



Researching Southern Claims Commission Records



The filmed Southern Claims Commission files for the approved claims for Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, and West Virginia, 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 (SLCL).

Background

Between 3 March 1871 and 3 March 1873, Southerners filed 22,298 claims before the Southern Claims Commission (SCC) based on the fact they

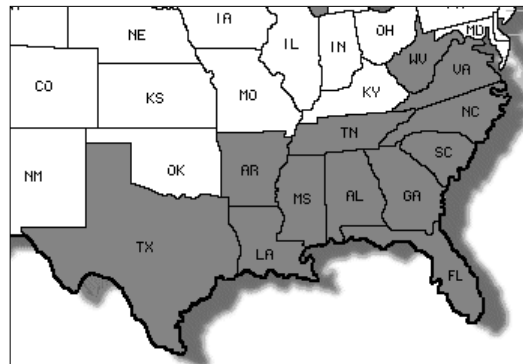
- were loyal to the Union during the Civil War
- had quartermaster stores or supplies taken by or furnished to the Union Army during the rebellion (Later, materials supplied to or taken by the U.S. Navy were also included.)

Southern Loyalists made 22,298 claims for property losses totaling \$60,258,150.44. However, only 7,092 claims (32%) were approved for settlements totaling \$4,636,920.69. Claimants had to prove their loyalty and loss through the testimony of others. The paper trail created by the claimants and the people who came forward to testify, for or against, included relatives, neighbors, friends, former slaves, and free people of color. Their testimony provides a wealth of information about individuals living in the South during the Civil War.

States Affected

Claims were made to the Southern Claims Commission based on losses in the twelve states in rebellion at the beginning of the Civil War. Those states were:

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia
- West Virginia (was part of Virginia when it seceded from the Union)



CONTENTS

RESOURCES	3
STEP-BY-STEP SEARCH STRATEGY FOR A CLAIM	
Basic Steps for Any Claim	5
Steps for Approved Claims	7
Steps for Barred Claims	9
Appealed Barred Claims	10
Steps for Disallowed Claims	11
Appealed Disallowed Claims	12

NOTE:

Mention is made of Ancestry and Fold3 subscription databases in relation to Southern Claims Commission indexes and document images they make available. Such mention is made for informational purposes only and is not intended to be an advertisement or endorsement of either database.

Ancestry refers to either Ancestry.com (for individuals) or AncestryLibraryEdition (for institutions) subscription databases. AncestryLibraryEdition is available in Special Collections Department and at every St. Louis County Library branch.

Fold3 (formerly Footnote.com) refers to Fold3.com, a subscription database, which is available in Special Collections Department, and at every St. Louis County Library branch. Remote access for this database is also available, but requires a valid St. Louis County Library card and residence within the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area.

SOUTHERN CLAIMS COMMISSION RESOURCES

The resources are listed in the order in which a researcher would use them:

- Indexes
- Descriptive pamphlets
- Film/fiche and subscription databases
- Questions asked

Indexes

- *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War*, by Gary B. Mills (973.745 M657S and R 973.745 M657S and also available on Ancestry)
Lists all claimants in alphabetical order; further tells state and county, commission (claim) number, office and report numbers (needed to find disallowed claims), year, and status of claim. This is considered the definitive index for Southern Claims.
- *Civil War Claims in the South: An Index of Civil War Damage Claims Filed Before the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*, by Gary B. Mills (R 973.717 M657C)
Lists claims by states, then alphabetically by name of claimant. Use *Southern Loyalists* or *Consolidated Index* for the additional information needed to pursue a claim.
- *Consolidated Index of Claims Reported by the Commissioner of Claims to the House of Representatives from 1871 to 1880*, compiled under supervision of J. B. Holloway (R 929.3 U58C)
Lists all claimants in alphabetical order; further tells state, commission (claim) number, office and report numbers (needed to find disallowed claims), year, amount claimed, amount allowed, amount disallowed, status, and nature of claim (animals, crops, lumber, etc.)
 - This index is available on the following National Archives microfilm publications:
 - ✓ P2257, Part 1, *Records of the U.S. House of Representatives: Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880* [Best copy]
 - ✓ M87 – roll 14, *Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880)*
 - ✓ M1407, first four fiche, *Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*.
- *Geographical List of Claims*
Lists claims alphabetically by state, county and then claimant. This helps determine which individuals in a "neighborhood" filed claims.
 - Available on National Archives microfilm publication M87, roll 13, *Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880)*
 - [Available on Special Collections' Web site](#) as Adobe PDF files

