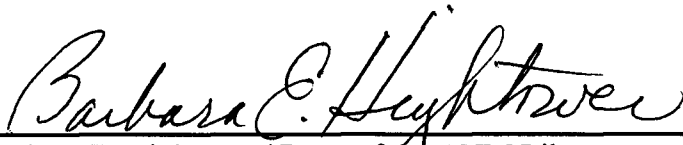



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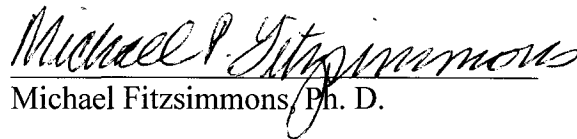
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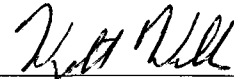
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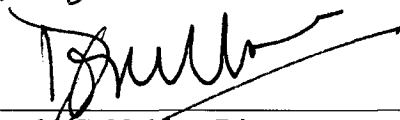
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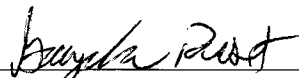


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Graydon Rust

4-8-14

As the Civil War ended, the state governments of the dying Confederacy faced the daunting task of caring for their growing number of disabled veterans. Alabama itself provided 95,000 men to the effort, and an estimated one third returned to the state disabled, many having lost either a limb or their sight, which dimmed their prospects for peacetime prosperity. These veterans, finding themselves on the losing side of the war, could expect no aid from the Federal government, as many northerners still viewed them as traitors. Therefore, Alabama and the other Confederate states had to create their own welfare legislation despite treasuries depleted by the war effort or prioritized for other projects. As a result, the development of welfare programs for Confederate veterans was slow and progressed as the years passed. Beginning during the war as relief for disabled soldiers and destitute families of all soldiers, the post-war relief generally amounted to an effort to assist maimed soldiers by providing them with artificial limbs and basic living expenses. Ultimately, however, this developed into a major program and an annual tax that, curiously, is still collected today. Alabama's Confederate pension system started and evolved not due to any one cause, but instead was the result of a number of influences that includes: an incentive to serve in the army, a deterrent to desertion, a constantly changing number of needy and degree of need, the inclusion of veterans in political leadership and the large voting bloc that veterans and their supporters represented, and, of course, the countless variables involved in running a comprehensive government program.

Despite the importance of pension programs in the culture and economics of the South, they have not received a corresponding amount of attention from historians. Although some scholars have carried out small studies, notably in Georgia, and others

have examined portions of the topic within the context of larger studies, such as Bessie Martin, Malcom C. McMillan, and Walter L. Fleming, there is no comparable compilation for Alabama's Confederate pension system. The pension systems from state to state were very similar and generally followed the same timeline, but each state had a number of differences including eligibility requirements and amounts paid. While Georgia paid the most out to its veterans and, thus, receives the most treatment from scholars, it is necessary to examine each state individually to get a true understanding of not only the variances between each state, but of the history and livelihoods of the veterans within every area. Beyond the South, the area that receives the most attention from historians is the Union pension system, which was not only much larger, but also more coherent and easier to study. James Marten has covered this area most recently and a brief overview is useful in understanding the system as it developed in Alabama.¹

The Federal government, already having an established history of pensions and aware that pension benefits served as an enticement to increase enlistments, quickly extended relief to Union veterans. On July 22, 1861, Congress passed an act declaring that any volunteer wounded or disabled "shall be entitled to the same benefits which have been or may be conferred on persons disabled in the regular service, and the widow, if there be one, and if not, the legal heirs of such as die, or may be killed in service, in addition to all arrears of pay and allowances, shall receive the sum of one hundred

¹ Kathleen Gorman, "Confederate Pensions as Social Welfare," in *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South, 1830-1930*, ed. Elna C. Green (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 25-39; Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops: A Study in Sectionalism*, (New York: AMS Press, 1932 James); Malcom C. McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governor's and Alabama's Wartime Home Front, 1861-1865*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986); Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905); James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union & Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

dollars.” This simple inclusion of new veterans into old laws, however, soon proved inadequate. The unexpectedly high number of casualties in the first year of the war, coupled with the uncertainty and confusion of pension laws enacted in 1813 and 1836 necessitated an updated structure. Thus, Congress passed a second bill, widely known as the General Law, on May 13, 1862, creating a framework that the Federal government followed throughout the war and for decades after.²

The new system, which Secretary of the Interior J.P. Usher cited as “one of the wisest and most munificent enactments of the kind ever adopted by any nation,” included a sliding scale that determined the amount paid based on the volunteer’s injury or condition as determined by a civil surgeon and the veteran’s rank. Privates could receive up to \$8 a month and officers garnered a maximum of \$30 each month for total disability, defined later as the inability to perform manual labor, including labor with the hands and labor requiring bodily exertion or muscular effort. In the case of a volunteer’s death, the government paid the pension meant for the veteran to the veteran’s widow. If no widow existed, any children, mothers, or orphaned sisters dependent on the volunteer for support received the pension. Widows and mothers received the pension until they either remarried or passed away, orphaned sisters until they turned sixteen, and children until they severally turned sixteen. All pensions commenced on the date of death if the claimant filled out an application within a year or on the date of application if more than a year had passed, a rule that proved contentious. As the years went by, rates increased and the conditions that qualified a veteran for funding expanded. This also happened in the former Confederate states, but at a much slower rate. In addition, Union pensions

² John William Oliver, “History of the Civil War Military Pensions, 1861-1885,” in *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin*, No. 844, History Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1917).

were much larger than were those in the South. Marten notes, “By the 1890s, the average northern recipient was receiving \$160 a year, while the average payment to Confederate veterans was \$40.” Moreover, the federal pension rolls eventually contained over 300,000 more men than had even served in the Confederate Army.³

The roots of Alabama’s pension system also developed during the Civil War, but did so haphazardly. With the majority of men gone to serve the war effort, life necessitated that wives manage plantations and farms in a challenging landscape plagued by droughts, inflation, shortages, and uncertainty. Men tried to aid their families in a variety of ways. They wrote letters home with detailed advice on how to run their farms and urged their wives to save food and money. These suggestions surely proved invaluable to many of the wives as they ran their homesteads. Mariah Hindsman Cotton of Coosa County, for example, raised seven children and ran her farm with the help of a slave. She wrote to her husband in August 1862, “. . . do you want me to sell any of you weet for seed or not you rite to me about what to do about it you muct rite mea all the good advice you can for I need advice . . .” Many times, neighbors reached agreements to leave a male behind to care for all of the families. Later in the war, conscription laws allowed an exemption for one white male to remain as an overseer on any plantation that housed more than twenty slaves, but did not allow exemptions to the majority of farms that housed either few or no slaves at all. Some women opted to move in with their parents or other relatives instead of maintaining a farm of their own. Most of these efforts, however, fell short. As war raged, droughts decimated the supply of crops and a

³ J.P. Usher, “Report of the Secretary of the Interior,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 9, 1865, 3; Oliver, “History of the Civil War Military Pensions, 1861-1865,” 5-9; Marten, *Sing Not War*, 16-17.

salt shortage threatened the preservation of meat. Food remained available in south Alabama for much of the war, but a deficient transportation system denied starving families in the north of sustenance. The scarcity of food and other necessities, coupled with the insecurity of Confederate currency, led to inflated prices that further limited the availability of resources to the poor.⁴

Communities attempted to care for their own. Local relief organizations soon developed, church congregations assisted needy members and adopted children orphaned by war, planters sold food below cost or even gave it away, merchants offered credit, and neighbors helped each other frequently. Efforts in the private sector, however, proved inadequate and the state soon addressed the issue. Governor Andrew Moore, in a letter to the Alabama House of Representatives only three days after secession, wrote, “That there will be much suffering and privation, and perhaps starvation . . . unless some provision against these contingencies is made by the Legislature.” Evidence shows that such privation occurred almost immediately. Another letter, from Lieut. Col. J. G. Coltart to Secretary of War Leroy P. Walker described many of his new recruits as “entirely destitute of accouterments and almost of clothing,” and noted that the usual sources of supply “had nothing on hand.”⁵

The deprivation at home led to another, perhaps more pressing, reason to implement public aid: as a deterrent to desertion. Even with the aid provided in future years, the situation on the home front proved costly to the Confederate States. Poverty, in

⁴Leah Rawls Atkins et al., *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 208-209; Lucille Blanche Griffith, *Alabama: Documentary History to 1900* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1972), 431-432.

⁵ Atkins, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, 208-209.

fact, stood as the leading cause of desertion. One newspaper noted, “What brings home half the deserters? It is the cries of mothers, sisters, wives, daughters.” A. S. Abrams likewise wrote: “The other causes which lead to desertion and absenteeism are but small when brought in comparison. . .” Soldiers forced to choose between family and country often chose family and, thus, in an effort to curtail desertions, the state provided aid to indigent families.⁶

In November 1861, with the passage of an act “To provide a Fund for the Aid of Indigent Families of Volunteers absent in the Army,” Alabama imposed a 25 percent special tax on all taxable property within the state to be paid by the county in either dollars or provisions at a fair market price. A “discreet and trustworthy” agent from each election precinct in each county was appointed to compile a list of volunteers serving in the army, the date each volunteer left, his company and regiment, and whether he left a wife, children, parents, or minor siblings dependent upon him for support. The state required the agent to detail the number of dependents, their sex and ages, their condition and situation, and whether they needed public assistance in the way of food and clothing and for how long such aid would be required. Furthermore, the act also included any volunteers discharged with wounds or sickness who, due to such wound or sickness, could not support their family as recipients of aid.⁷

⁶ Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops*, 146.

