



SOUTHERN CLAIMS COMMISSION

FINAL VERSION OF QUESTIONS FOR CLAIMANTS AND WITNESSES – 1874

To provide for consistency in interrogating claimants and witnesses, the Commissioners of Claims formulated a set of standardized questions. An initial set of questions was produced in 1871; it was amended in 1872; and the final version was established in July 1874. However, when a deposition was taken, only the *answers* to the questions were recorded, not the questions themselves.

When files for claims were filmed*, sometimes a copy of the questions was filmed, other times, it was not. It is difficult for a researcher to properly evaluate the answers without knowing what question generated a specific answer.

If working with a file on a film or fiche where a copy of the questions was not included, determine which set was used by comparing the date of the deposition and what the answers were with the three sets of questions. Make a copy of the appropriate set to have beside you as you review the answers.

*Note: Not all Southern Claims Commission files have been microfilmed.

The filmed Southern Claims Commission files for the Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, and West Virginia approved claims and for the barred and disallowed claims for the twelve states from which claims originated are part of the Julius K. Hunter & Friends African American Research Collection in the Special Collections Department of St. Louis County Library. The department wishes to promote Southern Claims Commission research by making these questions more easily accessible to researchers.

Visit www.slcl.org and do a keyword search for “Southern Claims Commission” to find further reference material about this source.

As taken from National Archives Microfilm Publication M87, Roll 1, Frames 344–346, *Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880)*

STANDING INTERROGATORIES

The following questions will be put to every person who gives testimony:

1. What is your name, your age, your residence, and how long has it been such, and your occupation?
2. If you are not the claimant, in what manner, if any, are you related to the claimant or interested in the success of the claim?

The following questions will be put to every claimant, except claimants who were slaves at the beginning of the war:

[Note—If the original claimant be dead, these questions are to be answered by each of the heirs or legatees who was not less than sixteen years of age when the war closed.]

3. Where were you born? If not born in the United States, when and where were you naturalized? Produce your naturalization papers if you can.

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4. Where were you residing and what was your business for six months before the outbreak of the rebellion, and where did you reside and what was your business from the beginning to the end of the war? And if you changed your residence or business, state how many times, and why such changes were made.
5. On which side were your sympathies during the war, and were they on the same side from beginning to end?
6. Did you ever do anything or say anything against the Union cause; and if so, what did you do or say, and why?
7. Were you at all times during the war willing and ready to do whatever you could in aid of the Union cause?
8. Did you ever do anything for the Union cause, or its advocates or defenders? If so, state what you did, giving times, places, names of persons aided, and particulars. Were the persons aided your relations?
9. Had you any near relatives in the Union army or navy? If so, in what company and regiment, or on what vessel, when and where did each one enter service, and when and how did he leave service? If he was a son, produce his discharge paper, in order that its contents may be noted in this deposition, or state why it cannot be produced.
10. Were you in the service or employment of the United States Government at any time during the war? If so, in what service, when, where, for how long, under what officers, and when and how did you leave such service or employment?
11. Did you ever voluntarily contribute money, property, or services to the Union cause; and if so, when, where, to whom, and what did you contribute?
12. Which side did you take while the insurgent States were seceding from the Union in 1860 and 1861, and what did you do to show on which side you stood?
13. Did you adhere to the Union cause after the States had passed into rebellion, or did you go with your State?
14. What were your feelings concerning the battle of Bull Run or Manassas, the capture of New Orleans, the fall of Vicksburg, and the final surrender of the Confederate forces?
15. What favors, privileges, or protections were ever granted you in recognition of your loyalty during the war, and when and by whom granted?
16. Have you ever taken the so-called "iron-clad oath" since the war, and when and on what occasions?
17. Who were the leading and best known Unionists of your vicinity during the war? Are any of them called to testify to your loyalty; and if not, why not?
18. Were you ever threatened with damage or injury to your person, family, or property on account of your Union sentiments, or were you actually molested or injured on account of your Union sentiments? If so, when, where, by whom, and in what particular way were you injured or threatened with injury?

