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**Southern Claims Commission  
Approved Claims  
1871-1880: Georgia**

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**Records of the Accounting Officers  
of the Department of the Treasury  
Record Group 217**



THE R. J. TAYLOR, JR., FOUNDATION  
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SOUTHERN CLAIMS COMMISSION  
APPROVED CLAIMS, 1871-1880:  
GEORGIA

This microfiche publication, M1658, reproduces the approved case files of claims submitted to the Commissioners of Claims (known as the Southern Claims Commission) from the State of Georgia, 1871-1880. These records are part of Record Group 217, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury. There are 629 individual approved case files represented on 761 fiche.

Background

Even before the close of the Civil War, in an act of July 4, 1864 (13 Stat. 381-82), Congress recognized the debt the Federal Government owed loyal citizens for property losses suffered during the war. This act, as did all such governmental legislation until 1871, applied only to citizens in States not in rebellion. Throughout the last half of the 1860's the Government was besieged with claims from the Southern States, many from people who had been unquestionably loyal to the Union cause during the war.

It was not until 1871, when the power of the Northern radicals in Congress had diminished, and the ill will felt throughout the North toward the South began to subside, that sufficient strength could be mustered to provide for the losses of the Southern Unionists. The act of March 3, 1871 (16 Stat. 524-25), authorized a special board of three commissioners to be appointed by the President, with the advise and consent of the United States Senate. The Commissioners of Claims were to "receive, examine, and consider the claims of those citizens who remained loyal adherents to the cause and the government of the United States during the war, for stores or supplies taken or furnished during the rebellion."

The commissioners were to satisfy themselves of the loyalty of each claimant; certify the amount, nature, and value of the property taken or furnished; and report their judgement on each claim in writing

to the House of Representatives. The House would then vote to approve or disallow the claim, and to appropriate money for payment. The House usually followed the recommendation of the commissioners. The act provided further that of the claims within its provision only those presented to the commissioners could be prosecuted, and that all others were to be barred.

The Commissioners of Claims met first on March 16, 1871, in Washington, with Asa Owen Aldis of Vermont as its President. The other two members were James B. Howell of Iowa, and Orange Ferriss of New York. Charles F. Benjamin served as the Chief Clerk. The volume of their work soon proved to be so great that they were authorized by an act of May 11, 1872,, to appoint special commissioners to administer oaths and affirmations and take depositions of witnesses, and special agents to investigate pending claims, procure evidence, and examine witnesses.

The special commissioners were local appointees confined to hearing "small claims". The special agents were traveling investigators of both "large and small claims". All papers collected by special commissioners and agents were sent to the Commissioners of Claims in Washington, who were responsible for making recommendations on all claims.

In 1872 the deadline for filing claims was set at March 3, 1873 (17 Stat. 577). By this date a total of 22,298 claims were filed, all of which were considered by the commissioners. The final date for filing evidence pertaining to a claim was fixed as March 10, 1879 (17 Stat. 97-98).

The Commissioners of Claims were occupied with the investigation and settlement of the Southern claims until March 1880, when the last of the claims were reported to Congress. Of the 22,298 claims filed, only 7,092 satisfied the rigid tests of sworn statements and cross examination in proving both the sustained Unionism of the claimant throughout the war and the validity of the claim. The total amount of the claims amounted to \$60,258,150.44, of which \$4,636,920.69 was approved and paid.

An act of June 16, 1880, terminated the Commission and gave the Treasury Department the responsibility for liquidating the business of the Commission.

The absence of any regularly established tribunal for the adjudication of claims by Southern Unionists, the dissatisfaction of many claimants with the outcome of their cases, and objections to the act of March 3, 1873, which declared that all claims not presented by that date "shall be deemed barred forever thereafter," led to the Bowman Act of 1883 and the Tucker Act of 1887. Under the provisions of these acts, Congress could reconsider any of the claims previously disallowed by the Southern Claims Commission and transmit them to the United States Court of Claims for review and recommendation. The result is that some case files are in Records of the United States Court of Claims, Record Group 123.

### Records Description

The approved case files of the Southern Claims Commission for the State of Georgia, 1871-1880, are arranged alphabetically by county, thereunder by name of claimant. Appendix A lists the approved claimants case files in this order, and also provides the case file number, as well as the number of fiche containing the case file. Appendix B lists the approved claimants alphabetically by surname, thereunder by claim number, and county.

A case file may contain any or all of the following types of documents: summary reports; petitions; inventories for supplies and property for which compensation was desired; application to have testimony taken by a special commissioner; testimony of the claimant and others, both favorable and adverse, relating to the claim; vouchers; power of attorney; correspondence; a copy of the Commissioners of Claims report, and the certificate of settlement issued by the Third Auditor of the Treasury.

### Related Records

Southern Claims case files have found their way into records of all three branches of the Government, the executive, legislative, and judicial. The approved claims, which were sent to the Treasury Department for payment, were inherited by the General Accounting Office, as the agency which succeeded the Comptrollers and Auditors of the Treasury. Most disallowed claims and barred claims have been

retained by Congress, and now are part of Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group 233. Claims which were sent to the Court of Claims for a finding of fact have become part of the case files of that body in Record Group 123.

The disallowed or barred case files in Record Group 233, have been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication M1407, Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880 (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1987).

An index of claims acted upon by the Commissioners of Claims was published under the title Consolidated Index of Claims by the Commissioners of Claims to the House of Representatives from 1871-1880, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892). This index was compiled under the supervision of J.B. Holloway, clerk to prepare digest of claims, and Walter H. French, file clerk, House of Representatives. This volume is the only document in which the names of all claimants appear in a single alphabetical list. This index has been reproduced on the first four microfiche of National Archives Microfilm Publication M1407, Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1987).

Additional records documenting the activities of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), are part of Record Group 56, General Records of the Department of the Treasury, and have been reproduced as Microfilm Publication M87, Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880 (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972).

The records reproduced in this publication were prepared for filming by William Kemp, Christoph Tanglin, Teresa Matchette, William Grover, Monroe Freeman, and Suzanne Gould. Introductory remarks were prepared by Monroe Freeman.

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