⁷ Atkins, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, 208-209; A.B. Moore to the Alabama House of Representatives, January 14, 1861 in *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), 4 (1): 51; C. P. Mitchell, “The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865,” Governor’s Records, Military Volunteer Family Assistance Reports, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; *Acts of Alabama* 1861, No. 3.

The portion of this act relating to the inclusion of soldiers regularly discharged constitutes the act as not only welfare for needy families, but also as a pension payment. Similar to the General Law, the act certainly served as a means to entice future volunteers. If a soldier suffered a wound that rendered him incapable of providing for his family, both governments made it known that relief was available. The act, however, distinguished itself from the pension laws created by the Federal government. Perhaps due to the degree of hardships faced by residents of the state, the act focused on caring for all indigent families of soldiers instead of just those wounded in service. Moreover, instead of providing disabled soldiers or families with a monthly stipend based on the degree of disability, the state relied on its county agents to determine the level of need that each family and disabled soldier required and provided provisions or material for clothing based on that need.

To accomplish this, the County Commissioners, often chaired by the Judge of Probate, sent the appointed agents into the election precincts, or beats, to gather the information necessary. The size of the county determined the number of beats; smaller counties ranged from ten to twelve and larger counties contained upwards of twenty-five. Depending on the size and demand of each beat, the commissioners sometimes hired additional agents. To determine the level of need, the agents canvassed their beats to record not only the number of families and the age, sex, and condition of each member, but also whether any family member owned real estate and the amount cultivatable, whether the family owned livestock and their ability to maintain it, and the amount of provisions on hand at the time of the visit. After compiling this information, the agent estimated the amount of appropriation needed to support the family each year for the

duration of the war. The agents then reported their findings to the County Commissioners who assembled and approved the findings before requesting the amount needed. After receiving the appropriation from the state, the commissioners purchased the necessary commodities and delivered them directly to the needy families.⁸

By the end of 1861, the legislature had enacted seven additional laws, excluding those passed to fix salaries of administrators, to improve on the original act. An act passed on November 29 allowed counties to use any surplus and tax money to aid their indigent families and disabled volunteers and a December 7 act exempted all property of volunteers and their widows from the special tax up to \$500 and exempted volunteers from poll taxes. The final five acts all dealt with specific counties, such as authorizing the counties of Talladega, Butler, and Cherokee to levy special taxes of their own, exempting several counties from the special tax by allowing them to pay 25 percent on the state tax, and allowing Choctaw County to make certain appropriations. By allowing counties to levy taxes of their own or to appropriate additional funds, the state enhanced the speed and efficiency of the aid, which was always quicker and more efficient on a local level.⁹

When the Comptroller of Public Accounts received the estimates of funds needed for supplying provisions to indigent families, the estimates far exceeded the amount raised by the 25 percent special tax on property. State taxes amounted to \$788,178.72, appropriating \$197,044.68 to the Fund for the Aid of Indigent Families of Volunteers absent in the Army, of which the comptroller paid \$189,379.00 to the counties. However,

⁸C. P. Mitchell, "The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865," Unit I, Part II; *Acts of Alabama* 1861, No. 3.

⁹C. P. Mitchell, "The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865," Unit I, Part II; *Acts of Alabama* 1861, No. 87, 98, 240, 198, 201, and 99; Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops*, 176.

the total estimates reported amounted to \$568,137.00, nearly triple the amount in the fund. Thus, the Comptroller of Public Accounts paid only one-third of the amount requested to each county. The amount of relief varied greatly from county to county. Winston County, perhaps partially due to their Unionist tendencies, received the least at \$314.33 and Mobile County received the greatest amount at \$41,200.00. As one expects with taxes, some counties paid more than they received while others benefited out of proportion to their populations. For example, while Winston County only received \$314.33, it only paid \$154.77 into the fund. On the other hand, Dallas County paid \$10,600.53 into the fund, but only received \$2532.00 in return. One would expect that the poorer counties, being most in need, would receive the most, but this was not the case. The average amount of aid given per family varied greatly, with Blount and Winston Counties receiving \$4 per family while Dallas County received \$66 per family. Of the counties in the north, all but six fell below the median average of \$19 per family as did the counties in the extreme southeast, usually noted as the poorest. As such, inequitable distribution created discontent in the poorer counties.¹⁰

By paying out only one-third of the requested appropriations, the comptroller left more than \$7,000 in the fund for use the following year. Even with the early start on 1862, the comptroller noted that an estimate of taxes for 1862 would provide the fund with approximately \$185,000. With the increase in the cost of clothing and other provisions, and the rapidly rising number of families dependent on the resources for sustenance, the comptroller noted that the state would need nearly \$1,500,000 to cover

¹⁰ Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1862, 71, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; Desertion of Alabama Troops, 175.

the needs of the families and suggested an amendment to the law.¹¹ The legislature heard the auditor's suggestion and approved a new act on November 12, 1862 repealing the 1861 law and appropriating \$2,000,000 to support indigent families of soldiers. Showing the extent of trust that the comptroller held, the legislation required him to reserve the extra \$500,000 unless the remaining \$1,500,000 proved insufficient. The act called for the comptroller to appropriate the money in three or four installments of \$500,000, depending on the need: the first to happen immediately, the second on the first day of January, the third in May, and the final, if required, in August. Because it would take time to receive new estimates from each of the counties, the comptroller used the previous data already in his possession to make the first appropriation while agents gathered new information, which they would provide in January, April, and June for the remaining installments. With this new information, the comptroller prorated the remaining installments to equalize the amount concerning the number of indigent families held in each county so that the poorest counties received an equitable share. By breaking the appropriation into installments, the state not only reduced the amount of stress placed on the treasury, but also allowed the county beat agents to ascertain the need in their districts on a regular basis instead of attempting to estimate their need for an entire, unpredictable year. The state surely meant these installments, separated by two to four months, to support the indigent families until the legislature could reexamine the issue in the 1863 session.¹²

In addition to repealing the special property tax and defining a payment plan, the new legislation included a number of other changes. It excluded all families of deserters,

¹¹ Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1862, 5-6.

¹² Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1862, 5-6; *Acts of Alabama* 1862, No. 12.

providing an incentive to soldiers to remain in service, and all families of substitutes in the army, who already received additional funds for serving, and included families of volunteers serving in the state militia. Next, the act allowed for any soldier without a family of his own next of kin, but with a father, mother, brother, or sister reliant on his support in any way, to provide the benefits of the act to them. The law also changed the wording of how indigent families would receive support. The first act provided provisions or material for clothing, which this act changed to supplies or provisions when practicable or, failing that, payment of money in part or whole.¹³

Furthermore, the new legislation included a number of sections safeguarding the application of the new funds. The previous act included only one such section, noting that probate judges were liable on their official bond for any misappropriation. This act, however, required each county commissioner to take an oath “to faithfully and impartially discharge the duties herein imposed, to use due diligence to ascertain the actual condition of those who report themselves, or may be reported by others, as indigent . . . and to distribute or expend any money . . . with due regard to economy, and to the ascertained wants of each family.” The law also required county commissioners to report to the governor if, in their opinion, the judge of probate’s bond was delinquent in securing fidelity in the discharge of his duties and therefore liable to be replaced. Moreover, any judge of probate, county commissioner, or agent convicted of employing any funds or articles to his own use “shall be punished as if he had feloniously stolen such funds or articles.” Lastly, the new act obligated the judge of probate to record all proceedings of the court of county commissioners and the names of each indigent family,

¹³ *Acts of Alabama* 1862, No. 12.

the amount paid in money or for the supplies furnished, and the article itself in books open to inspection by the public. In compensation for this, and other new duties, the judge of probate received $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent of the total amount dispersed by them. Neither the comptroller nor the legislation itself cites instances of abuse in the system to justify the safeguards; the state likely issued the new warnings and laws due to the significant increase in funding.¹⁴

The increase in funding proved necessary as the total paid during the fiscal year of 1862 eclipsed even the large estimation of the state comptroller. Of the \$2,000,000 appropriated, the state allocated \$1,943,015.50 for the support of indigent families. In addition, the state also appropriated \$70,238.03 raised by the special property tax prior to the passage of the new act for the support of indigent families (\$62,446.51 in new taxes and the remaining balance of 1861). In total, the state distributed \$2,013,253.53 to needy families and disabled veterans, an increase of more than tenfold over the previous year. The program consumed 51.65 percent of the total budget. To put the total in perspective, the state spent only \$300,000 on the military department, representing the second largest expenditure excluding the repayment of a loan. Furthermore, the amount that each family received also increased greatly, from the median average of \$19 per family in 1862 to an equalized amount of \$62.66 per family, less only than Dallas County's \$66 per the year prior.¹⁵

The legislature passed several other acts in 1862 related to indigent families. Two acts, both passed on November 7, allowed Autauga and Macon Counties to raise special

¹⁴ *Acts of Alabama* 1862, No. 12.

