every part of Mississippi, the situation for families on the home front became even more desperate when Mississippi became a focus of Union and Confederate forces. In May 1862, United States troops entered the northeast part of the state, quickly taking Corinth by the end of the month. They destroyed

⁶⁴ Elizabeth C. Haley to Governor Pettus, 15 July 1862, Series 757: Correspondence, MDAH, Jackson; 1860 U.S. census, Madison County, Mississippi, population schedule, p. 113, dwelling 797, family 797, Henry R. Haley; digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 1st Regiment Mississippi Infantry (State Troops) (King's), Henry R. Haley.

mills, factories, railroads, and other means of supplies.⁶⁵ The Legislature had not been scheduled to meet for another two years, but Governor Pettus was compelled to respond to this threat by calling an extra session “for the consideration of matters of vital interest to the safety of the State.” Declaring the previous legislation “wholly inadequate,” even though it had raised a total of \$356,703 for 1862, Pettus acknowledged that the families of soldiers could “justly claim protection and a supply of the necessaries of life from the State.” Between a recent drought and “the necessity of calling more men into the field,” Pettus realized that the number of destitute families in Mississippi would only rise in the coming year. He therefore recommended that “the most liberal provisions be made” for families of soldiers struggling to find food to eat.⁶⁶

The Legislature agreed with the Governor and on January 3, 1863, approved “an act better to provide for the Families of our Soldiers.” This law replaced the 1861 Military Relief Tax while setting up a stronger, but similar, system. Each county Board of Police was still in charge of making a list of soldiers and families as well as distributing funds. The biggest changes in the law dealt with the amount of money appropriated and taxed. A total of \$500,000 was appropriated for destitute veterans, wives, widows, and families, and the

⁶⁵ Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi in the Civil War: The Home Front*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 69-70.

⁶⁶ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862 and November Session of 1863*, (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 10; *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Called and Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in Jackson and Columbus, Dec. 1862 and Nov. 1863*, (Selma: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 117.

Military Relief Tax increased from 30 percent to 50 percent of the regular state tax.⁶⁷

By August of 1864, Mississippi had a new governor, Charles Clark, and \$600,000 in the Military Relief Fund. Clark asked that it be paid out “without delay” arguing that “. . . the enemy, have, in their raids, by destruction of property, theft and devastation, added greatly to the number of destitute. On their retreat they vented their cowardly rage on the non-combatant inhabitants, plundering, burning and destroying their property, even the clothing of the women and children.” He went on to remind the Legislature that “to provide for their material wants is your first duty.”⁶⁸

About eight months earlier, in December 1863, the Mississippi Legislature had passed a joint resolution stating that “the state pledges herself to her soldiers that those dear ones they have left behind them shall not want whilst Mississippi has it in her power to assist them.”⁶⁹ Evidence indicates that Governor Clark and the political leadership of wartime Mississippi did the best they could to adhere to this pledge. Yet, the end of the war still found many soldiers’ families on the home front starving. Elizabeth Williams’s husband John of the 36th Mississippi

⁶⁷ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at a Called and Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in Jackson and Columbus, Dec. 1862 and Nov. 1863*, (Selma, Ala.: Cooper & Kimball, 1864), 68-72.

⁶⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, Called Session at Macon, August 1864*, (Meridian: J. J. Shannon & Co., 1864), 7.

⁶⁹ *Journal of The House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, December Session of 1862, and November Session of 1863* (Jackson, MS: Cooper & Kimball Steam Printers and Binders, 1864), 265.

Regiment made it through the war unscathed, only to die a prisoner of war in 1865 on Ship Island. A neighbor wrote Clark begging for help for Williams and her two children. She was “sick in bed without two days provisions” and about to be evicted. She was a “clever industrious woman,” her neighbor observed, marveling at Williams’s determination to “raise money enough to get to Meridian” where she could find housing with a sister-in-law and seek employment. While Elizabeth Williams’s fate is unknown, existing records indicate that state aid did not initially help her or her children.⁷⁰ Challenges like those faced by Mary Jones and Elizabeth Williams did not end once the war was over.

“To Mississippi, alone, can they look for assistance,” proclaimed Mississippi Governor Benjamin Humphreys in his October 1865 inaugural address. “Justice and gratitude demand,” he argued, that the state help those veterans and families in need.⁷¹ One of the first postwar government sponsored relief measures for Confederate veterans was a short clause written in a bill placing a tax on all cotton sent to market. This clause exempted “all Confederate disabled soldiers or blind persons who were disabled in the late war” from paying these new taxes if they were in the business of selling cotton.⁷² In several additional instances over the next couple of years, the Mississippi Legislature

⁷⁰ J. S. Hart to Unknown, [n.d], Series 768: Correspondence and Papers, Governor Clark, MDAH, Jackson.

⁷¹ “Inaugural Address of Governor Humphreys,” *Weekly Panola Star* (Panola), 10 October 1865.

⁷² “An Act,” *Memphis Daily Appeal* (Memphis), 9 December 1865.

exempted disabled veterans from paying taxes. Sometimes, it was even done on the local level. For example, on March 24, 1866, the Panola County Board of Selectmen exempted Fred Smith, a “crippled Confederate soldier,” from paying street taxes.⁷³ While tax exemption is a far cry from a social welfare program, it demonstrates that state and local governments of Mississippi did have the well-being of their disabled veterans in mind and were acting on these concerns in the immediate postwar period.

By the end of 1865, the state legislature had passed two laws directly relating to the welfare of disabled Confederate veterans and their dependents. The first was an act “to ascertain the names of Maimed, State and Confederate soldiers in this state, requiring Artificial Legs, and for other purposes.”⁷⁴ Each county was asked to complete a roster of all resident veterans, similar to the same lists made for the Military Relief Fund, and to submit it to the Superintendent of Army Records, J. L. Power. The Legislature would then appropriate money to provide those artificial limbs. On October 13, 1866, Power reported to Governor Humphreys that he had received lists from only thirty-six of sixty counties in the state at that time, showing one hundred eighty-eight veterans in need of prosthetic legs. He estimated that it would then be “safe to

⁷³ “Board of Selectmen,” *Weekly Panola Star* (Panola), 31 March 1866.

