

WHY PENSION?: ESTABLISHING THE REASONS FOR BODY SERVANT PENSIONS USING NEWSPAPER  
AND MAGAZINE DEPICTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

BRYNA O’SULLIVAN: Why Pension?: Establishing the Reasons for Body Servant Pensions Using Newspaper and Magazine Depictions

(Under the direction of Dr. Joseph Glatthaar and Dr. Heather Williams)

Between 1888 and 1927, the legislators of former Confederate states began granting pensions to men that had served as body servants in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. The action seems illogical given the segregated conditions of the South. This paper explores the question of why pensions were offered. Relying upon newspaper and magazine descriptions of the servants, it suggests that pensions were largely the product of changes in body servant image brought about by the Lost Cause and of the changes in attitudes that followed.

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## Introduction

On June 3, 1862, Samuel W. Maurice of Kingtree, South Carolina placed an ad in *The Charleston Daily Courier*. In the ad, he requested a “body servant to go with the undersigned into Camp; whether slave, or free is immaterial.” He continued: “Will give \$8 per month and pay monthly if required.” Maurice wanted to hire an African-American male to act as a man-of-all-work in the Army camp. Such a man would be required to cook, wash clothing, and do anything else his “master” demanded. In camp, he would live alongside the other servants of wealthy Confederates. If he were free, he would earn a wage. If he were enslaved, the wage would go to the man’s slave owner.<sup>1</sup>

In hiring this man, Maurice would join an elite group of Confederates – those who were rich enough to either own or hire men who could serve them in camp. Together, they would bring several thousand servants into the Army and support them throughout the war. These men saw themselves as benefactors to their servants. They called these African-American men either body servants or personal servants. The synonymous terms demonstrated the master’s close relationship to his servant and softened the nature of chattel slavery, making it appear like a modern employer-employee relationship. Although they claimed to care for their servants, these men did not expect to support them financially after the war.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, between 1888 and 1927, Southern states did just that. States offered former body servants pensions based on their service in the Confederate Army. These annual payments usually amounted to around \$25.00 per servant but could be significantly more. Legislators in Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Virginia had

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<sup>1</sup>“WANTED A BODY SERVANT,” *The Charleston Daily Courier*, Charleston, S.C., June 3, 1862, <http://www.genealogybank.com>.

<sup>2</sup>Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA : University Press of Virginia, 1995), 185-86.

passed laws specifically authorizing pensions for servants. In several other states, legislators and state administrators used existing laws to pension specific servants. Each state varied in its application requirements and in the amount of money granted. Despite these differences, the pensions sent a common message: the servant was a sort of honored veteran. That message, however, went against the practices of these states. All supported segregation and discrimination against African-Americans. This contradictory action raises a question: why did state legislators decide to offer pensions?<sup>3</sup>

The Lost Cause acted as the catalyst for the pension movement, while the twin factors of a sense of duty and perceived reinforcement helped turn an idea into law. An ideological movement that treated the war as a civic religion, the Lost Cause encouraged a sense of nostalgia and reverence towards the antebellum South. That movement reshaped the portrayal of body servants. Body servants had been in the background of antebellum life. Lost Cause narratives made them central to the Confederate story: servants became the model slave in an idealized master-relationship. Because the body servants were now an important part of the Confederate past, recognizing them with a pension started to seem logical. Yet, legislators needed an additional push to actually write pension laws. They found it first in a sense of duty. Many of these legislators were former Confederates or the sons of Confederates. Believing in the ideal master-slave relationship, they could cast themselves as dutiful masters who needed to care for their loyal slaves. More simply, they could have felt pity for well-known Confederate figures who were now struggling financially. Second, they found it in the words of African-Americans. Newspapers recounted tales of African-Americans begging for pensions. These men were presented as loyal slaves who still supported their masters. They were also presented as struggling on their own. Legislators could read both how these men had stood up for the Confederacy and how much they needed legislators' support. These factors helped lead to pensions, although they have yet to be addressed by historians.