Descriptive Pamphlets

A Descriptive Pamphlet (DP) tells about the records on a particular film/fiche set. It also includes an individual fiche list or roll-by-roll list which can determine the fiche or roll of film needed for a specific claim. The following links lead to complete copies of the DP for each listed film/fiche set (in PDF format) on the Special Collections Web site:

- M87, [Records of the Commissioners of Claims](#) (*Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*)
- M1407, [Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880](#)
- M2062, *Southern Claims Commission* [Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Alabama](#)
- M1658, *Southern Claims Commission* [Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Georgia](#)
- M2094, *Southern Claims Commission* [Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Virginia](#)
- M1762, *Southern Claims Commission* [Approved Claims, 1871–1880: West Virginia](#)

Film/Fiche and Subscription Databases

The Southern Claims Commission (SCC) film/fiche listed below are part of the Julius K. Hunter & Friends African American Research Collection in Special Collections. To find out where these film and fiche are shelved, consult the “[Microfilm and Microfiche Cabinet and Shelf Location Guide](#)” for Special Collections on the SLCL website or ask a librarian. Records that are also available on Ancestry and Fold3 subscription databases are noted accordingly.

- *Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*, M1407 [fiche, Ancestry, and Fold3]
- *Records of the Commissioners of Claims* (*Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*), M87 [film]
- [Records of the U.S. House of Representatives: Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880](#), P2257 [film] (part two includes summary reports of the Commissioners of Claims in all cases reported to Congress as disallowed under the Act of March 3, 1871 – 4 vols.)
- *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Alabama*, M2062 [film, Ancestry, and Fold3]
- *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Georgia*, M1658 [fiche, Ancestry, and Fold3]
- *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Virginia*, M2094 [film, Ancestry, and Fold3]
- *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: West Virginia*, M1762 [film, Ancestry, and Fold3]
- [U.S. Court of Claims Docket Cards for Congressional Case Files, ca. 1884–1943](#), M2007 [film]

Questions Asked

There were three versions of the questions to be asked of claimants and witnesses

- [Initial version — 1871](#)
- [Amended version — 1872](#)
- [Final version — 1874](#)

STEP-BY-STEP SEARCH STRATEGY FOR A CLAIM

Basic Steps

Records generated by the Southern Claims Commission (SCC) are multi-faceted in nature, so it is helpful to use a step-by-step approach to direct your research.

1. Determine which of your ancestors might be in the records of the SCC.

Study the map at the beginning of this guide showing the twelve states from which claims could be made to the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission). Then make a list of all your ancestors who lived or owned property during the Civil War in any of those states. No matter their wealth or ethnic background, their presence or ownership of property in one of those states during the Civil War makes it possible that they were in some way included in SCC records.

2. Did your person file a claim with the SCC?

To find out, check either or both of the following alphabetical indexes:

- *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War: The Southern Claims Commission* (alphabetical by name of claimant) [R973.745/M657S and also on Ancestry]
Beyond claimant's name, county, and state, this index tells
 - commission number, office number, and report number
 - year
 - status of claim
- *The Consolidated Index of Claims* (alphabetical by name of claimants) [R929.3 U58C in printed and bound form; *Records of the U.S. House of Representatives: Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880*, P2257, Part 1, in microfilm format]
Beyond claimant's name and state, this index tells
 - commission number, office number, and report number
 - year
 - amount of money claimed, and how much was allowed or disallowed
 - whether barred, withdrawn, or dismissed (status of the claim)
 - nature of the claim (horses, corn, wheat, or other quartermaster stores)

3. Find out in which county a claim was filed.

Once you know the state where the property was taken, then it is helpful to also find out the county. If you do not know it already, consult either *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War*, mentioned in number two above, or his earlier index listed below.