⁷⁴ “Important to Maimed Soldiers,” *American Citizen* (Canton), 7 December 1865.

presume” that there were at least three hundred maimed veterans across the state who would need artificial legs.⁷⁵

The other law, passed on November 21, 1865, was “an act to provide for the support of wounded and disabled soldiers, and for the support and education of indigent children of deceased soldiers and the relief of indigent families of this State.” Modeled after the Military Relief Fund, it placed 20 percent of the state’s revenue into a fund up to \$60,000 for distribution to veterans and families. Each county’s Board of Police would be in charge of making a list of destitute veterans and families to be submitted to the State Auditor before funds could be distributed.⁷⁶ In April 1866, Humphreys announced that only six counties had sent their lists before the March 1 deadline, which he extended to May 1.⁷⁷ Then, in June 1866, the Jackson *Clarion and Standard* noted that \$60,000 sitting in the State Treasury for the relief of indigent families of deceased or disabled Confederate soldiers could not be disbursed because only twenty-four counties had sent their lists to the State Auditor. Since the other thirty-six Boards of Police neglected to send lists, the money would continue to sit until the legislature amended the law.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi at a Called Session, October 1866* (Jackson, MS: J. J. Shannon & Co, 1866), 130.

⁷⁶ “Public Acts,” *Daily Clarion* (Jackson), 12 December 1865.

⁷⁷ “Executive Office,” *Weekly Clarion* (Jackson), 26 April 1866.

⁷⁸ “Keep It Before The People,” *Clarion and Standard* (Jackson), 10 June 1866.

When the legislature reconvened in October, Humphreys included an entire section regarding disabled soldiers in his opening speech. He recommended that the \$60,000 be used to appoint someone to go to “visit the North-western states” to purchase food and other necessities to be distributed at “depots” in various parts of Mississippi. He also stated that he did not think \$60,000 was enough to meet the needs of veterans and their families. He recommended amending the original act to include 20 percent of the state’s revenue with no maximum amount. Humphreys concluded his speech with a promise that would inspire generosity among his constituents: “My heart’s love is entwined around the brave Confederate soldier by chords that cannot be severed; and I would divide with him the last crumb that belonged to myself.”⁷⁹ It seems, however, that the lawmakers did not entirely agree with the governor, or perhaps they lacked the funds to support his plan. Regardless, they amended the original law to give counties until the 3rd Monday in December to submit a list of destitute families.⁸⁰

Eventually, this money was paid out on the third Monday of May 1867. Those counties not submitting lists by this deadline were barred from receiving any of the money. While it is still not entirely clear why some counties refused to send in their lists, the reasoning may lie in the amount of money they would receive. It had been estimated that each recipient would only receive \$4 each. If

⁷⁹ “Governor’s Message,” *Weekly Clarion* (Jackson), 11 October 1866.

⁸⁰ “The Legislature,” *Woodville Republican* (Woodville, MS), 10 November 1866.

this estimate is accurate, roughly 15,000 disabled veterans, wives, widows, and children in Mississippi were destitute, an average of 246 destitute per county. The Warren County Board of Police turned down its portion of the fund, which totaled only \$171.90, saying “the amount was too trivial to have anything to do with.” Each recipient would receive only fifty cents. That said, other counties, such as Rankin County did return their list and received \$1,387, their share of the fund, and distributed it to the destitute families of their county. At the same time, Adams County received \$740.22. Each recipient received \$3.19, including Mary Jones’s two orphan daughters, Florida and Belle.⁸¹

After this time, relief efforts for disabled soldiers and their families slowly faded away from the public eye. This is not surprising given that Democratic Conservatives in the state legislature were stripped of their political power and Republicans of the state, including blacks, Unionists, and northerners, gained legislative power. It is possible that Confederate veterans were seen as unworthy of support by Reconstruction governments. Aid for Confederates was also seen as disloyal according to northern newspapers. As a Mississippi newspaper editor explained in 1866:

If a southern paper, in an unguarded moment, or in the honest expression of its opinion, lets fall a sentiment that savors of respect to the memory of the lost cause and its thousands of heroes, it is at once caught up and used as evidence that treason still lurks in this latitude, and that the flag and the union are still objects of hate with the mass of the southern people. If a southern legislature enacts

⁸¹ “The Indigent Fund,” *Natchez Democrat* (Natchez), 2 April 1867; “The Treasurer of this county...,” *Vicksburg Herald* (Vicksburg), 1 June 1867; “Indigent Fund of Adams County in Account with Jno. B. Dicks,” *Natchez Bulletin* (Natchez), 14 July 1869.

laws having in view the special relief of the widows and orphans of deceased Confederate soldiers, such action is regarded as a disloyal discrimination and is quoted to prove that we are not yet sufficiently reconstructed to be taken into full union fellowship. If a concert or other entertainment is given, and the proceeds thereof applied to any object that smacks of regard for dead, destitute, or maimed rebels, it is at once noted in their loyal columns with the usual complimentary comments.⁸²

In 1875, a Mississippi Republican newspaper examined certain topics in Mississippi Legislature history, noting that aid for destitute Confederate veterans and their families was discussed. The editor asked, “Would these ‘pensions’ be revived with the accession of the [Democratic] opposition to power?” Also during Reconstruction, Louisiana’s legislature passed a law to create a soldiers home for their destitute Confederate veterans in 1867. However, the home did not become a reality at the time “from a failure to make appropriations for its support by the Radicals.” Clearly the idea of welfare for Confederate veterans in need was not a priority for Republican governments. And so, disabled Confederates, their widows, and orphans were left out in the cold by Mississippi political leaders through the 1870s and much of the 1880s.⁸³

⁸² “Radical Notions of Loyalty,” *Daily Clarion* (Jackson), 13 September 1866.

⁸³ “Scraps of History,” *Daily Mississippi Pilot* (Jackson), 15 October 1875; “Soldier’s Home,” *Vicksburg Herald* (Vicksburg), 14 October 1875.

CHAPTER III – MISSISSIPPI CONFEDERATE PENSIONS

Studies of Civil War pensions tend to focus on Union veterans due to the breadth of the program, but by the turn of the century, southern states were providing veterans and their dependents with financial assistance, the first wide scale social welfare programs enacted in the South. At the same time, studies of Confederate pensions rarely include Mississippi or dig deep enough to really analyze the causes and catalysts for change throughout the life of the program. One historian even concludes that southerners rarely challenged or debated the idea of Confederate pensions before implementing them.⁸⁴ However, a closer look at post-war sources shows that granting of pensions was not a given in the new South, or at least not in Mississippi. Many factors, including politics, social responsibility, and the Lost Cause ideology, contributed to the passage of pension legislation.

As time passed, conditions for white Mississippians improved. Reconstruction ended in 1875, and the Democratic Conservative party was in power in Mississippi. There were 27,000 Confederate veterans and nearly 4,000 Confederate widows still living in Mississippi.⁸⁵ Over 40 percent of them were age fifty-five or over.⁸⁶ Many men, like Simeon Sanders were beginning to

⁸⁴ James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 204-207.