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<sup>3</sup>John William Oliver, *History of the Civil War Military Pensions, 1861-1865* (Madison, WI: Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, 1917), 5; James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., "Looking for Bob: Black Confederate Pensioners After the Civil War," Mississippi Department of Archives and History <http://mdah.state.ms.us/pubs/pensioners.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2010); "Thomas A. Sykes," Tennessee State Library and Archives, *This Honorable Body* <http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/bios/sykes.html> (accessed June 23, 2011).

Instead of questioning why body servants were pensioned, historians have focused on other aspects of the pension system. Most are interested in the data given in pension applications. Body servants explained what regiments they served, what their duties had been and how long they had served. For James G. Hollandsworth, pension applications provided insight into the roles that African-American non-combatants played during the Civil War. Others study why African-Americans chose to apply for pensions. Ervin L. Jordan's writing provides a typical example of this approach. In his 1995 *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia*, Jordan explained that "several Afro-Virginians' servants called themselves Confederate veterans and believed they were entitled to whatever social status this implied." Jordan focused solely on the African-American side of the story. To completely understand the pensions, study of the other side of the story is very much needed.<sup>4</sup>

That study has challenges, but is not impossible. Lack of insight into the legislators' thoughts poses the greatest difficulty. State archives offer no way to study legislative intent. There is no local equivalent of the federal *Congressional Record*. State legislative journals recorded changes in a law's wording, not the debate over its passage. Newspaper and magazine articles written by white Southerners can fill in some of the gaps. Little can be gleaned by studying an article's editor or author. The name of a newspaper's editor is usually known. However, one is often left to guess how his views impacted the paper's content. Nineteenth century newspapers rarely included a by-line. In most cases, there is no way to identify the author of an article or their individual views. Far more can be gleaned from an article's content. Many articles provide exhaustive depictions of the body servants. A few add details of pension laws. Using this information, one can grasp more than just what legislators likely thought of the servant. One can also perceive what arguments were made for and against his pensioning.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Bell I. Wiley, *Southern Negroes: 1861-1865* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1938); Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968 (reprint)), 39, 50-51; Richard Rollins, ed., *Black Southerners in Gray: Essays on Afro-Americans in Confederate Armies* (Murfreesboro, TN: Southern Heritage Press, 1994); Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA : University Press of Virginia, 1995), 196, 197, 200; Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 9.

<sup>5</sup>"Legislative History & Recording," Tennessee State Library and Archives <http://www.tn.gov/tsla/legislative.htm> (accessed June 23, 2011); "Legislative History in Virginia," The Library of Virginia [http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/leg\\_his.html](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/leg_his.html) (accessed June 23, 2011).

This paper will use newspaper and magazine articles to demonstrate how this movement toward pensions occurred. It will look first at the start of the movement, the impact of the Lost Cause upon that image of the servant and its relationship to the pension. It will then address the factors that turned an idea into law: the idea that servants were owed a debt and the idea that they were requesting legislators' help. Together, these three ideas will demonstrate how the pensions came to be.

## The Lost Cause

The ideological movement known as the Lost Cause started the pension movement by transforming the image of the body servant. It did so in two ways. First, it established that these loyal servants were owed a debt. Former Confederate soldiers and their families, the Lost Cause's supporters, formed a myth of an ideal master-slave relationship. The myth stated that servants were loyal to their masters and that masters cared for their servants. Body servants had supposedly carried out their side of the relationship. Masters – and, in their place, the state – had to fulfill their role. Second, the Lost Cause gave the body servants status within Confederate memory. Confederate sympathizers often sought to honor Confederate leaders through ritual and monuments and in print. In so doing, they also recognized their body servants.

