



SOUTHERN CLAIMS COMMISSION

AMENDED VERSION OF QUESTIONS FOR CLAIMANTS AND WITNESSES – 1872

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 104–105, *Records of the Commissioners of Claims (Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880)*

Revised Questions to be Answered by Claimants

1. What is your name, age, residence, and occupation?
2. Where did you reside from the 1st of April, 1861, to the 1st of June, 1865? If on your own land, what is the size of your farm? How much of your farm was cultivated, and how much was woodland? Where is it situated? What was your occupation during that time? Did you change your residence or business during that time? If so, where was your new residence, and what [was] your new business?
3. Did you ever pass beyond the military or naval lines of the United States and enter the rebel lines? If so, how often, when, where, and for what purpose, and how long did you stay within the Confederate lines on each occasion?

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4. Did you ever take any oath or affirmation to bear allegiance to the so-called Confederate States, or to aid or support them in any way, or to "bear true faith," or "yield obedience" to them? If so, when and where? State fully in regard to the same.
5. Have you ever taken any amnesty oath? If so, when, where, and under what condition? Have you been pardoned by the President? If so, when and where, and upon what conditions?
6. Were you ever directly or indirectly, or in any manner, connected with the civil service of the so-called Confederate States? If so, how, when, and where, in what capacity, and for what periods? Was any oath required of you for such service; and if so, what?
7. Did you ever hold any office or place of trust, honor, or profit under the Confederate Government, or under any of the States or Territories subordinate thereto? If so, state the nature and character of the office, the place at which, and the period for which you held it?
8. Did you hold any clerkship or have any agency or employment of any kind, for, or under, or for the benefit of the so-called Confederate States? If so, state fully in regard to the same.
9. Were you ever, in any capacity, in the military or naval service of the so-called Confederate States, or of any State or Territory subordinate thereto?
10. Were you ever an officer or soldier in the Confederate army? If yea, when, where, how long, and when did you leave such service?
[Each one of these questions must be fully answered.]
11. Were you ever in the State militia of any State while subordinate to the Confederacy? If yea, state when, where, how long, and when you left the service?
12. Were you ever in the home guard, or upon any vigilance committee, or committee of safety, which subject to the Confederacy? If yea, state when, where, and how long?
13. If you claim that you were conscripted into the rebel service, state fully all the circumstances.
14. Did you ever furnish a substitute for the rebel army? If yea, state fully all the circumstances.
15. Were you directly or indirectly, or in any way, connected with or employed in the quartermaster's department of the Confederate service or the commissary's department, or the medical department, the engineers' department, the ordnance department, the impressment service, the provost-marshal's department, or any other branch of the Confederate service?
16. Were you employed on any railroad in the service of the Confederate government? Did you aid in the transportation of soldiers, munitions of war, or supplies for the Confederate government? If yea, state fully all the circumstances. If you claim that what you did was not "giving aid or comfort" to the rebel cause, state fully all the facts and reasons for such your claim.
17. Did you at any time have charge of any stores or supplies for the use of the Confederate army, navy, or government, or the charge or care of trains, team or teams, wagon or wagons, vessels, boats, or other craft, or munitions of war, for the use of the Confederate army or navy? If so, state fully in regard to the same.
18. Were you ever in any service, employment, or business of any kind whatsoever for the Confederate government, or its army or navy?
Did you ever furnish any aid, or any supplies or stores, or property of any kind, to or for the so-called Confederate States, or any State in rebellion, or to the army, navy, militia, home guards, armed forces, or military organizations thereof, or for any officer, soldier, or sailor thereof? If so,

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state fully in regard to the same. Did you ever give any information to any officer, soldier, or sailor of the Confederate army or navy, or to any person employed by or for the so-called Confederate States, or acting on their behalf, or for their benefit, which might aid in any way any military or naval operations carried on against the United States? State fully in regard to the same.