⁸⁵ Department of the Interior, Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890*, (Washington, D.C., 1897), 577.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 579.

feel the effects of wartime wounds that may not have appeared in 1865. Even those who had not been physically wounded began to feel the effects of age, and their strength and ability to earn a living was diminishing. Veterans who could no longer support themselves were often forced to live with their children or other family members and friends, just as the elderly had always done in Mississippi.

By at least 1880, the Mississippi Legislature began discussing the establishment of a Confederate pension program. However, a “depleted treasury, and a cry for ‘retrenchment, reform, and economy” kept the bill from passing. At one point, the pension bill was defeated because it was “loaded with irrelevant amendments” that did not fit the author’s intentions. The topic of pensions for Confederate veterans also emerged often in national politics. According to some newspapers, Union soldiers favored giving pensions to Confederate veterans and General Grant even endorsed it. It is possible that Mississippi, with its state coffers depleted, mistakenly hoped that the United States government would sponsor a bill for its veterans. Mississippi county Boards of Police as well as the Legislature also continued to aid certain individual paupers who were often veterans.⁸⁷

Finally, in 1888, the Legislature was unanimously in favor of a pension bill, the “financial condition of the State being the only bar.” During debate, Senator

⁸⁷ “Disabled Confederates,” *Vicksburg Evening Post* (Vicksburg), 14 January 1886; “The bill of Senator Jackson...,” *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), 2 March 1880; “Washington,” *Vicksburg Evening Post* (Vicksburg), 8 April 1884; “Disabled Confederate Soldiers,” *Vicksburg Evening Post* (Vicksburg), 20 January 1886.

Frank Burkitt, leading Mississippi agrarian and Populist politician, proposed an amendment to also give veterans eighty acres of land, which was eventually struck from the bill. However, African American Senator G. F. Bowles of Natchez offered an amendment also to give pensions to camp servants who were taken to war as slaves by their masters. Bowles, a lawyer and newspaper editor originally born in South Carolina, was considered a moderate Republican. A Democrat newspaper editor characterized Bowles's legislative record as "free from objectional partisanship in matters which concerned the interests of all his constituents and of the State, and partook of impartiality which commended itself to the people of Adams County without regard to race or color." The same editor gave his Democratic Conservative blessing to having Bowles run again on the Republican ticket. The editor was not as kind to H. P. Jacobs. Described by one historian as one of the "most powerful preacher-politicians in the Natchez District," Jacobs attacked Bowles for supporting the pension legislation. The paper chastised Jacobs for the attack, saying local political leaders must "seal his political doom and ostracize him" from the community. The pension bill passed with the servant amendment included.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ "Untitled," *Weekly Democrat (Natchez)*, 1 February 1888; "A Veto," *Vicksburg Evening Post (Vicksburg)*, 24 January 1888; "The Senator and Representatives From Adams," *Weekly Democrat (Natchez)*, 18 January 1888; Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South After the Civil War*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 49, 238; *Journal of The Senate of the State of Mississippi at a Regular Session Thereof, Convened in the City of Jackson, January 3, 1888*. (Jackson, MS: R. H. Henry, 1888), 333; Albert D. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876 – 1825*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 92; Revels, *Redeemers, Rednecks, and Racial Integrity*, 602.

This made Mississippi the first Confederate state to grant pensions to former slaves who went to war with their masters.⁸⁹ In fact, many years passed before other states allowed it. It is also significant to note that for at least the first thirty years of the program, pensions given to former camp slaves were equal to those of both indigent veterans and widows, though the amount for maimed or blind veterans was generally more. The law stated that “such funds appropriated therefor [sic], equally, share and share alike.” As time passed, however, this changed. By the 1930s, camp servants were receiving much less than were Confederate veterans.⁹⁰ It should also be noted that as time passed and the Lost Cause became more entrenched in southern society, bills and amendments calling for the exclusion of black Confederate pensioners from the pension rolls or a reduction in their pension amounts began to be introduced. The debates referenced the “old negro,” the “old Black Mammy,” and the faithful slave, a “class unlike any that we have in active life.” Political addresses in support of black camp servant pensions often received much applause and were considered some of the “best speeches” to come before the Legislature. A Biloxi newspaper captured the racial prejudices of the day, arguing, “To owe a debt to

⁸⁹ James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., “Looking For Bob: Black Confederate Pensioners After The Civil War,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, LXVIX, No. 4 (Winter 2007): 305.

⁹⁰ *Laws of the State of Mississippi Passed at Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in the City of Jackson, Commencing January 7, 1896, and Ending March 24, 1896* (Jackson, MS: Clarion-Ledger Company, 1896), 65; “Funds Are Apportioned,” *Jackson Daily News* (Jackson), 26 October 1910.

an equal is humiliating. To owe a debt to an inferior is infinitely more so.”⁹¹

Evidently, the Mississippi Legislature agreed because the bill did not pass and servants continued to receive their pensions.⁹²

Problems emerged as soon as the first pensions were ready for distribution in early 1889. The legislature had appropriated \$21,000 for the veterans, expecting 700 applicants. Instead, they received and approved 1,000 applicants, and the appropriation had to be divided equally, giving each veteran \$21, much less than expected. The payout was also delayed because many applications were received in “irregular shape” and were returned for corrections. Obviously, veterans’ pensions were desperately needed in Mississippi, as was an efficient system to meet that need.⁹³

State leaders even believed the pension program was important enough to write it in the new 1890 state constitution, making sure that veterans and widows would be provided for.⁹⁴ Significantly, even though the original 1888 law specifically included indigent soldiers, sailors, widows, and servants, African American servants are not included in the 1890 Mississippi Constitution. It should also be noted that absolutely no evidence has been found showing

⁹¹ “State Pensions To War Servants,” *Daily Herald* (Biloxi), 9 February 1904; “House,” *Jackson Daily News* (Jackson), 24 February 1904; “Stand By the Faithful Confederate Servants,” *Natchez Democrat* (Natchez), 16 February 1912; “News of the State,” *Natchez Democrat* (Natchez), 31 March 1906.

⁹² “Mississippi Legislature,” *Daily Herald* (Biloxi), 25 February 1904.

⁹³ “The Confederate Pension Fund,” *Southern Herald* (Liberty), 19 January 1889.

⁹⁴ R. H. Thompson, George G. Dillard, and R. B. Campbell, preps., *The Annotated Code of the General Laws of the State of Mississippi* (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce, 1892), 87.

concern for the relief of black men who served the Confederacy as slaves any time after the war ended in 1865 and prior to the implementation of the pension program in Mississippi.