Taking root soon after the Civil War, the Lost Cause had an enormous reach in the white American South. The movement gained its name from the lost battle for the Confederate States of America. It would eventually touch all who had participated. The Lost Cause was started by a group of Confederate generals and political leaders looking to justify their decision to fight against the United States and to explain away military failures. These leaders, including Confederate general Jubal Early, had the necessary influence to spread their ideas. Former Confederate soldiers and their families quickly embraced the Lost Cause.<sup>6</sup>

The result has been called everything from a civic religion to an ideological movement, and a public memory. It encouraged white Southern society to treat a certain version of the Civil War as true: one in which Confederates were

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<sup>6</sup>Gary W. Gallagher, "Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 39, 40; Alan T. Nolan, "The Anatomy of the Myth," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 12; Gary W. Gallagher, "Introduction," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 1-2; Gary W. Gallagher, "Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal A. Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman," In *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*. Ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 39-40.



justified in their actions; Confederate leaders were gentlemen who cared for their families, and slaves were happy, diffident and loyal. This image was popular.<sup>7</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Confederate sympathizers formed social organizations that would help them spread the Lost Cause. Confederate veterans began their fraternal organization, the United Confederate Veterans, in 1889. This national organization replaced smaller local groups that had existed since the war. Able to communicate better within a national organization, veterans followed with reunions and a national publication. The *Confederate Veteran* soon became a publication of national renown. Men were not the only ones to create new social organizations. The Ladies' Memorial Associations of the 1860s and 70s had been small, local women's groups focused on memorializing Confederate veterans. These Associations gave way to a much larger and more powerful organization in 1894. The United Daughters of the Confederacy was soon to wield enormous influence throughout the former Confederate States of America. Made up of daughters and other descendants of veterans, the organization quickly held significant status. Many white Southern women sought membership as a means of social advancement. These men and women together became a potent force. They turned a limited public memory into one that touched the entire South, Confederate veteran or not.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Gary W. Gallagher, "Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 39, 40; Alan T. Nolan, "The Anatomy of the Myth," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 12; Gary W. Gallagher, "Introduction," In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*. Ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 1-2; Gary W. Gallagher, "Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal A. Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman," In *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*. Ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 39-40.

<sup>8</sup>Foner *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877*, 252; Herman Hattaway, "The United Confederate Veterans in Louisiana," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 16, no. 1 (1975), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4231434> (accessed March 10, 2010); David W. Blight, "Review: Untitled," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2004) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3662940> (accessed March 10, 2010); Anne Sarah Rubin, "Review: Untitled," *The Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 3 (2004), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27648533> (accessed March 10, 2010); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), 2-4, 9, 29; Herman Hattaway, "Clio's Southern Soldiers: The United Confederate Veterans and History," *Louisiana History: the Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1971) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4231200> (accessed June 14, 2010); Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum landscape* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 80.

These groups' activities helped spread their ideas about the Lost Cause and about the body servant. The United Daughters of the Confederacy explained its goals as five-fold: "memorial, benevolent, historical, education, and social." To achieve these aims, the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the United Confederate Veterans launched a variety of projects. Women built monuments to the Confederate soldier across the South; they supported aged veterans and their families in old-age homes; and educated children in the history of the "Old South." Men tended to focus on the war itself. United Confederate Veteran camps held annual reunions and promoted the Lost Cause version of the war through the *Confederate Veteran*. They also advocated for "proper" histories of the war through committees. As the men died off, the Daughters added the men's work to what they were already doing. In so doing, they continued toward a common goal: the protection of the Confederate legacy.<sup>9</sup>

These groups began their work by recasting the antebellum social structure in a positive light. The antebellum South had been a slave society. Sympathizers redefined slavery. In their South, slaves were bonded to their masters through a faithful, willing subservience and often by the master's good treatment. By illustrating the antebellum situation in this way, Confederate sympathizers could make themselves the victims of the war. They were fighting to protect a positive good, the racial order as it had existed, and not to disrupt the Union. They could also give themselves an idealized memory in which they could escape the challenges of the contemporary South.<sup>10</sup>