¹⁵ Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1863, 8-9; Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops*, 178.

taxes to support indigent families in their own counties. A third act, passed the following day, allowed all counties to pass special taxes, not exceeding 100 percent of the state tax, for the support of their indigent families. A fourth act (amending the act approved on Dec. 7, 1861) exempted a certain amount of property of volunteers and widows of deceased volunteers from taxation and replaced the word “volunteer” with the word “soldier,” entitling the conscripted to the act. A joint resolution approved on November 14 named a number of appointees in certain counties whose duty it was to receive the funds of the first installment of the appropriation and deliver them to their probate judges for allocation. Another act stands alone in its uniqueness. Approved on November 26, the state allowed the county commissioners of Walker County to hire as many slaves as they deemed proper and to rehire them to responsible parties for notes or bonds with two good securities payable in provisions in 1863. These provisions, paid at a time, place, price, quantity, and kind as agreed upon, were then to be distributed to indigent families in the county. The final act, approved on November 28, allowed Sumter and Walker Counties to borrow up to \$10,000 and levy special taxes to repay the amount borrowed for the relief of indigent families.¹⁶

Even with the massive increase in funding provided in 1862, the state found the support lacking. In a joint resolution during a called session of the legislature approved August 27, 1863, the state recognized that previous acts proved insufficient in achieving their purpose. A number of counties, levied taxes of their own to aid their needy families while others, often housing large numbers of soldiers and being the most in need, remained unable to supply extra funds and their poor suffered. Thus, the ability to support

¹⁶ *Acts of Alabama* 1862, No. 127, No. 141, No. 3, No. 2, Joint Resolution of November 14, No. 160, and No. 178.

indigent families of soldiers and disabled veterans varied in each county. Since “all the soldiers of the State are alike battling for the rights and liberties of the State and Confederacy,” the legislature acknowledged that all soldiers’ families deserve equal consideration and each county should bear equal taxation. In order to accomplish this, the state needed an additional appropriation from the treasury and, therefore, ordered the comptroller to obtain from each county the amount raised and an estimate of the amount needed.¹⁷

While waiting for the comptroller to gather the necessary information, the legislature passed a new appropriation of \$1,000,000 on August 29 to continue the payments of the 1862 appropriation, the last of which the state paid on the first of the same month. This new appropriation was to be paid in three equal installments in October, November, and December under the same provisions of the 1862 appropriation. For the first time, however, the state included the families of deceased soldiers as recipients of aid. The act, like the last, included two safeguards, declaring that any individual found guilty of applying funds or provisions to his own use is guilty of embezzlement and any agent found guilty of willfully failing to apply the funds equally and impartially would be fined \$100 to \$500 and spend not less than six months in the county jail. Finally, if the treasury lacked the funds to carry out the act, the governor was to use treasury notes to fill the deficit.¹⁸

In addition to the new appropriation, on the same day the legislature passed an additional act to supply the soldiers’ families with salt, which was invaluable as a means

¹⁷ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, Joint Resolution of August 27.

¹⁸ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 5.

of preservation before the invention of refrigeration. Before the war began, salt was extremely cheap and found its way to Alabama and other Confederate states from Europe on ships meant to carry cotton on their return voyage. The Union blockade, however, forced each state to find a new supply. Alabama found itself in better shape than most, holding the second largest salt supply of the Confederacy behind Virginia, but production took time and speculators quickly cornered the diminishing supply. Prices soared from 65¢ a bushel in 1860 to \$20 a bushel in 1862, well beyond the reach of indigent families. Governor John Gill Shorter attempted to alleviate the problem by leasing state land to current salt-making companies, signing contracts with companies to bring salt from out of state, making it illegal to send salt out of state, opening salt reservations to all citizens to make their own salt, and eventually entering the state itself into the salt making trade. Even with his effort, however, the salt problem persisted throughout the war, especially in northern Alabama, where neither rail lines nor waterways connected the area to the southern half of the state.¹⁹

The salt that the state did have, however, it gave to the indigent families. The act of August 29, 1863, distributed to the families all of the salt manufactured by the state, by companies leasing state land, or otherwise acquired by the state at a price covering only the cost of manufacturing, transportation, and incidental expenses. Each family was eligible to receive up to twenty-five pounds of salt unless extra salt remained after the initial disbursement, which was then distributed evenly again. The governor, thereby, retained the power to do all things necessary to ensure the correct distribution, including

¹⁹ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 6; McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 48-51.

seizing of works, which he used as a threat to increase the speed of production, though he never utilized it.²⁰

The legislature passed two additional acts during the called session of August 1863. The first, passed on the 27th, allowed Washington County to borrow up to \$10,000 to support its destitute families and to levy a special tax to repay the debt. The second act, passed on August 29, gave counties the right to impress any provisions that were “absolutely necessary” if they were unable to purchase them in order to supply indigent families. When impressing the items, the county was to pay just compensation for the items in the same way that the governor impressed items for the good of public safety.²¹

The regular session soon followed with a flurry of new laws. In November 1863, the legislature allowed Baldwin County to use \$4000 from the county treasury, Macon County to levy a tax on the producers of corn, meat, and potatoes to use for indigent families, Clarke County to establish a salt works to provide salt for its indigent families, Dale County to pay, levying a tax if necessary, Dr. James Bottoms for treating families with smallpox, and Pike County to levy a tax on all articles, commodities, incomes, etc. of any person producing more than 400 bushels of corn to support their needy families of soldiers. The state also repealed the 1861 act allowing Cherokee County to levy a special tax for the support of their destitute families. Lastly, the state amended the \$1,000,000 appropriation approved in August. By now, the comptroller had paid the first of three installments, with the remaining scheduled for November and December. With this new amendment, however, the state combined the remaining payments and asked the

²⁰ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 6.

²¹ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 45 and No. 21.

comptroller to send the appropriation to the probate judges when applicable. This amendment shows that even though the state both continually enlarged the size of payments and decreased the amount of time between payments, it still could not estimate and account for the actual need of its indigent families.²²

As one would expect, new appropriations soon followed. On December 8, 1863, the legislature allocated \$3,000,000 towards the support of indigent families of soldiers within the state. The act followed the same procedures of the August appropriation of \$1,000,000 and included the same safeguards. The main difference, however, is that, for the first time, the state allowed families of substitutes to receive the aid, provided that the substitute did not earn more than \$1,500 to become a soldier. This new appropriation was to be paid in three installments, in January, May, and October. In addition to the \$3,000,000, the state also appropriated \$500,000 to persons “rendered destitute by the seizure, waste or destruction of their means of subsistence by the public enemy.” While the relief was not limited to families of soldiers, the act excluded any individual who voluntarily took an oath of allegiance to the government of the United States, was disloyal to the Confederate government, deserted from the Confederate army, or harbored any deserters from said army. With these limitations, the majority of the recipients were certainly the same as those eligible for relief under the indigent family laws and the laws served the same purpose—both to support the citizens at home while dissuading soldiers from deserting. Furthermore, the distribution of the aid followed the same procedure and went through the same officials as the indigent family payments. The only difference in the procedure was that once the comptroller obtained the amount needed from each

²² *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 148, No. 149, No. 221, No. 233, No. 232, No. 95, and No. 150.

county, he reported these numbers to the governor, who then decided how much each county received.²³

In addition to the \$3,500,000 appropriated already, the legislature approved a number of other acts that appropriated funds or provisions to the support of destitute soldiers' families. The first of these provided indigent families with cotton yarn and more salt. The state allowed each county to engage in the manufacture of salt by buying or leasing furnaces and land, employing agents and hired hands, buying or hiring wagons and teams, and making any necessary contracts. After doing so, the counties were to furnish the salt to indigent families at a price not exceeding the cost of manufacture and delivery. If the counties leased state land to manufacture the salt, the state waived all tolls and any county able to manufacture a surplus of salt was allowed to sell it at market price, but would not receive the state appropriation of salt. The same act permitted counties to buy cotton yarn for its families and furnish it at a price not exceeding cost and delivery. In addition, the state authorized the allocation of any unexpended funds originally appropriated for military or hospital purposes to be used for the purpose of meeting appropriations for the indigent families of soldiers until otherwise provided by law. The legislature also required counties to pay for any medicines furnished to members of the destitute families of soldiers out of the county treasury, as long as the physician provided evidence that the price charged did not exceed the fair market price or usual charge for the prescription. Lastly, the state hired an agent to settle and adjust the accounts of all deceased soldiers and to transmit the sums to the soldiers' families, who were legally entitled to the funds. While these funds were neither a form of welfare nor a

²³ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 94, and No. 101.

pension, but instead just the payment of a contract to legal parties, it did give indigent families much-needed money at a dire time and saved them the difficulties and fees involved in settling the accounts.²⁴

Although the legislature appropriated more than \$4,000,000 in 1863, only slightly more than \$1,000,000 ever made its way to the indigent families. In his 1863 annual report, prior to these appropriations, the comptroller noted that a balance of \$4,889,286.25 of outstanding appropriations existed because the legislature had failed to make provisions for raising funds. Although this did not affect the indigent family relief in the 1863 fiscal year, it must have had an effect in 1864, when the appropriations of 1863 came due. Of the \$3,000,000 meant to be allocated towards the support of indigent families of soldiers in 1864 (\$1,000,000 appropriated in August 1863 and the first two installments of the \$3,000,000 appropriated in December 1863), the state distributed only \$1,068,953.30 according to the comptroller's annual report. In addition, of the \$500,000 appropriated to support destitute families in counties overrun by the Union troops, the state distributed only \$35,110. Between the two, the state distributed only 32 percent of the total appropriations. Even with an appropriation of only one third of the amount, however, the total allocation for indigent families represented 22 percent of the total distribution budget for 1864, a significant decrease from the 52 percent that indigent families represented in 1863. With the remainder of the funds allocated, however, the percentage would have totaled 47 percent (minus any other appropriations not funded), showing that the legislature attempted to allocate a similar amount of funding as the prior year, though slightly less, for indigent families. Unfortunately, neither the annual report