Pension application, approval, and distribution was carried out by the chancery clerk of each county and by the state auditor.⁹⁵ With each addition of a pensioner to a county's pension roll, the chancery clerk was required to send a copy of the completed application to the state auditor, who would then compile a list of pensioners and send it to the chancery clerk of each county.⁹⁶ The chancery clerk would then look over the list and make any necessary corrections.⁹⁷ On or about the first Monday in November, the state auditor would issue a warrant to each county treasurer via the state treasurer for the amount of pension money each county was to receive.⁹⁸

Following disbursement of funds, the chancery clerk of each county would send a report to the state auditor listing the amount of money paid to each class of pensioners and names of any individuals who did not draw their pensions.⁹⁹ Reports were required to be filed on the first day of October. Then, those who

⁹⁵William Hemingway, *The Annotated Mississippi Code Showing the General Statues in Force August 1, 1917* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1917), 2657.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2657, 2660.

⁹⁷Confederate Pension Rolls, 1889-1935, MDAH.

⁹⁸ Hemingway, 2657.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2658.; Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, Inc., *Pension Record Reports (1902-1942) of Confederate Soldiers and Widows Living in Newton County, Mississippi* (Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, Inc., 2003), Pension Report, 1920.

did not draw their pension would be marked off the official list and money due them returned to the state.¹⁰⁰

Over the years, there were several different classifications of pensioners according to eligibility and amount each could draw. While the qualifications for each classification changed over time, basically any soldier or sailor who served the Confederacy honorably and who could no longer support himself and was a resident of the state would qualify. Widows of veterans who served honorably and who were destitute Mississippi residents could also receive aid.

Veterans were required to prove their service before filling out an application. This became challenging as years dragged on and men's memories faded or widows were asked to recall details about their husband's service. Information required included date and place of enlistment, their regiment and company along with the names of commanding officers, whether they were wounded, how that affected their present day lives, and other personal information.¹⁰¹ While many pensioners were able to give accurate information, others were not. The Lawrence County Chancery Clerk complained to the State Auditor in 1924, "I am not able to get all of the information desired. Most of the applicants are very old, and are to [sic] feeble and forgetful to answer the

¹⁰⁰ Hemingway, 2658-2659.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2659.

questions, accurately. In making the new applications for this year, I did not rely upon their memory. . . .”¹⁰²

A widow, in turn, was required to supply the same type of information about her husband’s military service. Given that many years had passed since the war, widows often did not know the answers to these questions. Some would ask other veterans who served with their husband to write a letter to the county pension board stating that they served with the man in question and that he served honorably. For example, W. C. Summers, on behalf of widow, M. A. Scarborough, submitted such a note regarding Private James Allen Scarborough, with whom he had served in Company A of the 22nd Regiment Mississippi Infantry.¹⁰³ If the widow was unable to locate any of the men who had served with her husband, she could seek help from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in finding the information she needed. Sometimes, even that was not sufficient. In the case of widow, M. A. Lambert of Lawrence County, her brother-in-law and sister-in-law testified before the County Pension Board that their brother did in fact serve in the Confederate Army, even though they could not remember the name of the regiment or company, and her application was then

¹⁰² H. J. Patterson, Chancery Clerk, Monticello, MS, to Hon. Geo. D. Riley, State Auditor, Jackson, MS, 16 September 1924, County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1929.

¹⁰³ County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942. MDAH. Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1917.

approved.¹⁰⁴ Each application was required to be submitted to the County Pension Board on or before the first Monday of September.¹⁰⁵

In addition to filling out an application, an applicant was required to swear under oath, with the actual wording varying from year to year. The following is from 1917:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I was a confederate soldier, sailor, or servant of such confederate soldier or sailor (as the case may be); that I was honorably discharged or paroled, or did not desert from the Confederate service (as the case may be); that I reside in this state; that I am indigent and infirm; that I am not able to earn a support, and have no relatives able whose duty it is to support me; that I nor my wife do not own property, real or personal, to the value of four hundred dollars (\$400.00); that I nor my wife have not conveyed any of my or her property to anyone with a view of drawing a pension, so help me God.”

The oath for widows was similar.¹⁰⁶

Each county set up boards of inquiry, or pension boards, to deny or approved pension applications. The local camp of United Confederate Veterans in each county selected five worthy veterans from their camp to serve on the pension board of their respective county. A veteran would not qualify for the Pension Board if he happened to draw a pension also.¹⁰⁷ Beginning in 1924, county pension board members, were required to swear to an oath as well:

¹⁰⁴ H. J. Patterson, Chancery Clerk, Monticello, MS to Hon. C. C. White, State Auditor, Jackson, MS, 11 September 1929, County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1929.

¹⁰⁵ Hemingway, 2659-2660.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2660.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 2658-59.

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully support the constitution of the United States, and of the State of Mississippi; that I am not disqualified from holding the office of pension commissioner; that I will faithfully discharge my duty as commissioner, and I will not vote to place upon the pension rolls any person unless I am fully convinced that such person is justly entitled to participate in the distribution of the pension fund, so help me God."¹⁰⁸

Each county pension board met on the first Monday of September to review applications. Board members would take into consideration all information provided regarding a soldier's service.¹⁰⁹ As stated above, proof was often difficult to find, especially for widows, even though physical documentation, such as a pay receipt or muster roll, was not required. One widow, A. M. Scarborough of Lawrence County, even had her name dropped from the pension roll by the Pension Board simply because someone on the board heard a rumor that her husband was a deserter. It took a letter written by one of her husband's fellow soldiers and new application before she was able to be put back on the pension rolls a year later.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ "Oath Required to be Taken by County Pension Commissioners Under Chapter 333 Laws of 1924", B. F. Polk, 7 July, 1924. County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1924.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ J. H. Teunisson, Chancery Clerk, Monticello, MS to Hon. Robert E. Wilson, State Auditor, Jackson, MS, 9 October 1916, County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1916.; Auditor P.A. to Mr. T. H. Teunisson, Chancery Clerk, Monticello, MS, 24 November 1916, County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1916.; Betty C. Wilshire, *Mississippi Confederate Pension Applications P-Z*, vol. 3 (Carrollton, MS: Pioneer Publishing Company), 111.