To spread this account of slavery, sympathizers exploited the figure of the body servant. They rewrote his story and spread their version through a variety of mediums. Newspapers were a particular favorite. Writers and editors often had ties to the Lost Cause. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many editors were members of pro-Confederate organizations. Writers were rarely identified in print. Yet, a few historical accounts suggest that they may have also had these ties to the Lost Cause. Each could propose articles that fit with their views. These men and women knew how to make readers accept their description of the body servants. Historian David Currey profiled one such case

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<sup>9</sup>Cox *Dixie's Daughters*, 2-3, 49, 74, 121; John A. Simpson, *Edith D. Pope and Her Nashville Friends: Guardians of the Lost Cause in the Confederate Veteran* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 33-34.

<sup>10</sup>William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 178, 180.

in Franklin, Tennessee. In 1881, Confederate veteran Sam Watkins wrote a series of Civil War articles in the local *Colombia Herald*. Frustrated with economic changes in their area, white Franklin residents quickly accepted his glorified version of antebellum history. It was a way to escape into the past. As Currey demonstrated, readers read and accepted the content of the body servant article, as well as the master-slave relationship it presented.<sup>11</sup>

Writers produced several types of body servant descriptions. Early depictions gave the body servant a small part in a larger tale. The central figure in these stories was a Confederate soldier who occasionally relied on a servant. Later imagery centered on the servant. Articles became more frequent, more varied and more detailed. Articles about the body servant were no longer just stories of the Confederate Army; instead, there were also descriptions of veterans' reunions, newspaper notices of their funerals, and a variety of literary works.

The first articles mentioned the body servant only when discussing his master. In 1876, Carlton McCarthy wrote an article for the Confederate sympathizing *Southern Historical Society Papers*. McCarthy was a Confederate captain and, in 1904, would become mayor of Richmond. A life-long supporter of the Confederate cause, McCarthy set out to recount his war experiences. A key part of his tale was the bond between master and slave. Although many slaveholders were unable to feed their servants by the end of the war, they kept them with the Army. Their relationship altered, but only slightly. McCarthy described their new situation: "Some, however, became company servants, instead of private institutions, and held out faithfully to the end, cooking the rations away in the rear, and at the risk of life carrying them to the line of battle to be devoured with voracity by their "young mahster [sic]." This continued connection supposedly benefited both master and servant. The master was able to care for his servant, while the servant

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<sup>11</sup>Virginia Pierce, "The 1903 Tillman-Gonzales Affair: South Carolina's 'Crime of the Century,'" <http://library.sc.edu/blogs/newspaper/2011/04/18/the-1903-tillman-gon> (accessed June 28, 2011); Darren Grem, "Henry W. Grady (1850-1889), *The New Georgia Encyclopedia* <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id==h-2451> (accessed June 28, 2011); David Currey, "The Virtuous Soldier: Constructing a Usable Confederate Past in Franklin, Tennessee," In *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*. Ed. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 136-137.

was able to remain connected to the master he admired. McCarthy suggested that neither would have participated if they had not had an ideal master-slave relationship.<sup>12</sup>

Later writers made the body servants the center of the story. To portray the body servant, they adapted an existing stereotype of a loyal slave. The figure of the “black mammy” depicted a faithful female slave. Examples of the image dated back to the 1830s, but became more common after the Civil War. An invented version of the enslaved nurse, the mammy figure was much lauded by Confederate sympathizers. She supposedly was a hard worker, with true affection for her master and her masters’ children. Her master’s family was believed to hold the same affection for her. Details of her life outside the mammy role were ignored, so that she could be any of thousands of women forced into that life. This invented figure helped Confederate sympathizers argue the master-slave relationship was a good one. The stereotyped body servant could fulfill the same purpose. For that reason, the male servant was given many of the same characteristics as the mammy.<sup>13</sup>

