

## **ALABAMA'S RESIDENT CONFEDERATE PENSION RECORDS: SPECIAL SOURCES FOR THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES**

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Each of the former Confederate States of America and the states of Kentucky, Missouri, and Oklahoma eventually gave pensions to their respective resident Confederate veterans and widows of veterans. When a veteran or widow lived in a state not giving confederate pensions, usually the state from which the veteran served provided the pension. The years that pensions began, the amounts paid, and the legal mechanisms for granting pensions varied widely from state to state, as shown in Desmond Walls Allen, *Where to Write for Confederate Pension Records* (1991; copy in our Confederate pensions vertical file) and James C. Neagles, *Confederate Research Sources* (1986). Pensions for Confederate veterans and widows based on poverty or just service generally began in the late 1800s. Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, and possibly some of the other states also gave pensions to former black servants who served in the Confederate forces. See the Black Confederate Soldiers Website:

<http://blackconfederatesoldiers.com/alabama-state-records.html>

Alabama's pensions represent the best of the records generated by a state Confederate pension program. They illustrate the value of documents beyond just basic pension files, for research on Alabama citizens and other people across the country.

As with the other states granting Confederate pensions, Alabama's records are state government records and must sought in the state--not the federal—archives. Alabama's basic Confederate pension files are in alphabetical order and are cross referenced by the names of the widows. A typical file includes the veteran's unit and dates of service, as well as residence at the time that he or his widow applied for a pension. Additional information may include details of birth, marriage, property, and health of the applicant. Alabama began granting various forms of veteran's benefits, especially for disabled soldiers, almost as soon as the war ended but passed a

general pension bill only in 1899. In 1920, widow pensioners had to complete a detailed personal questionnaire, now found in their files, which included such information as the names of their respective fathers. We have these pension files on microfilm.

Alabama's pension files do contain a great deal of information but records created in conjunction with the pensions provide even more. The Alabama Department of Archives and History has a card catalog, which we have on microfilm, that indexes the state's pensions, original cards even include, for some veterans, lists of Civil War battles in which they served, information apparently provided from questionnaires now lost. This card catalog documents Confederate service for hundreds of men for whom no records of service survive at the National Archives.

The above card catalog also indexes the 1907, 1921, and 1927 state censuses of Confederate pensioners. The 1907 census, which is arranged by county and is in our collection in book form, provides each veteran pensioner's county of birth, date of birth, and military service. The 1921 census, which is arranged by regiment, asks the same questions but also asked each veteran pensioner for the place of birth and residence at the time of marriage of his wife (although not her name). Each veteran also had to provide the names of his respective children, their places of residence, and occupations. The 1927 census of Confederate widow pensioners asked each woman for specific information on her marriage. We have the 1921 and 1927 censuses on microfilm.

Information from these pension files and related censuses thus extends far beyond Alabama. Information that a veteran gave in Alabama also frequently relates to siblings, even in other states. For example, if a veteran residing in Alabama gave his birth as Camden District, South Carolina on July 2, 1842, that suggests Camden District as the place of birth for younger and even older brothers and sisters, as well as where to look for their parents in Federal censuses.

Not all of the valuable Alabama pension records are so easy to use. The Alabama Department of Archives also has correspondence with the pension office that includes information on Civil War service by veterans and widows unable to prove service although this material has no index. The Archives also has records of pension payments, 1899-1915, 1920-1925, 1927-1928, and 1930, a way of estimating when a pensioner died by when

he or she no longer received pension payments. They also have files on rejected pension applications, 1919-1938; records of Alabama's Confederate soldiers home; and applications for artificial limbs, 1865-1900.

Alabama counties have lists of lists of pensioners in their local courthouses.

Not all records appear to still exist. The state of Alabama gave old age pensions prior to the creation of Social Security Insurance. The names of those persons appear in the same county pension register books as the Confederate veterans. (No other records of those old age pension files are known to survive.) No records are known to survive of the Confederate Orphans Home at Tuskegee, Alabama although the children there are listed on the 1870 federal census (pp. 30-32) and the 1880 census (p. 67) of Macon County.

Similar records are often found in other states for benefits to veterans of the Civil War and their widows. For information on what may exist for your ancestor contact the state archives for the state from which he served or for where he or his widow resided after the war. We have on microfilm the Confederate Pensions for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee and the printed indexes for the pensions for Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. We have on microfilm indexes to Federal service pension records, which is also available on Ancestry.com.

Confederate Pension Records Available Online

State Name	State Archives/ Library Site	FamilySearch	Ancestry
Alabama			X
Arkansas		X	
Florida	X	X	
Georgia	X		
Kentucky	X	X	
Louisiana		X	
Mississippi		X	
Missouri		X	
North Carolina		X	
Oklahoma	X		
South Carolina	X		
Tennessee	X		
Texas	X		
Virginia	X		