If approved, a pensioner who moved to another county did not need to refile an application. All that was needed was a letter from the chancery clerk of the veteran's original county to be sent to the state auditor.¹¹¹ For example, when Rachel Crawford moved from Lincoln County to Leake County in 1914, the Lincoln County Chancery Clerk, R. W. McNair, notified Hon. D. L. Thompson, State Auditor, of this change.¹¹²

A similar transition was required whenever a veteran entered or was discharged from the Beauvoir Soldiers' Home (discussed in the next chapter). To enter the home, a veteran or widow had to be eligible for a pension, but, once in the home, the pensioner could no longer draw his pension.¹¹³ The Soldiers' Home Superintendent would send a letter to the chancery clerk of the new inmate's (as they were known) county, informing him that the pensioner would no longer be receiving his pension.¹¹⁴ Then, if and when an inmate was discharged, the superintendent would send a discharge letter to both the Chancery Clerk and State Auditor, stating whether or not the inmate was honorably discharged.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Hemingway, 2661.

¹¹² R. W. McNair, Brookhaven, MS to Hon. D. L. Thompson, Auditor, Jackson, MS, 6 July 1914, County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Leake County, 1902-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1914.

¹¹³ Laws of the State of Mississippi, Chapter 25, (1904): 26.

¹¹⁴ Jos. W. Havens, Biloxi, MS to Hon. Eustis McManus, Chancery Clerk, Gulfport, MS, 12 August 1932, Beauvoir Soldiers' Home Records, Beauvoir Collection. Beauvoir, The Jefferson Davis Presidential Library.

¹¹⁵ E. Tartt, Biloxi, MS to Whom It May Concern, 17 January 1931. County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Jefferson Davis County, 1906-1933, Box 3352, Folder 1931.

Once notified of the change, the Chancery Clerk and State Auditor would then put the pensioner back on the pension roll in his county.¹¹⁶

There were times when a pensioner was found to be fraudulently drawing a pension. Since the war had been over for many years and memories were fading with time and age, County Pension Boards had to rely on the testimony of the pensioner and any other witnesses that came forward. While it is impossible to know exactly how many pensioners were fraudulently drawing a pension, some were discovered and were promptly removed from the pension rolls. That said, the only way to discover if a pensioner was a fraud was through word of mouth and testimony. Enough Confederate records were destroyed during and after the war that the lack of a man's name on muster rolls, for example, did not prove a lack of service. Therefore, claims about fraud were often incorrect and unreliable, as in the case of Mrs. Scarborough above. In another case, a former servant was accused of fraudulently drawing a pension: "Charles Fortune a negro who passed the Pension Board at this last Sept, term is not under the law entitled to draw a pension at all, as I have been informed that he ran away from the Confederate Army and joined the Federal army during his services as a soldier....."¹¹⁷ While it is quite possible that Charles Fortune was a deserter, it is

¹¹⁶ D. F. Lambert, Chancery Clerk, Monticello, MS to Hon. Joe S. Price, Jackson, MS, 10 March 1933. County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Lawrence County, 1906-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1933.

¹¹⁷ W. H. Collier, Chancery Clerk, Carthage, MS to Hon. T. M. Henry, Auditor, Jackson, MS, 4 October 1905. County Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH, Leake County, 1902-1933, Box 3356, Folder 1905.

also quite possible that someone else made up the rumor just for spite, given that Mr. Fortune was black. Regardless, Charles Fortune was taken off the pension roll for 1905. However, he filled out a new application in 1906 and was placed back on the pension roll where he remained until 1909. While records are unclear, it is likely Fortune was removed upon his death. Pensioners, black or white, could easily and unfairly be dropped from the pension rolls.¹¹⁸

The pension program grew until the number of veterans in the state began to dwindle, and it was officially repealed in 1992.¹¹⁹ Sim Sanders received his first pension in 1910 and relied on it for 16 years before being sent to the Beauvoir Soldiers Home in Biloxi in early June 1926. Very sick, he languished in the hospital until his death on June 26. Even though more veterans received pensions than lived and died at Beauvoir, the Soldiers Home was an integral part of the social welfare program for Confederate veterans.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Confederate Pension Reports, 1895-1942, MDAH.

¹¹⁹ *Journal of The Senate of the State of Mississippi at a Regular Session Thereof in the City of Jackson Commencing Tuesday, January 7, 1992, Ending Saturday, May 16, 1992.* (Jackson, MS: 1992), 1392.; *Laws of the State of Mississippi*, "Laws Repealed or Amended.", vol. 2 (1992): 4.

¹²⁰ Mississippi Office of the State Auditor – Series 1201: Confederate Pension Applications, 1889-1932, S. T. Sanders, 1910, 1915, 1916, 1922, 1924. Beauvoir Soldiers' Home Resident Roster, Jefferson Davis Presidential Library.

CHAPTER IV – THE BEAUVOIR SOLDIERS' HOME

The Jefferson Davis Beauvoir Memorial Soldiers Home welcomed one, J. R. Climer of Madison County as its first Confederate veteran on December 2, 1903.¹²¹ Climer was one of hundreds of Confederate veterans, wives, and widows who would fill the rooms of Beauvoir over the next fifty-four years. Historian R. B. Rosenberg paints the inmates of Confederate veterans' homes as rough, poor, and uneducated. However, the men and women of Beauvoir do not fit Rosenberg's picture.¹²²

Beauvoir, the last home of Confederate President Jefferson Davis, was sold by his widow, Varina Howell Davis, to the Sons of Confederate Veterans as a memorial to Davis himself and as a home for Confederate veterans, wives, and widows who were no longer able to support themselves and had no one to care for them. Governor Theodore Bilbo once complained that people who had never visited the Home thought it was "a poor house." He explained, "This is a mistake. Every comfort, freedom and liberty is given the inmates of the home." Bilbo was correct. As Superintendent Elnathan Tartt explained to a group of veterans and their wives who did not live at the home, "We furnished [sic] you a home free of charge. Free clothes, free coal, free meals, free laundry, free tobacco and snuff, free medicine, free doctors, free trained nurses, free hospital treatment and...."

¹²¹ Mississippi Division United Daughters of the Confederacy, *Minutes of the 8th Annual Convention*, 69. *Roster of the Jefferson Davis Beauvoir Memorial Soldiers' Home*, Jefferson Davis Presidential Library, Beauvoir.

¹²² The Beauvoir Veteran Project, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, beauvoirveteranproject.org.

we give every inmate \$5 per month spending money.”¹²³ Tartt was correct. From the beginning, trained nurses were available to the Home residents, and ultimately two hospitals were built on the grounds with round-the-clock medical care. Funded mainly by the state, the Beauvoir Soldiers’ Home was the perfect example of Progressive reforms for whites that were happening at the time across the South.¹²⁴

So, who were the veterans, wives and widows of Beauvoir? Were they the same people who were destitute and given Military Relief Funds during the war? Were they the poorest of the poor? Random statistical samples of both destitute lists from Greene County and the Jefferson Davis Beauvoir Soldiers Home roster were used to compare data such as age, occupation, wealth both before and after the war, and whether or not the veteran or widow received a Confederate pension.