Like the mammy figure, the body servant stereotype portrayed a slave who had a good relationship with his master. Once again, the image was far different than the reality. The real servants were men of varied backgrounds and personalities. The stereotype was a one-sided figure, lacking a life outside of his service to his master. He had a name but little else. His traits, however, differed slightly from the mammy stereotype. The mammy demonstrated her relationship with the master through her attention to the master’s children; the body servant demonstrated it through his attention to the master himself or to his master’s son. Her relationship was with impressionable children; his was with hard to impress adults. While the mammy showed affection through maternal care, the body servant’s devotion took a different direction: he was forced to demonstrate his affection through devotion on the battlefield.

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<sup>12</sup>Carlton McCarthy, “Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia,” *Southern Historical Society, Southern Historical Society Papers (1876-1905)*, September 1, 1876, 129, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 78; “An Evening of Pleasure,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 2, 1904, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 17 June 2011); Untitled, *The Macon Telegraph*, August 18, 1908, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 17 June 2011).

<sup>13</sup>Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 94-95; Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4, 9.

Writers presented this stereotype of the servant in two ways. The first made up the majority of examples. In that narrative, the body servant became the central character. He was presented as a loyal slave: he was supposed to be devoted to his master, even to the point of sacrificing his own life. The second form of the story – a less common version – exploited the servant as a foil. Authors centered a story about the body servant on some humorous anecdote. In that anecdote, the body servant came across as a fool. His master, in contrast, was shown as kind and sensitive to his servant's needs. Using the body servant, these unidentified writers valorized the master as kind and generous and the servant as unfailingly loyal.

The first of these two types sought to present the body servant as a loyal slave. To do so, the stories focused on the idea of a servant's devotion. As portrayed in these stories, this devotion had three main aspects. First, it required fidelity in the face of a threat. Second, it required long-term commitment to his master, and through him, to a cause. Finally, the servant had to be willing to sacrifice for his master, even to the point of giving up his life. These aspects varied in intensity depending on the author, but all appeared in every story written in this form. Taken together, they challenged the arguments that slaves disliked the system of slavery or sought to question their masters.

Servants supposedly showed many different forms of fidelity. Some remained faithful despite the toils of war. An article in the 1902 San Antonio *The Daily Express* presented one such example. Wade Hampton proposed that Sam, his body servant, go home and see his wife. Sam refused, explaining, “Why, if I go and leab you, what you gwine to do, wid nobody to take keer of you, and what you gwine to do without me, massa? [sic]” His tie to his master supposedly overcame his family ties. Others remained faithful despite a chance at freedom. Union soldiers told Willis, a body servant, that he was free. Willis responded, “He is my master, and will be until one of us dies.” Instead of escaping the war, Willis chose to stay and continue to fight. A heavily circulated story told of a second such servant. Joe, the body servant of Confederate general Jubal Early, refused to accept freedom when it was proffered. He

supposedly remained devoted to his master and “follow[ed] him like a dog.” All of these narratives disputed postbellum arguments that slaves were not faithful to their masters.<sup>14</sup>

Commitment, too, had many forms. Newspapers depicted loyal servants who went beyond the call of duty during the war. According to the tellers, some acts were borderline heroic. One Confederate soldier recollected: “I remember an occasion where a colored man, a body servant to General Forrest, saved his life.” Others served equally well off the battlefield. A *Confederate Veteran* article recounted how one servant walked for miles to take his master’s watch to his wife. He then collapsed from fatigue and died. Another author depicted a servant fulfilling his promise to his mother. The woman, the master’s nurse, told her son to “ to take care of him [his master] and to bring him back to her.” To do so, the servant went on the battlefield and carried the master out under fire. This commitment further emphasized the tie between master and slave.<sup>15</sup>