²⁴ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 97, No. 100, No. 99, No. 100.

of the comptroller nor the annual report of the quartermaster general for 1864 mention a reason for the funding cuts, though the quarterly reports of the quartermaster general noted that the department disbursed \$856,835.50 of the \$1,000,000 appropriated in August and only \$253,677.50 of the first two installments of the \$3,000,000 appropriated in December. Even stranger still, after disbursing all of the funds, a balance of \$3,713,715.31 remained in the treasury, an amount capable of covering the remainder of the appropriations not dispersed and significantly larger than the \$2,414,551.86 left in 1863. Regardless of the reason, each county received nearly half of the total allocated the year prior. Thus, while the number of families eligible for the aid surely rose as the army required more soldiers and the state included all destitute families from overrun counties in the relief, the amount of aid dispersed to each family decreased drastically.²⁵

The legislature passed three other laws during the regular session that did not include appropriations of funds or items. The first of these limited agents to no more than 1 percent of the amount distributed, an increase from the ½ of 1 percent originally allowed. The second relieved any county overrun by the Union army from paying state taxes for that year. Since the beginning of the war, the comptroller noted that tax collection in border counties proved difficult and this law served as a logical act legally allowing the counties not to burden themselves and their citizens with tax collection. The final act passed redefined the office of the quartermaster general. With respect to indigent

²⁵ Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1863, 4; Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Reports 1864, 6-25; Quartermaster General's Report 1864, Administrative Files of the Governor, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; C. P. Mitchell, "The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865," Unit II Part I, 24-26. It should be noted that the total disbursed according to quarterly reports of the quartermaster general does not match the total recorded in the annual report of the comptroller, but adds to \$1,110,513.

family laws, the state charged the quartermaster general with the distribution of all salt manufactured in or purchased by the state for the use of citizens and control of all matters connected to the support of indigent families of soldiers. As part of overseeing both salt production and indigent family reports, the quartermaster general was to account for all receipts and disbursements and submit a complete report of the department to the governor on November 1 each year.²⁶

Despite not being able to pay the full appropriation of the 1863 laws, the legislature began the session of 1864 with a new appropriation of \$2,000,000, passed October 7. The act included only one payment, distributed in November. Like the appropriation of 1863, this law included substitutes in the relief, but included all substitutes instead of only those making less than \$1,500 to serve. Furthermore, finally heeding the comptroller's words of advice in his 1863 annual report, the legislature included a means of funding the appropriation. In order to offset any deficiency in the treasury, the act granted the governor authorization to sell both 20-year state bonds bearing 6 percent interest annually and 20-year state treasury notes bearing not more than 5 percent interest annually, with the interest payable in either Confederate or state treasury notes until twelve months after any peace treaty between the Confederate States and the United States. The law carried the same safeguards as previous laws, but added that any person convicted of altering or forging a note or bond was guilty of forgery in the first degree. Furthermore, to pay the expenses of issuing the state bonds and treasury notes, the legislature appropriated \$100,000 to the governor for use if necessary.²⁷

²⁶ *Acts of Alabama* 1863, No. 103.

²⁷ *Acts of Alabama* 1864, No. 2.

Displaying the intensity of the war in its final year, the legislature passed eleven separate acts in 1864 appointing new officers in certain counties to receive either the funds appropriated for indigent families or the quartermaster general's warrants in place of the probate judge. Many of these counties were located in northern Alabama—such as Jackson, Franklin, Marion, Lawrence—where continual guerilla warfare raged for years and raids by federal troops were becoming more and more common, while others—such as Clarke and Dale Counties—were elsewhere in the state. The legislature passed two other laws similar to these that are unique. The first, passed on behalf of Lawrence county, appropriated \$6,887.50 to reimburse the county for funds stolen by Union troops, stating:

“Whereas, about the 19th August, 1864, Federal soldiers under command of Col. Prosser, U.S.A., raided out from Decatur, in Morgan county, to Moulton, the seat of Lawrence county, broke open the office of Charles Gibson, judge of probate, scattered and destroyed the papers belonging to the office, found where he had concealed three thousand dollars of the funds belonging to the indigent families of soldiers in said county, and carried the same away . . . and whereas, about the 16th September, 1864, N.C. Alman, while on his return trip from Montgomery to Moulton, with the balance of funds due soldiers' families for the second quarterly installment, was attacked and robbed of thirty-eight hundred and eighty-seven dollars and fifty cents.”

The second act, passed five days after the reimbursement of Lawrence County, authorized Representative W.H. Robinson and Senator Francisco Rice of Jackson County to proceed either together or separately from Montgomery to their county. Once in Jackson County, which now stood behind enemy lines, the representatives were to meet with the judge of probate, collect the “considerable sum of money” meant for indigent families of soldiers, and select up to three “competent person or persons” to transport the

money past the points of danger and to safety. For their efforts, these men would earn \$10 per day plus expenses.²⁸

In addition to finding new means of distribution in war-torn counties, the legislature also appropriated additional funding specifically for these counties. Approved on December 9, the state allocated \$185,000—\$75,000 to Cherokee, \$30,000 each to DeKalb and Morgan, \$20,000 to Marshall, and \$15,000 each to St. Clair and Blount— noting that the seizure, destruction, and waste of the subsistence of these people by the Confederate and Federal armies made starvation imminent. This money, meant for all destitute people and not just families of indigent soldiers, was to be deducted from the remainder of the act passed in 1863 meant to provide relief for persons rendered destitute by the public enemy. Each county agent, after receiving the funds provided, was to invest the money in the purchase and transportation of articles of subsistence which were then to be distributed by the court of county commissioners in a manner it saw best. Of course, just as with the original act for those rendered destitute by the public enemy, only individuals loyal to the Confederate States who had resided in Alabama since May 1861 were eligible. In addition to the appropriation for war-torn counties, the legislature passed two other county-specific acts, authorizing Autauga County to use surplus money to support indigent families and Pike County to levy a tax of up to 10 percent on corn, meat, potatoes, and sorghum syrup to use for the benefit of soldiers' families.²⁹

²⁸ *Acts of Alabama* 1864, No. 28, 29, 30, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 166, 197, 185, and 212; C. P. Mitchell, "The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865," Unit I, Part II.

²⁹ *Acts of Alabama* 1864, No. 155, No. 170, and No. 199.

The state also equalized the distribution and price of salt for indigent families in 1864, allocating it to each county based on the number of families in the county and having the quartermaster general fix the price each fiscal quarter based on estimates of production, sacking, transportation, and other expenses. In addition, the legislature repealed the act of 1863 authorizing counties to pay for any medicine given to indigent families, with no reason given. Still, the most troubling problem remained in the northern counties. On December 9, Governor Thomas Watts wrote to General Richard Taylor asking him to remove his food-consuming cavalry from the struggling counties, saying, "The cries of starving people are coming up to me almost every day from that section." The issue was not the procurement of corn, which was plentiful in central and southern Alabama, but distributing it to needy areas that lacked rail and waterways. Governor Watts wrote in March 1864 that Ex-Governor Moore, who continued using his experience to purchase grain, had purchased "some one hundred and odd thousand bushels of corn." Much has been written about "corn women," who travelled from northern regions to the black belt, returning with corn carried on their backs, but they represented a problem more than a solution. Thus, the legislature approved an act on December 13, requiring the probate judges to order sheriffs in the county, when necessary, to employ wagons, teams, and drivers to transport articles of subsistence, provided that the county pay the sheriff and drivers for their expenses. The legislature did not make a direct appropriation for this cause, but Watts directed state funds for this use. In addition, the state enacted a Joint Resolution promising to negotiate with the Confederate Government over the corn tithe, which required each county to supply a percentage of their corn to the government, to procure corn out of the richer counties

close to railways instead of from needy counties and to sell any surplus to indigent families at cost.³⁰

The last two acts passed in 1864 included a new appropriation of \$3,000,000, bringing the total appropriations of 1864 to \$5,000,000, excluding the \$185,000 appropriated specifically for the northern counties out of funds allocated in the prior year and the funds allocated to individual counties. Approved on December 13, the state was to distribute the new allocation in the months of March and September 1865 under the same procedure as earlier acts, but cited specifically that mothers, daughters, and sisters of soldiers who could prove a pursuance of a reputable livelihood but were unable to support themselves were to be included in the aid. The act included the usual safeguards, but increased the fine for misappropriation, ordered the sheriff and circuit clerks to examine the vouchers and books, and included penalties for probate judges if they refused to carry out the act or obstructed it. The act also allowed families who moved from one county to another to continue receiving what they would have been due if they remained in the original county, a logical solution for refugees forced to move by destruction from armies or roving bands of deserters and criminals. Finally, the act allowed counties to hire agents to procure corn outside of county lines, returned control of distribution from the quartermaster general back to the state comptroller, and required counties to verify that families executed their due diligence in attempting to support

³⁰ *Acts of Alabama* 1864, No. 6 and No. 102; McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 92-93; *Acts of Alabama* 1864, Joint Resolution of October 7.

themselves. The final act passed required probate judges to report to the comptroller every six months with an enumeration of all indigent families in their counties.³¹