- *Civil War Claims in the South: An Index of Civil War Damage Claims Filed Before the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880* (alphabetical by state, then by name of claimant) [R973.717/M657C]

4. Find out who in a specific county or neighborhood filed claims.

Whether or not your ancestor filed a claim, it is important to review the list of claimants from your ancestor's county and maybe even neighboring counties to see who *did* file claims.

Why might a geographic approach be helpful? Because your ancestor may have given *testimony* as a witness for a relative, neighbor, friend, former slave, or former slave owner who filed a claim, or one or more of those individuals may have *mentioned* your ancestor in their testimony.

Review the [Geographical List](#) of SCC claimants organized by state, then county, then name of claimant. [This list is found on the Special Collections' Web site in PDF format and on roll 13 of National Archives microfilm publication M87, *Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880)*.]

- Within the geographical list, locate the section for the state and county in which your ancestor lived, and then review the claimants.
- How many claimants do you recognize from that county?
Were any of them relatives or neighbors to your person?
If your ancestor was a slave prior to the Civil War, is one of the claimants possibly his or her last slave owner?
- Print a copy of the list of claimants from each county of interest.

The SCC records for people from your ancestor's county tell about the "neighborhood" and events that occurred there during the Civil War. Even if you cannot find information about your ancestor, you will get a "feel" for what life was like in a specific community.

5. The next step in finding a specific SCC claim depends on whether the status of the claim was approved, barred, or disallowed.

Approved: Claim was approved and money was granted. Usually the amount paid to the claimant was only a small percentage of what was originally claimed.

Barred: Claim process was never completed so the SCC never considered the claim. This may have happened because

- Paper work for the claim was not completed.
- Investigators confirmed disloyalty or Confederate activity which made the claimant ineligible.

Disallowed: Claim was completed and went through the full process, but the SCC decided no money would be granted. Claimant may have lacked sufficient proof of loyalty, proof of ownership of goods, or that the claimed materials were officially taken by the U.S. Army or Navy.

STEPS FOR APPROVED CLAIMS

Follow the steps listed below **ONLY** if you are researching a Southern Claims Commission claim that was **approved**.

A6. If the approved claim was from *Alabama*

For online digital images, use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the desired name and its connecting documents. To use film, consult the [Descriptive Pamphlet](#) (DP) for *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Alabama* (National Archives microfilm publication M2062) to determine which film roll will contain the file for a specific claim.

A7. If the approved claim was from *Georgia*

For online digital images, use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the desired name and its connecting documents. To use fiche, consult the [Descriptive Pamphlet](#) (DP) for *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Georgia* (National Archives microfilm publication M1658) to determine the fiche number for a specific claim.

A8. If the approved claim was from *Virginia*

For online digital images, use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the desired name and its connecting documents. To use film, consult the [Descriptive Pamphlet](#) (DP) for *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: Virginia* (National Archives microfilm publication M2094) to determine which film roll will contain the file for a specific claim.

A9. If the approved claim was from *West Virginia*

For online digital images, use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the desired name and its connecting documents. To use fiche, consult the [Descriptive Pamphlet](#) (DP) for *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871–1880: West Virginia* (National Archives microfilm publication M1762) to determine which film roll will contain the file for a specific claim.

Ancestry and Fold3 databases and the film and fiche sets for approved claims are available in Special Collections as well as at other research facilities.

A10. Approved claims for the remaining eight SCC states not microfilmed.

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| ✓ Arkansas | ✓ Louisiana | ✓ North Carolina | ✓ Tennessee |
| • Florida | ✓ Mississippi | ✓ South Carolina | • Texas |

In the fall of 2011, Fold3 began the process of digitizing the approved claims for the six states shown above with checkmarks. A subscription is not required to search Fold3, but is needed to view SCC images. Currently (Feb 2012), contact the National Archives directly (see options 2 and 3 in the following table) for price quote and copies of approved claims from Florida or Texas.

OBTAINING A COPY OF AN APPROVED SCC CLAIM, WHICH WAS NEVER MICROFILMED**OPTION 1. CHECK FOR DIGITAL COPY**

- Before proceeding, check Fold3 to see if the needed file is available on their Web site.