19. Were you in any manner employed in the manufacture of munitions of war, of clothing, of boots, shoes, saddles, harness, or leather; of equipment for soldiers, or of any stores or supplies for the use of the Confederate army or navy; or were you in any way employed by, or did you aid or assist, others engaged in such manufacture? If so, state when and where, and by or for whom you were so employed, and for what period of time?
20. Were you ever, directly or indirectly, employed in the collection, impressment, or purchase, or the sale of stores, supplies or any property for the use or benefit of the Confederate government, or any State in rebellion, or the army, navy, or other forces thereof? Did you have any interest or share in contracts with, or purchases for, the Confederate government, or its army or navy, or any State in rebellion, or its forces? If so, state fully all particulars.
21. Were you ever engaged in blockade running, or illicit traffic or intercourse between the lines, or were you ever in any way interested therein? Did you ever have any interest or share in any goods, wares, merchandise, stores, or supplies brought into or exported from the so-called Confederate States during the war? If so, state fully all particulars.
22. Did you leave the so-called Confederate States between the 19th of April, 1861, and 19th of April, 1865? If so, when and how did you leave; where did you go; for what purpose; how long were you absent; in what business were you engaged while absent, and when and to what place did you return in the so-called Confederate States?
23. Were you the owner, or part owner, or in any way interested in any vessel used in navigating the ocean to or from any port in the Confederacy, or upon any waters in the Confederacy? If so, what vessels, when and where employed, and in what business?
24. Were you ever arrested by the Confederate government, or by any officer, soldier, or other person professing to act therefor, or for any State in rebellion? If so, when, where, by whom, and how long were you kept under arrest? How did you get released? Did you, for the sake of being released, or upon release, take any oath of any kind to the Confederate government? If so, what? [Put the same questions as to arrest by the United States Government, etc.]
25. Was any of your property ever taken by the Confederate authorities, or by any officer, soldier, or other person acting or assuming to act on their behalf, or in behalf of any State in rebellion? If so, what property, when and for what use, and have you received pay therefor?
26. Were you ever threatened with damage or injury to your person, family, or property on account of your Union sentiments? If so, state when, by whom, and what the threats were?
27. Were you ever molested or in any way injured on account of your Union sentiments? If so, state fully all the particulars.
28. Did you ever contribute anything—any money or property—in aid of the United States Government, or in aid of the Union army or cause? If so, state fully as to the same.
29. Did you ever *do* anything for the United States Government or its army, or for the Union cause, during the war? If so, state fully what you did.
30. Had you any near relatives—any *husband, son, brother, or nephew*—in the Confederate army? If yea, state *his name*, whether he is now living, and where he resides. Did you furnish him with any

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military equipments, any clothing, or any money? Did you contribute in any way to aid or support him while in the rebel service?

[Each of the questions under No. 30 must be fully answered.]

31. Have you owned any Confederate bonds or any interest or share therein; or had any share or interest in any loans to the Confederate government; or did you in any way contribute to *support the credit* of the so-called Confederate States during the late rebellion?
32. Have you ever given aid and comfort to the rebellion? If so, state fully all the circumstances.
33. Were you ever engaged in making raids into the United States from Canada, or engaged in destroying the commerce of the United States in the lakes and rivers adjoining Canada?
34. 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 State in rebellion, for political causes? If so, when, where, and under what circumstances? In what capacity were you engaged, and what was the name, rank, and command of your principal?
35. Were you ever a member of any society or association for the imprisonment, expulsion, execution, or other persecution of any persons on account of their loyalty to the United States, or did you ever assist in such acts?
36. Were you ever a paroled prisoner of the United States? If so, when and where, and by whom paroled?
37. Have you ever held any office in the Army or Navy of the United States? Were you educated by the United States at the Military Academy at West Point, or at the United States Naval Academy?
38. Did you ever receive any pass from any officer of the Confederate government, or from any person having or assuming to have authority to issue the same? If so, who gave you the pass; for what purpose; for what period of time; did you sign or swear to any promise or obligation in order to get it; or swear or promise to bear "bear true faith and yield obedience to the Confederate States;" did you use the pass, and for what purpose?
39. Are you or were you under the disabilities imposed by the Fourteenth Article of the Amendments to the Constitution of the United States? Have you held any office under the United States Government since the war? If so, what office; and did you take the (so-called) "iron-clad" oath?
40. At the beginning of the rebellion did you sympathize with the Union cause, or with the rebellion? What were your feelings and what your language on the subject? On which side did you exert your influence and cast your vote? What did you do, and how did you vote? How did you vote on ratifying the ordinance of secession? After the ordinance of secession was adopted in your State did you adhere to the Union cause, or did you "go with the State?"
41. [Original Question 34.] In conclusion, do you solemnly declare that, from the beginning of hostilities against the United States to the end thereof, your sympathies were constantly with the cause of the United States; that you never, of your own free will and accord, did anything, or offered, or sought, or attempted to do anything, by word or deed, to injure said cause or retard its success, and that you were at all times ready and willing, when called upon, or if called upon, to aid and assist the cause of the Union, or its supporters, so far as you means and power and the circumstances of the case permitted?

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If the claimant be a female, ask the following questions:

42. Are you single or married? 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? Given 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?

If the claimant be a colored person, ask the following questions:

43. Were you a slave or free at the beginning of the war? When did you become free? What was your business after you became free? How and when did you come to own the property named in your petition? How did you get the means to pay for it? Who was your former master? Are you now in his employment? Do you live on his land? Do you live on land purchased of him? Are you indebted to your former master for land or property, and how much? Has anybody any interest in this claim besides yourself? State fully all the facts in your answers to these questions.