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19. Were you ever arrested by any Confederate officer, soldier, sailor, or other person professing to act for the Confederate government, or for any State in rebellion? If so, when, where, by whom, for what cause; how long were you kept under arrest; how did you obtain your release; did you take any oath or give any bond to effect your release; and if so, what was the nature of the oath or the bond?
20. Was any of your property taken by Confederate officers or soldiers, or any rebel authority? If so, what property, when, where, by whom, were you ever paid saltpetre; and did you ever present an account saltpetre to the Confederate government or any rebel officer?
21. Was any of your property ever confiscated by rebel authority, on the ground that you were an enemy to the rebel cause? If so, give all the particulars, and state if the property was subsequently released or compensation made saltpetre.
22. Did you ever do anything for the Confederate cause, or render any aid or comfort to the rebellion? If so, give the times, places, persons, and other particulars connected with each transaction.
23. What force, compulsion, or influence, was used to make you do anything against the Union cause? If any, give all the particulars demanded in the last question.
24. Were you in any service, business, or employment, for the Confederacy, or for any rebel authority? If so, give the same particulars as before required.
25. Were you in the civil, military, or naval service of the Confederacy, or any rebel State, in any capacity whatsoever? If so, state fully in respect to each occasion and service.
26. Did you ever take any oath to the so-called Confederate States while in any rebel service or employment?
27. Did you ever have charge of any stores, or other property, for the Confederacy; or did you ever sell or furnish any supplies to the so-called Confederate States, or any State in rebellion; or did you have any share or interest in contracts or manufactures in aid of the rebellion?
28. Were you engaged in blockade running, or running through the lines, or interested in the risks or profits of such ventures?
29. Were you in any way interested in any vessel navigating the waters of the Confederacy, or entering or leaving any Confederate port? If so, what vessel, when and where employed, in what business, and had any rebel authority any direct or indirect interest in vessel or cargo?
30. Did you ever subscribe to any loan of the so-called Confederate States, or of any rebel State; or own Confederate bonds or securities, or the bonds or securities of any rebel State issued between 1861 and 1865? Did you sell, or agree to sell, cotton or produce to the Confederate Government, or to any rebel State, or to any rebel officer or agent, and if so, did you receive or agree to receive Confederate or State bonds or securities in payment; and if so, to what amount, and for what kind and amount of property?
31. Did you contribute to the raising, equipment or support of troops, or the building of gunboats in aid of the rebellion; or to military hospitals or invalids, or to relief funds or subscriptions for the families of persons serving against the United States?
32. Did you ever give information to any person in aid of military or naval operations against the United States?

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33. Were you at any time a member of any society or organization for equipping volunteers or conscripts, or for aiding the rebellion in any other manner?
 34. Did you ever take an oath of allegiance to the so-called Confederate States? If so, state how often, when, where, for what purpose, and the nature of the oath or affirmation.
 35. Did you ever receive a pass from rebel authority? If so, state when, where, for what purpose, on what conditions, and how the pass was used.
 36. Had you any near relatives in the Confederate army, or in any military or naval service hostile to the United States? If so, give names, ages on entering service, present residence, if living, what influence you exerted, if any, against their entering the service, and in what way you contributed to their outfit and support.
 37. Have you been under the disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution? Have your disabilities been removed by Congress?
 38. Have you been specially pardoned by the President for participation in the rebellion?
 39. Did you take any amnesty oath during the war, or after its close? If so, when, where, and why did you take it?
 40. Were you ever a prisoner to the United States authorities, or on parole, or under bonds to do nothing against the Union cause? If so, state all the particulars.
 41. Were you ever arrested by the authorities of the United States during the war? If so, when, where, by whom, on what grounds, and when and how did you obtain your release?
 42. Were any fines or assessments levied upon you by the authorities of the United States because of your supposed sympathy for the rebellion? If so, state all the facts.
 43. Was any of your property taken into possession or sold by the United States under the laws relating to confiscation, or to captured and abandoned property?
- The following questions will be put to all male claimants or beneficiaries who were not less than sixteen years of age when the war closed:*
44. After the Presidential election of 1860, if of age, did you vote for any candidates, or on any questions, during the war, and how did you vote? Did you vote for or against candidates favoring secession? Did you vote for or against the ratification of the ordinance of secession, or for or against separation in your State?
 45. Did you belong to any vigilance committee, or committee of safety, homeguard, or any other form of organization or combination designed to suppress Union sentiment in your vicinity?
 46. Were you in the Confederate army, State militia, or any military or naval organization hostile to the United States? If so, state when, where, in what organizations, how and why you entered, how long you remained each time, and when and how you left. If you claim that you were conscripted, when and where was it, how did you receive notice, and from whom, and what was the precise manner in which the conscription was enforced against you? If you were never in the rebel army or other hostile organization, explain how you escaped service. If you furnished a substitute, when and why did you furnish one, and what is his name, and his present address, if living?