OPTION 2. REQUEST PRICE QUOTE ONLINE FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- Go to www.archives.gov/contact
- Because NARA updates this webpage periodically, the actual wording on the "Contact" webpage will change. In general, look for a link that says something such as "questions about research and records." Follow that or similar links until given the opportunity to enter and submit a question.
- Submit a question asking for a price quote for the approved claim.

Include in your message

- fact that you are seeking an approved Southern Claims Commission claim
- full name of the claimant
- commission claim number
- state from which claim was made

In turn ask for

- availability of the original documents for the claim
- price quote for a photocopy or digital image of the documents

Be sure to provide

- your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply

OPTION 3. MAIL A WRITTEN PRICE REQUEST TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

National Archives and Records Administration
Reference Section
700 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20408

Be sure to provide

- all information listed above regarding the SCC claim
- your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply.

If the National Archives tells you the case file is missing, consult the chart entitled "Accessing Southern Claims Commission Records" that is opposite the title page of Gary Mills' book, *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War*, for other possible places within the National Archives to search.

STEPS FOR BARRED CLAIMS

Follow the steps listed below **ONLY** if you are researching a Southern Claims Commission claim that was **barred**.

Keep in mind that while barred claims traditionally contain less information than disallowed or approved, **they can still provide important information**.

B6. Begin your search.

For online images, use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the name you seek. If you find it, follow through to its connected document images.

To use fiche, [consult the "Barred Claims" section of the Descriptive Pamphlet \(DP\) for microfiche set M1407, Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880](#), to determine which fiche to use for the name you seek. The barred claims appear on pages 87–98 in the DP.

The barred claims are arranged on the fiche in alphabetical order by the name of the claimant. In its listing for the barred claims, the DP shows **only** the first name on each fiche so it does not give the range of names connected to that fiche number. Compare the first name listed for consecutive fiche to determine which has the range of names that will contain your person.

B7. Locate a copy of the needed fiche.

Locate the needed fiche and review the file. When pulling the fiche number from the drawer, check at the top of the first fiche to see how many fiche sheets apply to that fiche number. For example, "1 of 1" indicates there is only one fiche sheet for a specified fiche number. A listing of "1 of 2" indicates there are two fiche sheets for that fiche number and your person may be on the second fiche sheet.

Note: The fiche for barred claims are available in Special Collections as well as at other research facilities. Individual fiche may also be [purchased from the National Archives](#) and then viewed on a microfiche reader available to you at your library or elsewhere in your community.

B8. Was a barred claim appealed?

Sometimes, a barred claim was later appealed, and the files from such an appeal can contain a great deal of information. An indication that a barred claim was appealed might be a single document following the claimant's file folder that says "Cong. No. ###" and/or possibly a notation such as "Rec'd sundry papers in above case" and signed by someone from the Court of Claims. "House of Representatives" may also appear as part of that notation.

B9. If claim was appealed—check for Court of Claims docket number.

Check [U.S. Court of Claims Docket Cards for Congressional Case Files, ca. 1884–1943](#) (M2007) to see if it contains an index card for the claimant you are researching. Keep in mind that SCC claims were not the only claims taken before the Court of Claims. Therefore, the existence of an index card does not guarantee that the claim to which it refers was an SCC claim.

B10. Query National Archives for availability and cost of copies for appealed claim.

Appealed claims have not been microfilmed, nor are they digitized. It is therefore necessary to contact the National Archives to determine if the documents for the appeal of a barred claim are still available as not all claims have survived.

When making your request, be sure to include in your message

- fact that you are seeking a Southern Claims Commission barred claim which you believe was appealed
- full name of the claimant
- commission claim number
- state from which claim was made

and in turn ask for

- the availability of the original documents for the claim and its appeal
- a price quote for a photocopy or digital image of those documents

SUBMITTING A QUERY ABOUT A BARRED SCC CLAIM THAT WAS APPEALED
<p>OPTION 1. REQUEST PRICE QUOTE ONLINE FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to www.archives.gov/contact • Because NARA updates this webpage periodically, the actual wording on the “Contact” webpage will change. In general, look for a link that says something such as “questions about research and records.” Follow that or similar links until given the opportunity to enter and submit a question. • Submit a question asking for a price quote for the barred claim that was appealed. <p>Be sure to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information listed above regarding the approved claim • your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply.
<p>OPTION 2. MAIL A WRITTEN PRICE REQUEST TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National Archives and Records Administration Reference Section 700 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20408</p> <p>Be sure to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all information listed above regarding the SCC claim • your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply.