While the state appropriated \$5,000,000 to the support of its indigent families of soldiers in 1864, a continued increase over previous years, \$4,500,000 (\$1,000,000 carried over from 1863, \$2,000,000 appropriation, and first of two installments of \$3,000,000 appropriation) of the appropriations were due before April, when the war ended. Aside from the soldiers' families, the state also disbursed \$129,890 of the \$185,000 allocated to the destitute counties in the north—\$114,890 to Cherokee County and \$15,000 to Blount County. Of the \$4,500,000, the state allocated only \$746,951.50 towards the relief of indigent families. In addition, the state distributed \$640,169.68 under the title of "Quartermaster's Department," excluding warrants for salt, pay, and ordnance. Since the quartermaster general retained control of the indigent relief until December 1864, the \$2,000,000 appropriation scheduled for November, 1864, could be included in this line. Unfortunately, since the quartermaster general's annual report was not due until November, a further breakdown of this line does not exist. Even combined, the total disbursements represent only a fraction of the total appropriations, even excluding those due after the war ended. Of the \$4,500,000 appropriated, the state only allocated between 21-40 percent. The \$746,951.50 represented only 11 percent of the total treasury disbursements up to May 24, 1865, when the final warrant prior to the provisional government was drawn. Including the total amount under the quartermaster's department, which certainly would not all have been indigent family funds, the percentage rises to 21 percent, similar to the 22 percent of the budget allocated in 1864.

³¹ *Acts of Alabama* 1864, No. 67 and No. 68.

One can, therefore, determine that the percentage allocated decreased from the prior year, but not by how much.³²

To make matters worse, the measures taken by the state to fund the appropriations had negative effects of their own. While the state increased taxes and attempted to sell bonds to cover the costs of support, most of the funding came from issuing treasury notes, which began as early as 1862. These treasury notes, however, fed inflation, so that by the time the families received the funds, the notes were worth much less than when the state first appropriated them. This is why the legislature made such an effort to supply families with provisions first, and only with funds as a last resort. Supplying provisions, though, meant a new set of problems, including the issue of transportation and of purchasing supplies from manufacturers. The “one hundred and odd thousand bushels of corn” that Ex-Governor Moore purchased in 1864, for instance, created a problem “because most of the planters would not take anything but the new issue of currency in payment.” Furthermore, the number of individuals receiving support continued to rise, with estimates as high as one fourth of the white population, not including soldiers, receiving support. In Talladega County, for example, with a white population of 14,634 (including soldiers), thirty individuals received state aid in May 1861. By April 1864, however, 3,799 individuals received aid. In Randolph County, 1,600 soldiers’ families and 8,000 people, representing one third of the population, received support. These numbers certainly increased further by 1865. Thus, while the state continued to increase the funding allocated to support indigent families of soldiers each year, the rising number

³² Comptroller of Public Accounts, Annual Report 1865, 10-21.

of destitute families coupled with inflation resulted in each county, and, therefore, each family and individual receiving less aid as the years, and need for support, progressed.³³

Evidence supports these facts fuller when looking at the total amount of relief given over the life of the indigent family laws. While full records are no longer available, what remains tells the story. In 1861-1862, fifty-two reporting counties asked for a total of \$841,654.49 to support their needy, which amounted to 8,156 families and 29,040 individuals. In 1864, with the final appropriation, forty-six reporting counties asked for \$8,050,973.00, an increase of nearly tenfold with six fewer counties reporting. These counties reported 32,308 families and 121,140 individuals. Therefore, while both the number of families and number of individuals increased by a multiplier of four, the amount of funding needed increased by at least a factor of ten. This shows that in addition to there being more families and individuals to support, these individuals also either needed more support or that inflation increased the amount of money needed to support them, both of which are likely true.³⁴

Finally, as is often the case with government-sponsored programs, complaints of inefficiency and unfairness on the part of various officers charged with administering the act persisted. Accusers claimed that probate judges failed to buy corn at the earliest and cheapest prices, that state agents speculated in salt, that Tory judges allocated aid to families of deserters and Union soldiers, and that officers sometimes misunderstood the laws, depriving deserving families of aid. It is likely that many or all of these charges had

³³ McMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 44, and 92; Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 201.

³⁴ C. P. Mitchell, "The Support of Indigent Families of Alabama Soldiers Serving C.S.A., 1861-1865," Unit II, Part II, 2.

merit. Salt speculation, for instance, was rampant during the war. During the early months of Governor Watts's administration, a salt agent in Gadsden, R. B. Kyle, wrote the governor to notify him that speculators in the area assembled their stock from state salt sacks. Watts quickly moved to end the problem by issuing an order that any sack of salt signified marked with the Alabama insignia belonged to the state and should be seized. In one instance, two separate causes of inefficiency came to a head, when a roaming band of men once connected with the Confederate cavalry murdered the probate judge of Winston County, T.P. Curtis, for allegedly giving supplies to families of Union soldiers. After kidnapping the judge, the band forced their way into the county's supply of salt for the indigent families, which they then sold. In the end, the state appropriated more than \$11,000,000, excluding those funds raised by individual counties, for the support of its indigent families of soldiers, but due to an assortment of inefficiencies, unchecked inflation, and a rapid rise in both the number of indigent families and the hardships of each family, the state never succeeded in removing said families from destitution; and, thus probably never significantly curtailed desertion of troops from the army.³⁵

After the war ended, Alabama's veterans returned home cloaked in heroism and revered by the citizenry for standing up for their state's cause. The veterans found themselves in prime position to attain political office, and many of them did. It was on the backs of these newly-elected veterans in the legislature, and the overwhelming support they received from the public, that the state was able to pass its first act for the relief of maimed soldiers on February 19, 1867, only ten days before the approval of the

³⁵ Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops*, 185-186; MacMillan, *Disintegration of a Confederate State*, 94-95.

Congressional Reconstruction Act that placed Alabama under military rule. The law appropriated \$30,000, half in the form of state bonds, to provide artificial legs for any man in need of one, provided that the mutilation occurred while serving in the military of Alabama or any of the Confederate states. Governor Robert Patton soon contracted with Strasser & Callahan of Montgomery to manufacture the limbs, which cost the state fifty dollars for a limb amputated below the knee, and seventy dollars for a limb amputated above the knee. An individual maimed to the point that a limb would not provide relief received one hundred dollars in lieu of the limb. The law was relatively simple and so was the process of application. To receive a limb, the disabled had only to furnish a sworn statement to his probate judge. In this statement, he had to indicate his age; place of residence; company and regiment in which he served; when, where, and how he was wounded; the name of the surgeon that amputated his foot or leg; and proof that he was a resident of the county and intended to remain there indefinitely. The applicant then filled out a form of measurements for the contractor, who would create and send the limb to a central place for pickup by the applicant.³⁶

This first law gave relief only to a very specific group of soldiers, those who had lost a leg or foot. This is likely due to the outlook that many southerners held towards welfare programs. Deeply engrained in the southern attitude was a sense of honor, dignity, and independence. These feelings stood in opposition to any sort of relief program, especially one of direct payments similar to the one adopted by the Federal government for its soldiers. One veteran explained, “to beg we are ashamed, to except

³⁶ William W. White, *The Confederate Veteran*, (Tuscaloosa: Confederate Publishing Company, 1962), 72; Clyde E. Wilson, “Report on Artificial Limbs,” 4 November 1937, State Auditor, Confederate Pensioners’ Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; *Acts of Alabama*, 1866-1867, No. 643.

[sic] the charity of friends in case we have them, is humiliating.” Nonetheless, the veterans were in need of aid and this law may have found the middle ground. By providing the maimed with limbs, the act could be seen not as charity, but as an attempt to eliminate the disadvantage that the maimed received while serving the state. Thus, those that accepted the aid could still earn a living and continue to be self-sufficient instead of dependent on the government. In fact, while the legislature allowed for the payment of one hundred dollars to any man too maimed for an artificial limb to be of use, the government did not have any takers. The only soldier to receive one hundred dollars worth of aid between 1867 and 1876 was Private John J. Lyons, a resident of Eufala who served in Company B of the 10th Georgia Regiment, and he did so because he lost both of his legs during the Battle of the Seven Days and received two artificial limbs, which cost the state \$50 each.³⁷

It was not long, however, before the state’s relief program found itself at a standstill. Only a year after the state began to distribute aid to its disabled veterans, Reconstruction laws excluded the former soldiers and their supporters from public office as Republicans dominated politics. Consequently, the relief provided by the state waned through Alabama’s Reconstruction years. While 218 men received limbs in 1867, the number dropped to twelve in 1868, followed by zero for the next three years. It was not until 1872 that the legislature resumed the allocation of aid. With the election of 1870, Democrats regained a majority in the state House of Representatives, but still faced a Republican super-majority in the Senate. How the Democrats were able to push the act

³⁷ R. B. Rosenburg, *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers’ Homes in the New South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 14, 31; Wilson, “Report on Artificial Limbs”; Auditor’s Files, “Application for Artificial Limb,” Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

through the Senate remains unclear (perhaps deals were made with certain Republican factions), but the act passed nonetheless. Due to military Reconstruction beginning shortly after the passage of the first act in 1867, \$15,560 of the \$30,000 allocated still remained in the treasury in 1872. Thus, the legislature passed an act to allow the remaining funds to be used in the same manner as the first. The legislators also recognized that after years of use, a number of the original limbs had worn out and needed replacing. As such, applicants could reapply for replacement limbs.³⁸

Beginning in 1874, the Democrats gained complete control over state politics and the relief of Confederate veterans was able to continue uninterrupted. Veterans were also able to retake their positions as public officials. Historian William W. White argues that the years 1877 to 1900 were the “Confederate Veteran Era” in southern politics with veterans holding the majority of the best offices. That era began even sooner in Alabama. White also notes that the veteran vote itself was important in the shaping of southern politics, not just because of the large number of ballots that the veterans themselves represented, but also because of the influence they had on their families and admirers. Accordingly, in order to receive the support of this vast voting bloc, politicians, both veterans and non-veterans alike, needed to make concessions to veterans, which they gave in the form of aid.³⁹

The concessions showed themselves again in 1875 as the original funds were still yet to be distributed and the legislature passed an additional act to continue their allocation. Also in 1875, Governor George Houston contracted with a second limb

³⁸ Wilson, “Report on Artificial Limbs”; Sarah W. Wiggins, *The Scalawag in Alabama Politics: 1865-1881*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 66-67; *Acts of Alabama*, 1872, No. 17.