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47. Were you in any way connected with or employed in the Confederate quartermaster, commissary, ordnance, engineer, or medical department, or any other department, or employed on any railroad transporting troops or supplies for the Confederacy, or otherwise engaged in transportation of men and supplies for the Confederacy? If so, state how employed, when, where, or for how long, under whose direction, and why such employment was not given "aid and comfort" to the rebellion?
48. Did you at any time have charge of trains, teams, wagons, vessels, boats, or military supplies or property of any kind for the Confederate government? If so, give all the facts as in previous questions.
49. Were you employed in saltpeter works, in tanning or milling for the Confederate government, or making clothing, boots, shoes, saddles, harness, arms, ammunition, accoutrements, or any other kind of munitions of war for the Confederacy? If so, give all the particulars of time, place and nature of service or supplies.
50. Were you ever engaged in holding in custody, directly or indirectly, any persons taken by the rebel government as prisoners of war, or any persons imprisoned or confined by the Confederate government, or the authorities of any rebel State, for political causes? If so, when, where, under what circumstances, in what capacity were you engaged, and what was the name and rank of your principal?
51. Were you ever in the Union army or navy, or in any service connected therewith? If so, when, where, in what capacity, under whose command or authority, for what period of time, and when and how did you leave service? Produce your discharge papers, so that their contents may be noted herein.

The following questions will be put to every person testifying to the loyalty of claimants or beneficiaries:

52. In whose favor are you here to testify?
53. How long have you known that person altogether, and what part of that time have you intimately known him?
54. Did you live near him during the war, and how far away?
55. Did you meet him often, and about how often, during the war?
56. Did you converse with the claimant about the war, its causes, its progress, and its results? If so, try to remember the more important occasions on which you so conversed, beginning with the first occasion, and state, with respect to each, when it was, where it was, who were present, what caused the conversation, and what the claimant said in substance, if you cannot remember his words.
57. Do you know of anything done by the claimant that showed him to be loyal to the Union cause during the war? If you do, state what he did, when, where, and what was the particular cause or occasion of his doing it? Give the same information about each thing he did that showed him to be loyal.
58. Do you know of anything said or done by the claimant that was against the Union cause? If so, please state with respect to each thing said or done, what it was, when it was, where it was, and what particular compulsion or influence caused him to say or do it.
59. If you have heard of anything said or done by the claimant, either for the Union cause or against it, state from whom you heard it, when you heard it and what you heard.

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60. What was the public reputation of the claimant for loyalty or disloyalty to the United States during the war? If you profess to know his public reputation, explain fully how you know it, whom you heard speak of it, and give the names of other persons who were neighbors during the war that could testify to this public reputation.
61. Who were the known and prominent Union people of the neighborhood during the war, and do you know that such persons could testify to the claimant's loyalty?
62. Were you, yourself, an adherent of the Union cause during the war? If so, did the claimant know you to be such, and how did he know it?
63. Do you know of any threats, molestations, or injury inflicted upon the claimant, or his family, or his property, on account of his adherence to the Union cause? If so, give all the particulars.
64. Do you know of any act done or language used by the claimant that would have prevented him from establishing his loyalty to the Confederacy? If so, what act or what language?
65. Can you state any other facts within your own knowledge in proof of the claimant's loyalty during the war? If so, state all the facts and give all the particulars.

The following questions concerning the ownership of property charged in claims will be put to all claimants, or the representatives of deceased claimants:

66. Who was the owner of the property charged in this claim when it was taken, and how did such person become owner?
67. If any of the property was taken from a farm or plantation, where was such farm or plantation situated, what was its size, how much was cultivated, how much was woodland, and how much was waste land?
68. Has the person who owned the property when taken since filed a petition in bankruptcy, or been declared a bankrupt?