Appeals can be quite lengthy, and because they were filed at a later date, they were sometimes filed by the heirs of the original claimant.

STEPS FOR DISALLOWED CLAIMS

Follow the steps listed below **ONLY** if you are researching a Southern Claims Commission claim that was **disallowed**.

D6. Have the report & office numbers for each claim.

Be sure that you have written down the **report** and **office** number for each disallowed claim as listed in the *Consolidated Index of Claims* or in *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War*.

D7. Begin your search.

Use Ancestry or Fold3 to search for the name you seek. If you find it, follow through to its connected document images.

To use fiche, [consult the "Disallowed Claims" section of the Descriptive Pamphlet \(DP\) for microfiche set M1407, Barred and Disallowed Case Files of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880](#), to determine which fiche will contain the records for the name you seek. The disallowed claims are in numerical order by report, then office number, and appear on pages 1–86 of the DP, which is available on the Special Collections web site. If you do not have the report and office number for a claim, see step 2 above for the indexes which will provide that information.

D8. Locate a copy of needed fiche.

The fiche for disallowed claims are available in Special Collections as well as at other research facilities. [Individual fiche may also be purchased from the National Archives](#) and then viewed on a microfiche reader available to you at your library or elsewhere in your community. Digital images of disallowed claims are also being made available on Ancestry and Fold3.

D9. Some files contain only one document.

When viewing the fiche, you may find that there is only a single document following the file folder for the person you are researching. That may be an indication that the disallowed claim was appealed. Look for a "Cong. No. ###" and/or possibly a notation such as "Rec'd sundry papers in above case" and signed by someone from the Court of Claims. "House of Representatives" may also appear as part of that one-page note.

D10. Check for Court of Claims docket number to see if claim was appealed.

Check microfilm M2007, *U.S. Court of Claims Docket Cards for Congressional Case Files, ca. 1884–1943*, to see if it contains an index card for the claimant you are researching. Keep in mind that SCC claims were not the only claims taken before the Court of Claims. Therefore, the existence of an index card does not guarantee that the claim to which it refers was an SCC claim.

D11. Query NARA for availability and cost of copies for appealed claim.

Appealed claims have not been microfilmed. It is therefore necessary to contact the National Archives to find out if the documents for an appealed claim are still available, as not all claims have survived, and if available, the cost of photocopying.

When making your request, be sure to include in your message

- fact that you are seeking a Southern Claims Commission disallowed claim which you believe was appealed
- full name of the claimant
- commission claim number
- report and office numbers
- state from which claim was made

and in turn ask for

- the availability of the original documents for the claim and its appeal
- a price quote for a photocopy or digital image of those documents

SUBMITTING A QUERY ABOUT A DISALLOWED SCC CLAIM THAT WAS APPEALED
<p>OPTION 1. REQUEST PRICE QUOTE ONLINE FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES</p> <p>Go to www.archives.gov/contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because NARA updates this webpage periodically, the actual wording on the “Contact” webpage will change. In general, look for a link that says something such as “questions about research and records.” Follow that or similar links until given the opportunity to enter and submit a question. • Submit a question asking for a price quote for the disallowed claim that was appealed. <p>Be sure to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information listed above regarding the approved claim • your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply
<p>OPTION 2. MAIL A WRITTEN PRICE REQUEST TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">National Archives and Records Administration Reference Section 700 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20408</p> <p>Be sure to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all information listed above regarding the SCC claim • your name, e-mail address, postal mailing address, and phone number for a reply.

Appeals can be quite lengthy, and because they were filed at a later date, they were sometimes filed by the heirs of the original claimant.

D12. Claims that No Longer Exist

Not all Southern Claims files still exist. If the above steps for a disallowed claim lead to a dead end, check the second part of microfilm set P2257, [Records of the U.S. House of Representatives: Southern Claims Commission, 1871–1880](#), which includes the Commissioners’ Summary Reports for all disallowed cases. If the original file no longer exists, the summary report may be the only surviving record of the claim.

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