**Revised Questions as the Taking or Furnishing of Property,
to be Answered by Claimants and Witnesses.**

1. Were you present when any of the articles of property specified in the claimant's petition were taken?
2. Did you see any of them taken? If so, specify the articles you saw taken.
3. Begin with the first article (Item No. ---) which you have specified that you saw taken, and give a full account of all you saw and heard in connection with the taking of that article?
[The special commissioner should require the witness to state *all the circumstances*; for it is only by a knowledge of *all* of them that the commissioners of claims can judge whether the taking was such a one as the Government is bound to pay for. The common phrase, "I saw the property taken by United States soldiers," is not enough, for there was much lawless taking. The witness should be required to detail the facts as to *each* item, when the items were taken at different times; but if all, or more than one, were taken at the same time, that fact should appear, and then a repetition of the circumstances is needless. The special commissioner must be careful to elicit *all* the facts, as well those against as for the claim, especially as to those articles of property which were the special objects of pillage and theft, such as horses, mules, cattle, hogs, &c. Claimants must bear in mind that a neglect to observe these directions *works to the prejudice of the claimant*, and may defeat the claim.]
4. Where were the articles taken? When were they taken? Give the day, month and year, if you can? By whom were they taken? Did you see more than *one* soldier engaged in the taking? How many soldiers were present? State the number as near as you can? How many helped take the property? How long were they engaged in taking the property?
5. Who were present other than soldiers when you saw them taken? Give the names of all you know?

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6. Was any United States officer, either commissioned or non-commissioned, present at the taking? If so, state his name, rank, regiment, and the command to which he belonged. Did he order the property to be taken? Did he say anything about the taking?
7. Describe how the property was taken, and give a full account of all you saw done, or heard said, upon the occasion of the taking.
8. How was the property removed—by soldiers or in wagons, or in what manner? State fully as to each article taken and removed.
9. To what place was it removed? Did you follow it to such place, or see it, or any portion of it, at any such place, or on its way to such place? How do you know the place to which it was removed?
10. Do you know the use for which the property was taken? What was the use, and how do you know it? Did you see the property so taken used by the United States army? Did you see any *part* of the property so used? State fully all you know as to the property or any of it having been used by the army; and distinguish between what you saw and know, and what you may have heard from others, or may think, or suppose, or infer to be true.
11. Was any complaint made to any officer on account of such taking? If so, state the name, rank, and regiment of the officer. What did he say about it? State fully *all* that he said.
12. Was any voucher or receipt for the property asked for? If so, of whom asked? State name, rank, and regiment. Was any receipt or paper given? If so, produce it, or state where it is, and why it is not produced. If no voucher or receipt was given, state why none was given, and if refused, why it was refused; state *all* that was said about it. State fully all the conversation between any officer or other person taking the property, and the claimant, or any one acting for him.
13. Was the property, or any of it, taken in the night-time? At what hour of the day (as near as you can tell) was it taken? Was any of the property taken secretly, or so that you did not know of it when taken?
14. When the property was taken, was any part of the army *encamped* in that vicinity? If so, state how far from the place where the property was taken, and what was the company, regiment, or brigade there encamped? How long had it been encamped there? How long did it stay there, and when did it leave? Had there been any battle or skirmish near there, just before the property was taken? Did you know the quartermasters, or any of them, or any other officers of the army for whose use the property is supposed to have been taken?
15. Describe clearly the *condition* of the property when taken, and all that tends to show its value at the time and place of taking? Thus, if corn, was it green or ripe? Had it been harvested? Was it in the shock, or husked, or shelled? Where was it? If grain, was it standing; had it been cut; was it in shocks, or in the barn or in stacks; had it been threshed? If horses, mules, or cattle, state when they were taken, how taken, and fully their condition, age, and value. Have you talked with claimant about their value?
16. What means have you of knowing the *quantity* taken? State *particularly* how you estimate the quantity? Did you count or weigh the articles? Give us all your data. How much did you see taken and removed? What quantity was taken in your *presence*? As to quantity, distinguish carefully as to what you *saw and know*, and what you may *think or believe from what you have heard from others*.

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17. If you have testified as to the taking of *wood*, how do you know it was taken? How do you know the quantity? Was it measured? By whom? What was the kind, quality, and value of the wood? Was it taken *in the tree*, standing, or had it been cut? *Where* was it taken?

18. If rails were taken, did you see them taken; how taken: in wagons, or by soldiers? To what place taken? How do you know, and what do you know, as to the quantity taken? Were the rails new or old? Did officers try to prevent their being taken? Was any complaint made to officers on account of the taking?

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