The following questions will be put to female claimants:

69. Are you married or single? If married, when were you married? Was your husband loyal to the cause and Government of the United States throughout the war? Where does he now reside, and why is he not joined with you in the petition? How many children have you? Give their names and ages. Were any of them in the Confederate service during the war? If you claim that the property named in your petition is your sole and separate property, state how you came to own it separately from your husband; how your title was derived; when your ownership of it began. Did it ever belong to your husband? If the property for which you ask pay is wood, timber, rails, or the products of a farm, how did you get title to the farm? If by deed, can you file copies of the deeds? If single, have you been married? If a widow, when did your husband die? Was he in the Confederate army? Was he in the civil service of the Confederacy? Was he loyal to the United States Government throughout the war? Did he leave any children? How many? Are any now living? Give their names and ages. Are they not interested in this claim? If they are not joined in this petition, why not? State fully how your title to the property specified in the petition was obtained. Did you ever belong to any sewing society organized to make clothing for Confederate soldiers or their families, or did you assist in making any such clothing, or making flags, or other military equipments, or preparing or furnishing delicacies or supplies for Confederate hospitals or soldiers?

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The following questions will be put to colored claimants:

70. Were you a slave or free at the beginning of the war? If ever a slave, when did you become free? What business did you follow after obtaining your freedom? Did you own this property before or after you became free? When did you get it? How did you become owner, and from whom did you obtain it? Where did you get the means to pay for it? What was the name and residence of your master, and is he still living? Is he a witness for you, and if not, why not? Are you in his employ now, or do you live on his land or on land bought from him? Are you in his debt? What other person besides yourself has any interest in this claim?

The following questions will be put to all colored witnesses in behalf of white claimants:

71. Were you formerly the slave of the claimant? Are you now in his service or employment? Do you live on his land? Are you in his debt? Are you in any way to share in this claim if allowed?

The following questions will be put to claimants and witnesses who testify to the taking of property, omitting in the case of each claimant or witness any questions that are clearly unnecessary:

72. Were you present when any of the property charged in this claim was taken? Did you actually see any taken? If so, specify what you saw taken.
73. Was any of the property taken in the night time, or was any taken secretly, so that you did not know of it at the time?
74. Was any complaint made to any officer of the taking of any of the property? If so, give the name, rank and regiment of the officer, and state who made the complaint to him, what he said and did in consequence, and what was the result of the complaint.
75. Were any vouchers or receipts asked for or given? If given, where are the vouchers or receipts? If lost, state fully how lost. If asked and not given, by whom were they asked, who was asked to give them, and why were they refused or not given? State very fully in regard to the failure to ask or obtain receipts.
76. Has any payment ever been made for any property charged in this claim? Has any payment been made for any property taken at the same times as the property charged in this claim? Has any payment been made for any property taken from the same claimant during the war, and if so, when, by whom, for what property and to what amount? Has this property, or any part of it, been included in any claim heretofore presented to Congress, or any court, department or officer of the United States, or to any board of survey, military commission, State commission or officer, or any other authority? If so, when and to what tribunal or officers was the claim presented; was it larger or smaller in amount than this claim, and how is the difference explained, and what was the decision, if any, of the tribunal to which it was presented?
77. Was the property charged in this claim taken by troops encamped in the vicinity, or were they on the march, or were they on a raid or expedition, or had there been any recent battle or skirmish?
78. You will please listen attentively while the list of items, but not the quantities, is read to you, and as each kind of property is called off, say whether you saw any such property taken.

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79. Begin now with the first item of property you have just said you saw taken, and give the following information about it. 1st. Describe its exact condition, as for instance, if corn, whether green or ripe, standing or harvested, in shuck, or husked, or shelled; if lumber, whether new or old, in buildings or piled; if grain, whether growing or cut. 2^d. State where it was. 3^d. What was the quantity; explain fully how you know the quantity, and if estimated, describe your method of making the estimate. 4th. Describe the quality to your best judgment. 5th. State as nearly as you can the market value of such property at the time in United States money. 6th. Say when the property was taken. 7th. Give the name of the detachment, regiment, brigade, division, corps, or army, taking the property, and the names of any officers belonging to the command. 8th. Describe the precise manner in which the property was taken into possession by the troops, and the manner in which it was removed. 9th. State as closely as you can how many men, animals, wagons, or other means of transport, were engaged in the removal, how long they were occupied, and to what place they removed the property. 10th. State if any officers were present; how you knew them to be officers; what they said or did in relation to the property, and give the names of any, if you can. 11th. Give any reasons that you may have for believing that the taking of the property was authorized by the proper officers or that it was for the necessary use of the army.
80. Now take the next item of property you saw taken and give the same information, and so proceed to the end of the list of items.

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