Servants appeared to remain committed to the master-slave relationship well after the war. Some servants supposedly financially supported their slave owners. A body servant named Jerry cared for his master’s widow after her husband’s death. Without family or friends to support her, she had been left destitute. It was Jerry who arranged the woman’s pension. Other forms of commitment were more subtle. Some men attended the funerals of their former masters. Others participated in veterans’ reunions. There, they supposedly demonstrated their devotion to their former master and to the Confederate cause. A body servant from Rome, Georgia was a favorite. Calling himself “Daddy,” the man was well-known in the United Confederate Veterans. Lige Moore was equally well known and an honored

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<sup>14</sup>The original version of this article supposedly appeared in the *New York Mail and Express*, which as of yet, I have not been able to locate. Julian Ralph, “Hampton’s Body Servant: A Negro Slave’s Fidelity to the Confederate General,” *The Daily Express*, May 19, 1902, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 11, 2010). The second article was recopied many times. I have yet to find the original source. “Jube Early’s Nigger Joe,” *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, CO., July 8, 1886, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed 12 June 2011); “General Early’s Black Servant,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 7, 1886, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 9, 2010); “A Change of Boss,” *The Daily News* (Charlotte), March 15, 1890, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 9, 2010).

<sup>15</sup>The first article was supposedly reprinted from the Owensboro (Ky.) *Inquirer*, which thus far, I have been unable to verify. It was likely recopied to prove point – that African-Americans were war heroes. “A Kentucky War Story. An old Confederate soldier said recently,” *The Christian Recorder*, August 29, 1895, <http://www.accessible.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); “Uncle Jeff,” in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XXVII* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 153; Burgess H. Scott “Fidelity of Negro Servants,” in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume V* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 119.

member of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Georgia Infantry. Less ostentatious servants attended reunions of Green's Brigade and other branches of the Confederate Army. No matter the form of their commitment, these servants supposedly put their masters and their masters' goals above themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Sacrifice also varied widely. Some servants were presented as self-sacrificing. A devoted servant could prove himself on the battlefield. One soldier recounted the history of such a servant. A friend of his and the friend's men "were surrounded by a regiment of the enemy." All were captured except his friend. The friend escaped, but was left without means to protect himself or return to the Army. His body servant risked his life to help: "during the night Henry slipped out with both of his master's horses and the following day rode into our camp." Another man overcame his timidity to protect his master. The man's devotion to his master supposedly overwhelmed the man's fear: "Never was a dog so devoted to his master as Joe was to our captain, and this devotion so overcame his natural timidity that he would follow us into battle to be on hand in case 'Mars Brown was hurted [sic]."<sup>17</sup>

Retrieving the body of a master provided another kind of proof of sacrifice. To nineteenth century Americans, laying the body to rest was a crucial part of preserving the deceased's soul. Families went far out of their way to bury their dead properly. One article told how a servant crawled across the lines to rescue his master's corpse. A few servants walked miles to bring home their masters' bodies. An example in the *Confederate Veteran* recounted the story of Jerry, a body servant. Jerry was told that his master had likely been killed. Determined to find his master's body, "away in the darkness he went." Stories demonstrated how servants were willing to risk themselves to serve. Protecting

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<sup>16</sup>This article was reprinted in many other publications. "Jerry May Got His Old Mistress a Pension," in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XIII* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 423; "Tribute to a Soldier," *The State*, Columbia, SC, December 11, 1895, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011); "Survivors of Gallant Forty-Second Georgia Hold Annual Reunion and Visit Battlefields," June 22, 1908, *The Constitution*, Atlanta, GA, <http://www.footnote.com> (accessed June 13, 2011); "Notes of Interest About the Reunion," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 3, 1915, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011); "Happy Day at Brenham," *The Galveston Daily News*, Houston, TX, February 22, 1891, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed June 12, 2011); "Apotheosis of a Lost Cause," *The Weekly News and Courier*, Charleston, SC, June 8, 1896, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed June 12, 2011); "Gathering the Gray," *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, LA, June 3, 1891, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed June 12, 2011).