³⁹ William W. White, *The Confederate Veteran*, 80-86.

manufacturer, William M. Hawkins. Hawkins was a wounded veteran himself, having lost his leg at the Battle of the Wilderness while serving in Company C of the 18th Mississippi. Having received a limb from Strasser & Callahan in 1867, Hawkins disapproved of the quality, and being a shoemaker by trade, began improving the limb. He eventually developed a new patent, allowing him to provide limbs more satisfactory to veterans.⁴⁰

By 1876, the state had exhausted the original \$30,000 fund. It remained clear, however, that veterans were still in need of relief and in March, the legislature passed a new act allocating an additional \$5,000 for the purchase of artificial legs. The legislature again acknowledged that some limbs were worthless and all were of limited durability. With this second mention, it is clear that the impermanence of limbs proved to be a turning point in the shift from the distribution of artificial limbs to a more regular system of direct payment. While the state had intended to provide relief to each veteran one time, it found itself paying for new limbs with each successive act. William M. Hawkins exemplified this, not only through his development of an enhanced limb, but also by submitting applications for his own artificial limbs in 1867, 1872, 1875, and 1876. As such, the aid became a pension in all but name and regularity. Nonetheless, in 1877 the legislature again appropriated \$5,000 for the distribution of limbs to maimed veterans, this time to replace amputated arms. These limbs were to cost the state \$50 each and any soldier too maimed for the limb to be of use received a cash payment of \$75.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Acts of Alabama* 1875, No. 53; Auditor's Files, "Application for Artificial Limb," Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; Wilson, "Report on Artificial Limbs."

⁴¹ *Acts of Alabama* 1876, No. 149; Auditor's Files, "Application for Artificial Limb;" *Acts of Alabama* 1877.

By the mid to late 1870s, at the end of Reconstruction, the apparent rejection of state relief by southerners waned. While the first \$30,000 had taken almost a decade to disperse, the applicants collected \$7,455 in 1876 alone. In addition, maimed soldiers also collected \$4,850 of the \$5,000 allocated in 1877 by the end of the fiscal year, only eight months later. This, coupled with the impermanence of artificial limbs, finally caused a shift to the regular pension system that the state adopted in 1879. In addition, the distribution of limbs only aided a portion of disabled veterans. A study of the applications recorded by the U.S. government show that only about 25 percent of the Union soldiers who received pensions before 1888 received their disability for gunshot or shell wounds. The majority of disabilities arose from a myriad of other diseases and injuries. These numbers are for Union pensions, but one could expect similar results from a study of Confederate veterans. As a result, with a second act in 1879, the legislature expanded the eligibility requirements to include veterans who had lost their sight serving in the Confederate army. This development was small, but an improvement nonetheless.⁴²

The legislature appropriated \$10,000 with the first act and gave applicants six months to apply for a direct payment of up to \$75 each. In the second act, the state allocated \$1,800 for the relief of blind veterans, with \$150 given to each applicant. These funds, like the ones allocated in 1876-1877, quickly depleted. Of the \$10,000 allocated with Act No. 23, the state distributed \$9,939.60 by the end of 1880. Due to such a large amount of veteran applicants, 330 in all, the state was unable to allot the maximum \$75 to each pensioner. These men received only \$30.12 each, less than half of the maximum. Comparatively, the Union pension system adopted in 1861 offered privates eight dollars a

⁴² Alabama State Auditor, Annual Reports, 1870-1892. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL; Marten, *Sing Not War*, 82; *Acts of Alabama 1879*, No. 23-24.

month for total disability, with an increasing pay scale for higher-ranking veterans. Thus, the lowest ranking veteran in the Grand Army of the Republic in 1861 received more than three times the amount of any Alabama veteran, excluding the blind, in 1879, eighteen years later. Furthermore, the Union pensions were annual and increased in amount throughout the years, while Alabama distributed pensions only on the years that the state allocated funds, with no permanent structure for over a decade longer.⁴³

Although the state had expanded the number of applicants eligible for relief to include both those who had lost an arm and the blind, it had still not recognized the problem associated with the mass of soldiers whose wounds were not as obvious. This was a problem throughout the country, as citizens struggled to accept disabilities that did not directly correlate with common injuries sustained during war. Even the medical profession, in addition to regular citizens, was unable to define the ailments of the increasing number of men who began to apply for pensions based on vaguely described conditions. This problem continued to show itself in Alabama even with the passing of yet another act. In 1881, the state allocated an additional \$15,000 to anyone who had lost a limb and those “materially disabled by wounds,” a blatant dismissal of those veterans who suffered from vague disabilities that could not be directly attributed to their service in the late war. Even with this exclusion of a large number of veterans, the number of applicants continued to rise. That year, 1,014 veterans received a share of \$14.77 each. While the Federal government increased the amount of each pension throughout the

⁴³ *Acts of Alabama* 1879, No. 23-24; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Reports, 1870-1892; Marten, *Sing Not War*, 16.

years, Alabama's pensions were actually losing value. In just two years, the number of applicants had tripled, causing the payment to decrease by more than half.⁴⁴

With this increase in applicants, the attempt by the state to exclude many veterans that were not in dire need of aid had failed. As a result, the state once again changed the wording of the eligibility requirement two years later. With an appropriation of \$15,000, the legislature wrote that any veteran who had lost an arm or leg, the use of an arm or leg, or received a wound that rendered him physically incapable of making a living through labor was eligible for payment. Furthermore, in order to curtail what must have appeared to the legislature as fraudulent applications, the state required for the first time a certificate from a physician to prove the authenticity of the applicant's condition. That year, each of the 835 applicants, fewer than there were only two years earlier, received \$17.96. The state followed the same format again in 1885 with an appropriation of \$25,000. Of this, the legislature allotted \$1,500 specifically for the blind. The applicants this year gained an average of \$15.03 each, even after factoring in the blind, who received more than the regular veteran did. By this year, the allocation of pensions constituted approximately 3 percent of the entire state budget. The state did not completely ignore the issue of eligibility that year, however, but added an additional requirement to the applicant. In an attempt to give funds to those that needed it most, the legislature limited the funding only to those with less than \$2,000 of property in either their or their wife's name, after deducting encumbrances. It appeared that the state was

⁴⁴ James Marten, *Sing not War*, 84; *Acts of Alabama* 1881, No. 20; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Reports, 1870-1892.

attempting to limit the number of applicants and increase the value of the pensions, but all of that changed again two years later.⁴⁵

Beginning in 1887, the state increased the eligible pool of veterans to include a completely new group—those who were killed during the war. For the first time, Alabama allowed widows to collect pensions as long as their husband died in combat or of disease or wounds contracted during the war, up to twelve months after the war ended. These widows qualified for the pension if they did not remarry and their taxable property did not exceed \$1,000. The legislature allocated \$30,000 to the widows and the veterans previously eligible, with \$1,500 allotted for the blind. The number of widows who applied is evident in the increased number of applicants, more than five times the amount only four years earlier. As a result, the veterans and widows received an even smaller amount. The 4,258 applicants received \$6.69 each (excluding the blind, who gained \$78.94 each). This new figure was less than the eight dollars that a lowly private earned from the Federal government 1861, twenty-six years earlier, and the private received his funds monthly. The state followed this same format again in 1889 with an appropriation of \$50,000 to veterans and widows. That year, all were eligible only if they owned less than \$400 in taxable property. Widows, however, were now qualified if their husband died within five years of the end of the war. With this act, \$1,200 of the funds went to the blind, as long as their gross income per year did not exceed \$1,000. With the increased funds, the amount given to each applicant increased by nearly double to \$12.16, with the blind receiving \$48 each. The amount of funding allocated, though it increased every

⁴⁵ *Acts of Alabama* 1883, No. 109 and 1885, No. 95; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Reports, 1870-1892.

year, did not constitute a higher percentage of the budget, but decreased to only 1.8 percent.⁴⁶

Starting in 1891, thirty years after both the start of the war and the creation of the Union pension system, the format of the pensions in Alabama again considerably changed. While the system had developed into a form of direct payments instead of the distribution of limbs, it was still not permanent and only allotted to the veterans when the legislature passed a new act, which occurred every two years. This required an unwarranted amount of work by the legislature and an obligation to obtain the funds every other year when the chambers met. With the passing of the 1891 act, however, all of this changed. From this point on, the application would be renewable on an annual basis. While the veteran or widow still had to apply yearly, the legislature passed the act for the duration of six years. All veterans who had lost a limb, the use of a limb, or received a wound that rendered them unable to earn a livelihood through labor were qualified, as well as widows whose husbands died within five years of the war, as long as their taxable property did not exceed \$600. Furthermore, the legislation enacted a special tax to fund the revised pension system. The tax was on property and constituted one-half of one mill on each dollar annually. Of this tax, \$1,200 would be set aside annually for the relief of the blind. This tax eventually developed into a permanent tax and is still collected even today. The first year after its passage, the state collected \$135,879.04 in special taxes, which constituted 8.4 percent of the receipts collected that year, a significant increase in the percentage of the budget now available for use as pension payments. The first distributions of the new tax went out to 4,982 pensioners in 1892.

