

THE SOUTH'S 1867 RETURNS OF QUALIFIED VOTERS AND THEIR VALUE IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

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To revise the legal machinery for restoring the former Confederate states to the Union, the United States Congress passed a new Reconstruction law on March 23, 1867. Among the changes called for in the law was state-wide elections in each of the former rebel states, except Tennessee, among registered males, black and white, over age twenty-one. Almost all adult males were allowed to vote in these elections after taking an oath of allegiance to the United States. The some 20,000 persons requiring presidential or congressional amnesty before they could take the oath are listed in our copy of Carolyn McGough Rowe, Index to Individual Pardon Applications From the South 1865-1898 (1996). The pardon applications are at the National Archives in Washington, DC and those to President Johnson are on National Archives microcopy M1003, a copy of which is in the collection at Wallace State.

The surviving voter records of 1867-1870 vary widely in quantity and quality, depending upon state. **At Wallace State, we have these records for Alabama and Georgia.** A complete set of the books would include voter registration books (sometimes called "Returns of Qualified Voters") and related oath books signed by the registered voters. The oath books are the original records and, in some instances, discrepancies have been found between the oath books and the voter register books on microfilm. Almost all surviving voter registration books contain naturalization information on any foreign born registrants. Some registers also contain such information, for each voter, as state of birth or number of years in the state or county. Other registers are only lists of names. No evidence has been found that a complete copy of the voter returns were sent to Washington. Jimmy Walker discovered some copies from the local returns, scattered in uninventoried and poorly cataloged collections of records of the Freedman's Bureau and of the U. S. Army Commands in Record Group 393, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Listed below, by state, is the information that I have been able to learn, with the help of Mic Barnett of Houston, Texas, about what survives of these 1867-1870 voter records.

ALABAMA. The 1867 voter registration books survive, in at least some form, for each of the counties. The original records are in the records of the Elections and Registration Division of the Alabama Department of Archives and History and have been microfilmed, although the film and the documents are often hard to read. Aside from naturalization information on foreign born persons, most of the returns lack any major genealogical information. Most counties have no foreign born voters although the returns for Mobile and Tuscaloosa counties are rich in naturalization information. Dale County's returns give the names of employers for some registrants. The books for Henry, Lee, Perry, and Russell counties give place of birth for at least some voters. The Walker County and Winston County returns are spectacular, giving exact date of birth and state of birth for most of the men registered. See Carolyn McGough Rowe, 1867 Voting Registration. . . Walker County, Alabama (1995) and her similar book on Winston County. She has also published the voter list for Marion County. Having an ancestor who voted in the 1867 election was one of the requirements for voting under the state constitution of 1901. **We have these records on microfilm at Wallace State, as well as the 1866 state census and 1865-1866 Federal tax records of Alabama.** The Alabama Department of Archives and History has begun compiling an index to these records on its web site.

ARKANSAS. The Arkansas History Commission writes that no such records survive among the state records although the Genealogical Society of Utah (the LDS) has found at least fragments of these records in some eight or nine courthouses and microfilmed them.

FLORIDA. The 1868 voter registration books for Florida usually include, for each voter: name, race, time of residence, state/ country of birth, and naturalization (if foreign born). These records survive for Hernando, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Marion, Nassau, Orange, Polk, Putnam, St. Johns, Santa Rosa, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Volusia, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties. They do not survive for twenty other counties. The records that do survive are in the

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Florida Department of Archives and History and have been microfilmed. They have also been published by the Tallahassee Genealogical Society as Florida Voter Registration Lists 1867-68 (1992).

GEORGIA. Georgia has 1867-1868 voter registration books (Record Group 1-1-108) and oath books (Record Group 1-1-107) for all counties and major cities except Haralson County. The original records are in the Georgia Department of Archives and History and have recently been microfilmed. Naturalization information is given for almost all foreign born persons and this information will soon be published by Mic Barnett of Houston, TX. Some of the return books give state/country of birth for each person and some provide number of years residence in Georgia and in the respective county. An inventory of the contents of these records is in Robert S. Davis, Jr., Georgia Genealogical Workbook (1987), pp. 48-9. **We have these records on microfilm at Wallace State and, in book form, the new index by Rita Brinkley Worthy, and John David Brandenburg, Index to Georgia's 1867-1868 Returns of Qualified Voters and Registration Oath Books (White) (Atlanta: The authors, 1995). See the attached for a list of districts by county. We also have the 1865-1866 Federal tax records for Georgia on microfilm.**

LOUISIANA. The Louisiana Department of Archives and History has voter registration books for all but the eight parishes not in existence in 1868. Their returns include nationalization information on foreign born voters. These records have been microfilmed.

MISSISSIPPI. The 1867 voter registration books at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History survive in Record Group 28, records of the Secretary of State, for Franklin, Lee, Marshall, Monroe, Neshoba, Noxubee, Perry, Pike, Scott, Smith, Tallahatchie, Tunica, and Yalobusha counties. Records for other counties have been reported, by Mic Barnett, to be in Record Group 58. We do not yet have these records on microfilm at Wallace, although we do have the 1866 state census of Mississippi.

NORTH CAROLINA. The 1867 voter registration books that have been found for North Carolina are in the North Carolina Division of Archives and History and have been published by Frances Holloway Wynne as North Carolina Extant Voter Registrations of 1867 (1992). These records survive for Carteret, Chowan, Clay, Cleveland, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Davidson, Duplin, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Granville, Guilford, Hyde, and Wake counties.

SOUTH CAROLINA. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History has 1867-1868 lists of voters, by county. The lists for Oconee and Pickens counties have been published by Peggy Burton Rich as 1868 Voter Registration: Oconee and Pickens Counties (1991).

TENNESSEE. Tennessee was not required to hold an election to return to the Union and therefore does not have these records.

TEXAS. The 1867-1870 voter lists appear to survive for all of the Texas counties. For each voter, there is given name, race, place of residence, length of residence, state/country of birth, and, for foreign born persons, naturalization information. See Jean Carefoot, Guide to Genealogical Resources in the Texas State Archives (1984), pp. 95-6. The records have been microfilmed although some of the film is of poor quality. No comprehensive publication of these records has been made although some local groups have published at least parts of their respective returns.

VIRGINIA. Poll lists, ballots, and other miscellaneous records for the 1867-1869 elections were found in the state records in 1991 and turned over to the Virginia State Library and Archives. These records, such as they are, have been inventoried.

The Family and Regional History Program at Wallace State is headquartered on the fifth floor of the college library. The college is located near Cullman, Alabama, and is on Highway 31, a few miles east of Interstate-65 (take the Hanceville-Highway 91 Exit), only one hour from Birmingham, Gadsden, and Huntsville. Our extensive and growing collection of research materials includes books, periodicals, microfilm, microfiche, cd-rom disks, computer programs, family folders, and much more. The hours are 8 to 8, Monday through Thursday; 8 to 4PM on Friday; and 9 AM to 3 PM on Saturday. The collection is completely open to the general public. The Program also offers college credit courses in genealogy and research field trips to other libraries across the South.