

SOUTHERN UNIONISTS AND OTHER CIVIL WAR CLAIMS

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Thousands of southerners applied to the United States government for compensation for property destroyed or seized by U.S. forces during the War Between the States. Their claims often include detailed personal information on the claimants and their families. Many southern supporters of the Union made no claims because they had not lost property to the Federal forces or for other reasons. Many of the persons who filed claims were barred or disallowed because of evidence that they had supported the southern cause or their failure to prove property loss.

A giant index to Civil War claims of all types brought before the U. S. Treasury is Entry 366, Record Group 56, National Archives. This index can be searched by mail from National Archives II, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20408-6001. Military Records, National Archives, has the claims to the abandoned and confiscated properties turned over to the Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Lands (the Freedman's Bureau). Military Records also has the claims filed with the United States government by government contractors in Entry 788, Record Group 92 (Quartermaster Claims), although these claims are difficult to use and sometimes have not survived. Correspondence of the Secretary of War and the Adjutant General frequently contain information on confiscated civilian property. This material is available on microfilm from the National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. The Center for Legislative Archives in the National Archives and the U.S. Court of Claims, described below, have records of appeals of Civil War claims. National Archives records of civilians and private businesses that worked for the Confederacy are described in James C. Neagles, Confederate Research Sources: A Guide to Archives Collections (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1986), pp. 233-43.

The most famous Civil War claims are those of the Commissioners of Claims, also known as the Southern Claims Commission. Using Southern Unionist claims is complicated. Starting in 1864, claims from states that remained in the Union or, at the end of the Civil War, all states were filed with the Quartermaster General of the U. S. Army. Known as "Fourth of July Claims," these quartermaster claims must be sought from the Military Records Branch, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. At least as early as 1868, claims could also have been filed with the U. S. Court of Claims. To learn if such a claim was filed write to Index Section, U.S. Court of Claims, 717 Madison Place NW, Washington, DC 20005 to check for a congressional Court of Claims case number. If such a case number is found, a copy of the case (claim) file can be obtained from Suitland Reference Branch (NNRR), National Archives, Washington, DC 20409.

Beginning in 1871, claims by southerners perporting to have remained loyal to the Union were filed with the Commissioners of Claims. The most extensive published list of these claims is Gary Mills, Southern Loyalists in the Civil War (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1994), which is kept on top of our microfilm cabinets. This book and the alphabetical list of the claims on reel fourteen and the geographical index on reel 13 of National Archives Micropublication M87, Records of the Southern Claims Commission, indicates claims that were allowed (paid), in at least some amount; barred; and disallowed. All of these indexes are flawed.

Sometimes the wrong county is given and sometimes a person filed a claim in a different county or state than that of where he or she lost the property.

If a person filed a claim with this Southern Claims Commission and that claim was paid, in any amount, the claim should be in Record Group 217, Records of the Auditors of the Treasury, Entry 732, General Reference Branch (NNRG), National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. Copies can be obtained by mail for a fee. The claims are arranged by county and then alphabetically. We have the approved Georgia claims in microfiche drawer eleven and we have on order microfilm of the approved Alabama claims. HOWEVER, some 2,500 of these approved claims were destroyed in the nineteenth century and do not survive even as copies.

Most of the barred (when the person failed to follow up on a claim) and disallowed (where the compensation requested was refused) claims are found in National Archives Micropublication M1407, Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, a copy of which is in our microfiche collection in drawers 1-3. Copies of claims can also be obtained from the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408 for a fee. The disallowed claims are arranged numerically on fiche nos. 5-4272. An alphabetical index is on fiche nos. 1-4. The barred claims are arranged alphabetically on fiche 4273-4829. For more information on barred and disallowed claims see the printed guide on top of our microfiche cabinet.

If a claim was filed but you cannot find a copy of the claim papers in any of the above, it was most likely transferred to the U.S. Court of Claims in 1881 or later. If checking the above sources fails to locate the papers of a known claim, write to Index Section, U.S. Court of Claims, 717 Madison Place NW, Washington, DC 20005 to check for a Court of Claims case number. (We have on microfilm the index to the cases before the Court of Claims, 1884-1939). If such a case number is found, a copy of the case (claim) file can be obtained from Suitland Reference Branch (NNRR), National Archives, Washington, DC 20409.

We also have on microfilm U. S. Commissioner of Claims, Summary Reports in all Cases Reported to Congress as Disallowed Under the Act of March 3, 1871 (Washington, DC 1871-1882), which provides abstracts of claims disallowed by the Southern Claims Commission. (these are the "reports" referred to in the indexes to the disallowed claims.) These four volumes are arranged by year, then by state, and finally alphabetically. At the end of volume four can be found a list of the claims disallowed because no witnesses were produced. Those claims were reported to Congress in 1880 as barred. This list is arranged by state, then county, and then alphabetically.

Also in our collection is National Archives Micropublication M87, Records of the Southern Claims Commission, including some reports and other records of claims. These fourteen reels of microfilm have no index or usable list of its very limited contents. See Sarah Lawson, "Records of the Southern Claims Commission," Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives 12 (1980): 207-18, a copy of which is in our vertical file under Southern Unionist Claims, and the introduction at the beginning of the microfilm for ideas on how to use this microfilm.

Some southerners petitioned Congress directly for compensation. Their claims should be sought from the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. Not all

Civil War claims are Southern Unionist claims, even for property in the South. The best information on Civil War claims is found in Henry Pudney Beers, The Union, pp.125-31, 287-99, 623-24. The Treasury records in the Civil Reference Branch of the National Archives includes various collections of Civil War Treasury claims, including some cataloged simply as "miscellaneous", and a card catalog index to "Cotton and Captured and Abandoned Property" case files. The latter are claims by southerners, without regards to loyalty or politics, for property seized or destroyed by Federal forces after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. The rejected claims for cotton seized, 1872-1890 are at the National Archives in Record Group 56, Entry 371. These claims are also mentioned in the previously described index to all Treasury Department records relating to Civil War claims.

The National Archives--Southeastern Branch in East Point, GA, and other regional branches of the National Archives, have court records for their respective states. The court case files, Federal and Confederate, contain tens of thousands of records of civilian property and the Civil War. Sometimes property losses from the Civil War are also documented in civil court cases found in local court houses.