⁴⁶ *Acts of Alabama* 1887, No. 23 and 1889, No. 96; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Reports, 1870-1892.

The new legislation, though improved, remained imperfect. One issue with the new tax was the amount of work required by the state auditor. As Alabama's first large special tax, the law was rough and not well thought-out, calling on the state auditor to write out separate warrants for each of the almost 5,000 applicants. As such, the pension program continued to evolve for decades more.⁴⁷

For the next six years, the pension system remained virtually unchanged. In 1893, the state distributed \$132,533.66 to just under 5,000 applicants for \$26.50 to each maimed soldier and widow, and \$31.57 to the blind. This was an increase of more than double to each soldier and widow compared to 1889, but a decrease of almost \$17 for the blind, continuing the reduction of allocations to each individual blind man since receiving \$150 each with the passing of the first relief of blind soldiers act passed in 1879. Each year between 1893 and 1898, the distribution of payments to disabled soldiers and widows remained relatively stable. The amount of funds distributed decreased over time from \$132,533.66 in 1893 to \$116,784.98 in 1899. At the same time, the number of applicants continued to rise. While 4,982 applicants applied in 1891, by 1898, there were 8,969 in 1898, made up of 5,541 maimed veterans, 3,364 widows, and 64 blind. As a result, the amount that each applicant received decreased throughout the six years. From the \$26.50 to each maimed soldier and widow and \$31.56 to each blind soldier in 1893, the amount dropped to \$12.98 for each maimed soldier and widow, back to the mark that

⁴⁷ *Acts of Alabama 1891*, No. 286; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1891, p. 6-35; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1892, 3-25. The figures found in the Auditor's Annual Reports are often contradictory and confusing. As such, the most logical numbers are chosen and the overall thesis of this essay is not affected.

it was in 1889. Each blind soldier received \$18.72, once again continuing the reduction in the pension collected since 1879.⁴⁸

Between 1893 and 1895—a period of severe economic depression—the state experienced significant deficits within the budget. In 1894, the state auditor explained that the situation was even worse than it appeared, noting that the deficit was even larger the first three months of every fiscal year when the treasury, with depleted funds from the previous year, simultaneously appropriated for a number of annual expenditures. The auditor then claimed the deficit would continue to grow rapidly each year unless expenditures were cut or revenues were significantly increased. While this only slightly affected pensions, as they had their own special tax as funding and were not dependent on the General Fund, it is interesting to note that even while the state battled with deficit spending, the reduction of pensions never became a serious threat.⁴⁹

In 1896, the auditor addressed a different issue—the increased number of applicants each year. He pointed out that each year the death rate for veterans remained high, and yet, the number of applicants has continued to increase. In 1895, an amendment passed on the act of 1891, which limited the eligibility requirements. Previously, any widow whose husband had died from disease or wounds received during the war within five years of the war's end was eligible. With the new amended law, a widow was only eligible if her husband had died from wounds, not from disease. Even though this should have significantly reduced the number of applicants, it did not. The amendment also created county boards of examiners, composed of ex-Confederate soldiers when possible,

⁴⁸ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1891, 6-35; and 1892, 3-25; and 1893, 3-156; and 1894, 3-175; and 1895, 3-173; and 1896, 3-204; and 1897, 19-212; and 1898, iii-109.

⁴⁹ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1893, p. 3-156; and 1894, p. 3-175; and 1895, p. 3-173.

to handle the large number of applications. This was probably meant to decrease the amount of work for the auditor and especially each county's probate judge, but it may have contributed to a new concern altogether. The auditor explained, "The restriction above noted does not seem to have reduced the number of applicants at all and I apprehend that applicants and officials, in many cases, have either overlooked this restriction or wholly disregarded it." The auditor then described three instances of abuse. First, one applicant made application from Arkansas before the mayor of the town in which she lived, and the probate judge and county board of examiners approved the application in the county that she alleged to reside. Second, a state prisoner had two applications approved by the county examiners and probate judge, one from the county in which he resided and after being rejected, one from the county in which he was imprisoned. Third, an examiner approved an application for himself. These examples, suggesting widespread fraud, coupled with the growing number of pensioners, led the auditor to conclude that the law needed amending. His recommendation included a sort of class system, where the neediest disabled veterans would receive \$25 each from the fund, while the state divided the rest between all other eligible applicants.⁵⁰

In 1897, the auditor tackled the same issue again. Between 1896 and 1897, the number of approved applicants increased by 1,464, even after the amended law reduced the number of eligible applicants and veterans continued to pass away at a rapid rate. The auditor once again credited the issue to abuse within the system by the county examiners. While the relief of Confederate veterans was meaningful to a large portion of the public,

⁵⁰ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1896, 36-39; *Acts of Alabama* 1895.

especially other veterans like those approving dubious applications, the auditor pleaded with the examiners to do their jobs correctly:

This effort of the State to aid these worthy men is being sadly abused. Applications are allowed in a great many instances that should be rejected. The Boards of Examiners, in some counties, do not appreciate their trust. They grant applications that they know are based upon false statements, thereby diverting this sacred fund from its proper course. They should feel that every cent improperly allowed is taken from a pittance that is intended for a worthy Confederate soldier *who is not able to make a living for himself*. They should know that it is not an effort on the part of the state to pay the Confederate soldier for services. If it were, then all would be entitled to share. It is given in charity and love, to those who come under the law, and any soldier who does not come within its requirements is as completely barred as those who were not Confederate soldiers. I sincerely hope that in the future those whose duty it is to pass upon the merits of applicants, will do it with that devotion to duty which they exhibited when their country called them from peaceful homes to the field of battle.⁵¹

Despite his plea, the abuse did not stop. Again, in 1898, the auditor was compelled to address the issue. This time, instead of playing to the examiners' emotions to convince them to do what was right, he recommended a new amendment to the law. His recommendation included the creation of a State Board of Examiners consisting of five members to which each county board of two members must report applications for approval before submission to the auditor. He also recommended that each pensioner be added to a permanent list after being approved, removing the requirement that a new application be submitted annually.⁵²

Finally, after years of beseeching by the state auditor, the legislature passed a new act in 1899 to overhaul Alabama's pension system. The law created an Alabama State Board of Examiners of Pensions comprised of three men, instead of the five recommended by the auditor. The board included a practicing physician and two Confederate veterans, all of whom the governor appointed. In addition, the governor also

⁵¹ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1897, 22-24.

⁵² Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1898, xxiv-xxv.

appointed a practicing physician and a Confederate veteran in each county to comprise a County Board of Examiners of Pensions. Moreover, the legislature also adopted the auditor's recommendation that applicants be divided into classes with the neediest veterans guaranteed the highest pension. The act created four classes implemented as follows: Class 1 covered the blind and those who had lost two limbs or the entire use of two limbs; Class 2 contained those who had lost a leg above the knee or an arm above the elbow; Class 3 encompassed those who lost a hand or foot or the entire use of either; and Class 4 was those otherwise wounded, unable to make a living, etc. and the widows who had not remarried. In addition, the new act also implemented a permanent, bound record of pensioners as suggested by the auditor in his previous report and an increased tax from a half-mill on the dollar to one mill on the dollar.⁵³

In 1900, the state distributed the first allocations for its new pension hierarchy and the numbers are revealing. Of the 9,268 total applicants, 8,881 of them fell in Class 4, suggesting that the neediest veterans were not receiving the fullest benefits because of the huge influx of widows and veterans with lesser injuries. The passage of this new act was an improvement, as the funds allocated to the neediest veterans increased tremendously, while those allocated to the least needy decreased slightly, but not significantly. That year, the 83 veterans in Class 1 received \$23.76 each, the 140 veterans in Class 2 received \$19.80 each, the 164 veterans in Class 3 received \$15.84 each, and the remainder in Class 4 received \$11.88. This is in comparison to the \$12.98 that every veteran and widow received, and \$18.72 that the blind received the year before. Thus, the veterans deemed the neediest received exactly twice the amount allocated the previous

⁵³ *Acts of Alabama* 1899, No. 421.

year, while the blind and the next two classes of needy veterans also saw significant increases. The widows and least needy veterans received \$1.10 less than the amount given a year earlier. Even with the added salaries of the state and county boards of examiners removed from the Pension Fund and out of the hands of the veterans, the considerable increase in pensions to veterans that needed it most showed that this was a development in the evolution of the pension law that deserved implementation.⁵⁴

The following year, the state was able to pay significantly more money to each pensioner as the increased tax revenue streamed into the treasury. In that year, the state received \$260,041.85 for allocation into the Pension Fund. This represented 9.1 percent of the state's receipts. The total number of pensioners continued to increase to 11,224. In Class 1, 101 veterans received a payment of \$42.55. Class 2 had 145 veterans who received \$35.46 each and Class 3 had 175 veterans who received \$28.37. In Class 4, 10,803 veterans and widows received \$21.27. As one might expect, each class received slightly less than double the amount given the prior year before the increased tax revenue. In 1902, once again, following an increase of revenue, the total number of pensioners spiked, totaling 13,405. This year, the four classes had 111, 151, 184, and 12,959 pensioners, respectively. As a result, the amount that each class received again decreased. The state distributed \$37.85, \$31.54, \$25.20, and \$18.90 respectively. In 1903, the total number of pensioners increased to 14,415, and the amounts paid to each class was similar to the figures the prior year.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1900, 3-61; *Acts of Alabama* 1899, No. 421.