Elbert Lewis Ezell was a Greene County veteran who served as a Sergeant in the 36th Alabama Regiment during the war. A farmer and blacksmith by trade, Ezell was in the middle of building his family a home when he was called away to war according to family stories. Ultimately ending up a prisoner of war at Camp Chase, Ohio, after the Battle of Nashville, Ezell came home to his wife and three children. Unlike the other veterans researched, Ezell was slightly

¹²³ “Room for Vets is Open at Beauvoir at Present,” *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), 20 October 1929.

¹²⁴ “Untitled,” *Daily Herald* (Biloxi), 25 January 1904; Nannie Pitts McLemore, “The Progressive Era,” in *A History of Mississippi*, vol. 2, ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore (Hattiesburg: University & College Press of Mississippi, 1973), 30.

more wealthy in 1870 than a decade earlier, the value of his real estate cut in half but the amount of his personal estate increasing \$250. Ezell's life was cut short on April 12, 1886, exactly twenty-five years after Confederates began firing on Fort Sumter and the war began. Ezell walked into his blacksmith shop a few yards from his home and committed suicide with a shotgun. By 1900, his widow, Margaret, seventy-one years old, was listed as a farmer and living with her widowed sister-in-law and two young granddaughters. She applied for a Confederate pension under her husband's name on August 29, 1900, saying she did own property and her own home but was "indigent and unable to earn a livelihood." She was granted the pension but died a few months later on February 23, 1901.¹²⁵

Another Greene County veteran, Samuel J. Smith, was a farmer and well known teacher in the local public schools."¹²⁶ Smith was one of the wealthier individuals profiled who suffered major losses between 1860 and 1870. Smith

¹²⁵ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, 36th Alabama Infantry, Lewis Ezell; "Hart New," Rootsweb.com, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=hkhart12&id=I24106>; 1860 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Stateline, p.23, dwelling 141, family 141, E. L. Ezell, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1870 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Stateline, p.12, dwelling 86, family 92, Lewis Ezel [sic], digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016 ; Fellowship Cemetery (Greene County, Mississippi), Elbert L. Ezell, Find A Grave Memorial #25254766, Findagrave.com; 1900 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Avera, p. 161, dwelling 4, family 4, Margret C. Ezell, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; Mississippi Office of the State Auditor – Series 1201: Confederate Pension Applications, 1889-1932, Margaret C. Ezell, 1900; Fellowship Cemetery (Greene County, Mississippi), Margaret C. Finlay Ezell, Find A Grave Memorial # 66556212, Findagrave.com.

¹²⁶ Dunbar Rowland, *Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi*, 1912, (Nashville: Brandon Printing Co., 1912), 418.

was forty-three years old when the war began, and while the value of his real estate was small, only \$50, most of his wealth, \$2450, was invested in the enslaved woman and two small children he owned.¹²⁷ By 1870, his property value had increased by \$250, yet the loss of his slaves is very evident as his personal property was valued only at \$280, a 77 percent decrease in wealth over the ten year period.¹²⁸ By 1900, Smith was eighty-two years old and a widower living with his son, also a Confederate veteran.¹²⁹ Though holding approximately \$300 worth of property, the elder Smith was granted a Confederate pension.¹³⁰ After 1900, he disappeared from the Greene County pension roll. He likely passed away or moved in with another child another county.

While 70 percent of the veterans sampled from Greene County were dead by the early 1900s, the Beauvoir Soldiers Home was not opened until 1903. The average age of the Greene County destitutes in 1860 was thirty. The average age in 1860 of Beauvoir residents sampled by the Beauvoir Veteran Project was 19 years old for veterans and 10 years old for widows. Beauvoir veterans and

¹²⁷ 1860 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Leakesville, p.11, dwelling 71, family 71, S. J. Smith, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, slave schedule, p.3, S. J. Smith, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹²⁸ 1870 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Stateline, p. 11, dwelling 79, family 85, S. J. Smith, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹²⁹ 1900 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, Beat 3, p. 183, dwelling 84, family 85, S. J. Smith, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹³⁰ Mississippi Office of the State Auditor – Series 1201: Confederate Pension Applications, 1889-1932, Samuel J. Smith, 1900.

widows were younger than the veterans found in Greene County, many of them still living at home with their parents in 1860. In fact, 79 percent of Beauvoir residents were living with their parents in 1860. Only 11 percent were considered head of household, while the other 9 percent were single boarders.¹³¹ For example, John Cochran of Greene County, who was thirty-three years old when he went to war with the 24th Mississippi Infantry, never had a chance to live at the Beauvoir Soldiers Home since he died in 1896.¹³² By contrast, John W. Gammell of Neshoba County was living with his parents in Alabama at the age of sixteen in 1860. He entered Beauvoir with his wife, Nancy, in 1914 at the age of sixty-nine. The Gammells were readmitted in 1917 and remained at the home until Nancy died in 1921 and John in 1926.¹³³ Martha “Mattie” Hamilton Molpus was only ten months old when the census taker recorded her family in Neshoba County in 1860, though not all Beauvoir widows were that young when the war began. She entered the home with her husband, Samuel J. Molpus, twelve years her senior, in 1921 at the age of sixty-one. Sam had enlisted in the 2nd Regiment Mississippi Cavalry late in the war at sixteen years old. He died three

¹³¹ Beauvoir Veteran Project data, as of 24 May 2017.

¹³² 1860 U.S. Census, Greene County, Mississippi, population schedule, McLeod, p.30, dwelling 182, family 182, J. A. Cochran, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 24th Mississippi Infantry, John A. Cochran; “Untitled,” *Democrat Star* (Pascagoula), 18 September 1896.