⁵⁵ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1901, 3-94; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1902, 3-117; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1903, 3-81.

Starting in 1904, the state began allocating funds towards the relief of Confederate veterans and widows in addition to the special tax. In that year, the legislature allocated an additional \$50,000 to the Pension Fund to be appropriated annually. Furthermore, the legislation allowed the treasurer and auditor, if necessary, to appropriate an additional \$100,000 for the fiscal years of 1906 and 1907. Consequently, even though the number of pensioners continued to rise, the payment to each veteran and widow also rose. In 1904, 15,038 pensioners received aid. The four classes had 120, 148, 175, and 14,595 pensioners each and they received \$43.30, \$36.10, \$28.85, and \$21.65 each, respectively. Thus, the state allocated a total of \$331,569.30 in 1904, only \$295,009.39 of which was collected through taxes, a decrease from 1903. Thus, without the additional appropriation, the amount each pensioner received would have decreased. In 1905 and 1906, the auditor took advantage of the additional funds, allocating the full amount of \$150,000 each year. In 1905, the state collected \$310,616.15 in special taxes with an additional \$50,000 appropriation. In all, the state disbursed \$341,471.40 to pensioners, with no significant change from 1904 in the amount each pensioner received. In 1906, the pension fund showed similar numbers, raising \$327,832.67 in taxes, but with \$150,000 in appropriations. The auditor distributed \$462,924.63, or almost 14 percent of the total state disbursements that year. This year, the 127 pensioners in Class 1 received \$60, 142 pensioners in Class 2 received \$50, 168 in Class 3 received \$40, and the remaining 14,709 pensioners in Class 4 received \$30. These numbers represent an increase of nearly 50 percent over the pensions distributed only two years earlier.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Acts of Alabama* 1903, No. 232; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1904, 11-95; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1906, 20-122.

In 1906, however, the auditor demonstrated yet another problem in the distribution of pensions. Because the allocation of pensions took place only once a year, when a mistake occurred, it had significant consequences. For example, if an official accidentally removed a pensioner's name from the record book, he would not receive his allotment and there was no method for granting him his due payment until the following year. Most veterans were extremely poor and going a year without their payment had a deleterious effect on their lives. At the same time, aging veterans were dying every year, and in some instances, the wrong went uncorrected. Thus, the auditor recommended either that the state grant the auditor the power to fix the errors immediately, or that the state create a new office of Pension Commissioner, granting him the same privileges and allowing the state to allocate pensions on a quarterly system. Furthermore, the auditor wrote that because of the age of the needy Confederate veterans, their number would soon decrease drastically. In order to care for them in their last years, the auditor recommended an increase in appropriations, "at least for a few years yet."⁵⁷

At the following legislative session, the legislature acknowledged the auditor's suggestions and approved a new overhaul of the pension system appropriating \$350,000 annually in addition to the annual \$50,000 and special tax and establishing a quarterly system of pay with installments in October, January, April, and July of each fiscal year. Furthermore, the legislature fixed the amount of each pension at \$25 for Class 1, \$20 for Class 2, \$16 for Class 3, and \$12.50 for Class 4 per quarter. In the event of the fund lacking the necessary amount due for the 4th quarter, or in the event of a surplus after all payments, the remaining funds would be distributed to all pensioners pro rata. In an

⁵⁷ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report, 1906, 9-10.

extension of the effort to care for needy veterans and their widows in their final years, the legislature also approved an act to move all pensioners currently over the age of 80 into Class 1, guaranteeing them the highest amount disbursed. The legislature later amended this act to move all pensioners to Class 1 as they reach the age of 80, not just those currently over that age.⁵⁸

With the new appropriations not taking effect until the fiscal year of 1908, 1907 proved similar to 1906, with a disbursement of \$473,750 for 15,475 pensioners. The four classes received \$60, \$50, \$40, and \$30 respectively once again. In 1908, however, the funds, boosted by the \$400,000 appropriation, saw a significant increase. Between the special one mill tax and the appropriation, the pension fund totaled \$760,862.63. After including returned warrants from the prior the year, the auditor disbursed the total amount of \$778,495.10, an increase of 64 percent in just one year. Even with this enormous increase in the fund, however, the amount represented just over 15 percent of the total state disbursements, representing only about a 1 percent increase in the total expenditure. Furthermore, the auditor was still unable to disburse the amount called for in legislation. As in years past, the number of pensioners continued to rise, totaling 16,568, or an increase of 1,093 from the year before. In addition, by moving all pensioners over age 80 to Class 1, the number of pensioners in said class increased from 147 in 1907 to 1,337 in the 4th quarter of 1908, an increase of 1,189. Because of these two increases, the first three quarters of payments cost the state \$690,295.95. After prorating the remaining funds, the four classes received \$10, \$8, \$6, and \$5 respectively. Regardless, each pensioner still earned more than the prior year. After four quarters of payments, the

⁵⁸ *Acts of Alabama* 1907, No. 291, No. 604, and No. 27.

classes each received \$85, \$68, \$54.40, and \$42.50; these showed gains of \$25, \$18, \$14.40, and \$12.50 from 1907. These numbers remained similar in 1909, 1910, and 1911, though with a continued increase in the number of pensioners, number of Class 1 pensioners, and the special tax, leading to a slight increase per pension.⁵⁹

Even fifty years after the start of the Civil War and the creation of Confederate pensions, Alabama did not have a reliable and efficient system in place. In 1910, the auditor again called for the creation of a Pension Commissioner, citing a list of inefficiencies and stating, “The Pension Rolls in this state badly need revision.” This led to an overhaul of the organization that began in 1911 and eventually created a new board of pension commissioners in 1915 comprised of the Director of the Department of Archives and History, the Attorney General, and the Chief Examiner of Public Accounts (a board titled the Alabama Pension Commission in 1919) that continued to run the state’s pension system until 1959.⁶⁰

While dealing with depleted funds and an attitude of independence that rejected governmental dependency, Alabama was successful in implementing a system to care for a large and needy segment of the population. Although Alabama’s pension system never rivaled that of the Federal government, it was still able to develop into a significant program worthy of attention. Beginning during the war as relief for indigent families in an effort to both recruit new soldiers and discourage those same soldiers from deserting the army, the amount spent on the program quickly skyrocketed to represent more than

⁵⁹ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1907, 10-11, 158; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1908, 6-18; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1909, 11, 138-147; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1910, 16, 162-171; Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1911, 13, 186-195.

⁶⁰ Alabama State Auditor, Annual Report 1910, 5-7; *Acts of Alabama* 1911, No. 327; *Acts of Alabama* 1915, No. 779; and *Acts of Alabama* 1919, No. 409

fifty percent of the state's total disbursements. These funds, however, disappeared even faster than they arose with the Confederate defeat and implementation of Reconstruction in Alabama. Nonetheless, the state government, bolstered by the political leadership of Confederate veterans and their vast public support, re-administered and slowly expanded a Confederate pension system that included only 218 men in 1867 to an enormous program encompassing more than 16,000 pensioners each year, extending the pool of eligible recipients as the number of needy veterans and their widows increased. At the same time, the amount provided increased from a low of \$6.69 per pensioner in 1887 to approximately \$40-\$85 per pensioner in 1911, depending on their class. The organization of the pension system also underwent numerous changes throughout the years, both during and after the Civil War, to both increase its efficiency and to meet the growing demands of the burgeoning program. These changes, however, did not end with the creation of the Alabama Pension Commission and, in fact, are still occurring now.

Today, Alabama residents continue to pay the property tax established to fund pensions for disabled veterans in 1891 even though the last Confederate widow, Alberta Martin, died in 2004. These taxes maintain the Confederate Memorial Park at the original site of the Confederate Soldiers Home, founded in 1902 as a place for disabled and aging veterans, who could not care for themselves, to live. The Home closed in 1939, yet the site remains as a memorial for the state's Confederate veterans. Annually, the tax raises approximately \$400,000, an extraordinary amount for a historical park to collect, especially with the recent budget cuts that have stripped many historical sites from the funding that they have come to rely on. In 2011, a controversy emerged as State Representative Alvin Holmes began an ultimately unsuccessful drive to allocate these

funds away from the park. Director of the Confederate Memorial Park, Bill Rambo, however, argued that the park should continue to receive the pension money because “If it wasn’t for the way we’re funded, this story wouldn’t be told. The kids in school are only getting one side—the winner’s side.” Whether or not this statement is true, the story of the Confederate veterans and that of the welfare programs that supported them after the war continues to live on through the park and the taxes that support it.⁶¹

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⁶¹ “Confederate History Park Unscathed in Budget Battle,” *Anniston Star*, 31 March 2011

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