¹³³ 1860 U. S. Census, Chambers County, Alabama, population schedule, Milltown, p. 86, dwelling 596, family 596, W. A. Gammell, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; Beauvoir Soldiers Home Resident Roster.

years after entering the home and Mattie followed him in death four years later.¹³⁴

The average age of admittance in the Beauvoir sample was seventy-five, meaning that individuals thirty years old in 1860 would have likely been the earliest inmates of the home, turning seventy-five around 1905. Any older veterans were even less likely to have resided at the home since it opened in 1903. For example, A. W. Wray, Sr. was thirty-seven years old when he joined the 54th Alabama Infantry. By 1900, when asked his occupation on his Confederate pension application, he responded, “got none, to[o] old.” Even though he had been wounded in the foot in 1864, he considered it “not bad” at the time of his pension, and instead replied, “old age my trouble.” Wray entered the home at age eighty-two, just six months after it opened, and in “feeble” health. He died just eight months later on January 21, 1905, being one of the first ten residents buried in the Beauvoir Cemetery.¹³⁵

They amount of wealth lost between 1860 and 1870 was also high for Beauvoir veterans. Data compiled for the Greene County veterans also seems

¹³⁴ 1860 U. S. Census, Neshoba County, Mississippi, population schedule, Philadelphia, p. 111, dwelling 722, family 741, Wm. Hamilton, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed July 10, 2016; Beauvoir Soldiers Home Resident Roster; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 2nd Mississippi Cavalry, Samuel Molpus.

¹³⁵ 1860 U. S. Census, Panola County, Mississippi, population schedule, Popes Station, p.29, dwelling 185, family 185, A. W. Wray, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Alabama, 54th Alabama Infantry, A. W. Wray; Mississippi Office of the State Auditor – Series 1201: Confederate Pension Applications, 1889-1932, A. W. Wray, Sr., 1900; Beauvoir Soldiers Home Resident Roster; “Beauvoir,” *Daily Herald* (Biloxi), 25 January 1905.

to show a correlation between wealth lost and pension application. However, due to the fact that 70 percent of the sample was dead by 1900 and very few pension records prior to 1900 exist at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, it is impossible to be sure who received pensions and who did not. The more wealth lost after war, often in the form of slaves, the more likely a veteran or his widow would apply for a pension or seek other forms of aid.

Similar patterns surfaced in other Confederate homes. R. B. Rosenberg found that 52 percent of veterans who resided at the Tennessee Soldiers' Home had estates worth only \$376 or less. However, he also shows that the mean wealth of the Tennessee Soldiers' Home veterans and their families in 1860 was \$3,766 for those veterans admitted between 1890 and 1900. For those veterans admitted between 1901 and 1922, the mean 1860 wealth climbs to \$10,120.¹³⁶ While Beauvoir veteran families were a little more wealthier in 1860, the statistics are similar to those for the Tennessee Soldiers' Home. The average wealth of the Beauvoir Veteran Project sample was \$14,485 and ranged from John D. Cox, a single farmer in Grove Hill, Alabama, who held a personal estate worth only \$200 to Stephen C. Moore, a twenty-one year old single lawyer still living with his family in Monroe County with a combined total wealth of \$91,007, including 171

¹³⁶ Rosenberg, 19, 167.

slaves and real estate owned by his father and brother.¹³⁷ Given that the Beauvoir Soldiers Home did not open until 1903, and given the Tennessee Soldiers Home statistics, it is possible that poor veterans never had the opportunity to live at the home. Yet, Rosenberg's assertion that "many of those who would one day occupy the wards of Confederate soldiers' homes had been poor at the outset of the war," however true for the Tennessee Home, it was definitely not true for the Beauvoir.¹³⁸

So how would a veteran who was relatively wealthy in 1860 end up at a home for "indigents?" Wealthier Mississippians had more to lose when the Civil War began since most of their wealth was in slaves. Beauvoir veterans who lost over 90 percent of their wealth between 1860 and 1870 are common, especially if they were still living at home in 1860. For example, William Handy began his life in ante-bellum Mississippi the son of a Mississippi Supreme Court judge and ardent secessionist.¹³⁹ When the war began in 1861, William was attending the University of Mississippi where he joined Company A of the 11th Mississippi

¹³⁷ Beauvoir Veteran Project; 1860 U. S. Census, Clarke County, Alabama, population schedule, Grove Hill, p.73, dwelling 659, family 732, John D. Cox, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U. S. Census, Monroe County, Mississippi, population schedule, Aberdeen, p.79, dwelling 535, family 535, L. B. Moore, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U. S. Census, Monroe County, Mississippi, slave schedule, p.21, Lucian B. Moore, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U. S. Census, Monroe County, Mississippi, slave schedule, p.81-83, James Moore, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹³⁸ Rosenberg, 20.

¹³⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, Called Session, January 1861* (Jackson, MS: E. Barksdale, 1861), 63-87.

Infantry, the University Greys.¹⁴⁰ Handy's father, Alexander, owned fourteen slaves in 1860, giving him a combined wealth of \$26,500.¹⁴¹ It should be noted that even though William Handy and his four brothers are registered as soldiers on the 1864 Madison County list used to tally all the soldiers in the county for the Commissioner of Indigent Families, no one in the Handy family is shown as destitute on the county destitute list.¹⁴² Also, Alexander Handy served the state of Mississippi as a judge throughout the war.¹⁴³ This could explain how the Handy family, which included William's mother, Susan, a younger brother and four younger sisters, did not fall destitute due to the war.¹⁴⁴

However, by 1870, while Alexander Handy had moved back to his home state of Maryland where he held \$16,000 worth of property, William himself was a life insurance agent, married with one child in Canton, Mississippi, with an

¹⁴⁰ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, 11th Mississippi Infantry, William Handy.

¹⁴¹ 1860 U.S. Census, Madison County, Mississippi, population schedule, Canton, p.2, dwelling 12, family 12, A. H. Handy, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U.S. Census, Madison County, Mississippi, slave schedule, p.389 (stamped), Judge A. H. Handy, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹⁴² "Mississippi, Confederate Records, 1889-1942" Images. *FamilySearch*. <http://FamilySearch.org>: 24 May 2017. MDAH, Jackson.

¹⁴³ James B. Lloyd, *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 217.

¹⁴⁴ 1860 U.S. Census, Madison County, Mississippi, population schedule, A. H. Handy.

estate valued at only \$500.¹⁴⁵ Going by the title of Colonel Handy, though he never attained the rank, he spent the rest of his life selling life insurance, serving in the state legislature, and speaking at Confederate memorial and University events.¹⁴⁶ As he aged, Handy moved around quite a bit.¹⁴⁷ In 1914, he entered the Beauvoir Soldiers Home.¹⁴⁸ It is unclear why his move to the home was necessary, though it should be noted that he had only one son left who was living in Washington, D. C. and working for the Department of the Interior.¹⁴⁹ William Handy was likely no longer able to support himself and without family nearby to care for him. While there, William Handy married Laura Taylor on April 9, 1915, and remained in the home until his death on February 20, 1917.¹⁵⁰

Andrew J. McDonald also lost a tremendous amount of wealth due to the war and emancipation. McDonald was a Baldwin County, Alabama planter in 1860. He has no real estate but \$29,000 in personal property and a total of 25

¹⁴⁵ 1870 U.S. Census, Baltimore County, Maryland, Baltimore, population schedule, p. 29, dwelling 156, family 157, Alex. H. Handy, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1870 U.S. Census, Madison County, MS, Canton, population schedule, p.16, dwelling 100, family 98, Sarah Salmon, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹⁴⁶ "Insure Your Life in the American Life Insurance Co.," *Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, MS), 29 August 1872; "Handy Represents Madison County in Mississippi House," *Weekly Clarion* (Jackson, MS), 4 January 1882; "Colonel Handy Proud of His War Record," *American Citizen* (Canton, MS), 1 October 1881; "The Alumni Banquet," *Clarion* (Jackson, MS), 20 June 1887.

¹⁴⁷ "Col. Wm. Handy," *Clarion* (Jackson, MS), 20 June 1887.

¹⁴⁸ Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers Home Register.

¹⁴⁹ "Colonel Handy Dies," *Jackson Daily News* (Jackson, MS), 21 February 1917.

¹⁵⁰ "Marriage Licenses for the Week," *Gulfport Daily Herald* (Gulfport, MS), 10 April 1915; "Col. Handy Dead," *Gulfport Daily Herald* (Gulfport, MS), 20 February 1917.

slaves.¹⁵¹ By 1870, however, McDonald was living as a farmer in Jefferson County, Mississippi, his personal estate valued at only \$30.¹⁵² Between 1860 and 1870, McDonald lost nearly 100 percent of his wealth, and it seems he never recovered. In 1880, Andrew McDonald and his family were living with his father, and by 1900, with his daughter and son-in-law, also a farmer.¹⁵³ On October 24, 1905, Andrew J. McDonald entered the Beauvoir Soldiers Home. At some point, he was one of many veterans and widows furloughed from the home over the years. No record of his returning exists.¹⁵⁴

The Beauvoir Soldiers' Home was one of the first places in Mississippi for veterans and their wives or widows who were "too old" or feeble to support themselves and had no family to take care of them. Though many, if not most, of the residents had come upon hard times in their old age, they were not the poor, uneducated veterans that Rosenberg and other scholars describe. The Soldiers Home was a home for the sick and dying, but it was also a home for those who could enjoy the final years of their lives.

¹⁵¹ 1860 U.S. Census, Baldwin County, Alabama, population schedule, p.83, dwelling 676, family 541, A. J. McDonald, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016; 1860 U.S. Census, Baldwin County, Alabama, slave schedule, p.41, A. J. McDonald, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed December 31, 2016.

¹⁵² 1870 U.S. Census, Jefferson County, Mississippi, population schedule, Union Church, p. 9, dwelling 64, family 65, A. J. McD, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed June 29, 2016.

¹⁵³ 1880 U.S. Census, Jefferson County, Mississippi, population schedule, Beat 1, p. 28, dwelling 249, family 252, James McDonald, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed June 29, 2016; 1900 U.S. Census, Jefferson County, Mississippi, population schedule, Beat 2, p. 77-78 (stamped), dwelling 56, family 56, C. A. Hendrixon, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed July 1, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Jefferson Davis Memorial Soldiers Home Register, 3.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

The Civil War affected everyone in Mississippi -- rich, poor, black, white, free and enslaved, educated, uneducated, young and old. As historian Joseph Glatthaar has argued, it really was “everyman’s war.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Confederate welfare in Mississippi ultimately became the issue of everyone, addressing the needs of veterans, women, children, and former camp slaves.

Despite the wealth of scholarship on Civil War veterans, it remains largely unknown that Mississippi began providing for destitute families of soldiers early in the war. This support only increased as time passed. However, with more families added to the destitute lists, declining funds in the Mississippi Treasury, and fewer supplies available, it became increasingly difficult to successfully provide for soldiers and their families. Compounding this issue was the fact that former Confederates could not expect assistance from the U. S. government against which they had rebelled for four long and bloody years. As Governor Humphreys reminded his fellow citizens in 1865, “to Mississippi, alone, [could the destitute] look for assistance.” For nearly a century, Mississippi county and state leaders worked to provide for all citizens -- black and white, men and women -- who had served the Confederacy and been left destitute by that service. While

¹⁵⁵ Joseph T. Glatthaar, “Everyman’s War: A Rich and Poor Man’s Fight in Lee’s Army,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Sept 2008), 229-246.

these efforts may not have helped everyone, like Mary A. Jones, undoubtedly it did help some Mississippians.

Also, despite the works of historians, such as James Marten, Confederate pensions were debated in Mississippi following Reconstruction. Though it took some time, a pension program was ultimately developed, and despite flaws and imperfections, it kept hundreds of veterans and widows off the pauper lists and out of the poorhouse. It also put former camp slaves on equal footing with indigent veterans and widows, for at least the first thirty years of its existence. A program that began with an African American politician in 1888 ultimately became an integral part of the Lost Cause, though that was likely never Senator Bowles's intention.

Confederate soldiers' homes have long been seen as homes for the poor and decrepit. Historians have argued that they were miserable places where old soldiers were put on pedestals, more to benefit society than the veterans themselves. In the case of the Beauvoir Soldiers' Home, however, the opposite was true. "Everyman," as long as he was an old soldier, resided at the Beauvoir home, along with wives and widows of all ages, education levels, and antebellum family wealth. While these men and women may have been "living monuments," they were not the poor and neglected monuments described in prior scholarship. There were sick and dying residents at the Mississippi home, but many residents thrived. The home gave all its veterans, wives, and widows the opportunity to enjoy their last days with good clothes, shelter, medical care, and even

entertainment in relative ease, something they may not have had since before the Civil War.

The evolution of Confederate welfare in Mississippi was complex, leaving the state's care of its veterans and their families a vastly understudied subject. Understanding the reasons behind the programs and what their meaning to Mississippi society is important to understanding the impact the Civil War had on the people of Mississippi. It is easy to speculate that thousands of women and children left behind were dying on the home front from lack of food and clothing, but the Military Relief Fund story reveals the toll the war took on the Mississippi home front. It is also easy to attribute the black pensioner program to the Lost Cause but this was not the case. It began because a black politician, G. F. Bowles, used his power as an elected official to gain pensions for former camp slaves on an equal level with white veterans. Only as the influence of the Lost Cause increased did the equality of black pensions decline. And, just as the "rich man's war, poor man's fight" argument has been discredited, so has the argument of only the "poorest of the poor" in Mississippi's Confederate welfare system.

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