<sup>17</sup>"A Faithful Servant," in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XXX* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 84; Samuel Coleman, "Master and His Faithful Slave," in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XX* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 410; James Dinkins, "My Old Black Mammy," in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XXXIV* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 21; "Our Captain's Joe: How He Stuck by His Master to the Very Last," *Wilkes-Barre Times*, December 27, 1894, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 9, 2010).

the master at all costs was a necessary part of the body servant's duties and if that was no longer possible, bringing his body back to loved ones for proper burial was the last act of loyalty.<sup>18</sup>

In its second form, the body servant focused on another aspect of Confederate memory. These stories did not look at the servant himself, but instead focused on the master, often a Confederate political or social leader. Such tales used the body servant as a foil. Through humorous situations, authors compared the body servant and his master. Invariably, the body servant seemed ridiculous. The master, in contrast, appeared in a positive light. He was polite, friendly, and cared deeply for his body servant. Such a model helped Confederate sympathizers in several ways. First, it further supported their portrayal of the master-slave relationship. Second, it increased the status of Confederate leaders.

This model was especially popular for its portrayals of Confederate military leaders. Stonewall Jackson was an especially common subject. His death during the war had made him a semi-mythic and much adored figure. Articles on Jackson appeared regularly after 1890. In the spring of 1894, *The New York Times* reprinted an article from *The Confederate War Journal*. The writer told an amusing tale about Jackson, using his body servant. The body servant was supposed to have prior knowledge of any engagement. When asked why, he responded: "whenever I sees Massa Stonewall get up in the night and go to kneeling and saying his prayers I know there's a fight on hand." The comment gave readers a laugh. It also reminded them of Stonewall Jackson's piety. Other articles achieved the same goal. In a January 1911 letter to the *Baltimore Sun*, Joseph Baldwin used his brother-in-law's body servant to demonstrate the kindness of Jackson. That servant was a deaf man, called "Dumb George." By accident, George mistook Jackson for his master. The result was somewhat shocking: "George, mistaking General Jackson for Major Garber, quietly walked up behind the General and gave him a most vigorous slap on the back." Instead of punishing the man, Jackson "extended his hand and shook hands with George, who was made perfectly happy by his kindly act." Jackson was the

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<sup>18</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 61, 62; W.E. Gonzales, "A Good Old Darky," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 30, 1899, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed repeatedly); "'Uncle' Jerry Perkins," in *The Confederate Veteran Magazine, Volume XIII* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1988), 422.



good master, honoring the loyal slave. Both of these incidents highlighted positives in the Confederate leader's personality and the master-slave relationship.<sup>19</sup>

The loyal slave stereotype played heavily into the choice to pension the former body servants. That role was not apparent in the first pension legislation. Mississippi's 1888 pension law included servants, but records do not explain why. That changed in 1912. That year, Mississippi legislators seriously considered removing African-Americans from the pension rolls. The legislative debate was driven by Lost Cause imagery. Those supporting the pension law based their case entirely on the loyal slave myth. A newspaper article summarized their argument: "Those who opposed the bill and advocated pensions for the negroes claimed that the South owed a debt of gratitude to the faithful old slaves who remained loyal to their masters." Those trying to remove the servants from the rolls tore that myth apart. According to the same article, they claimed "that stories about negroes carrying their wounded masters from battle fields were myths." These legislators also attacked the servants' pensions from two other directions – class and race – but the myth remained their focus. Although they faced a vigorous fight, the pro-pension side won. So, too, did their idea that loyal slaves deserved a pension.<sup>20</sup>

This debate helped lay the groundwork for future pension laws. Arguments had been made to pension servants before. As early as 1887, newspaper writers had demanded pensions. Their reasoning was always the same: "Would it not be a good idea [...] to pension the negroes who faithfully followed their southern masters through the late war [...]?" The 1912 victory helped bring about a shift. By voting for pensions, legislators publically validated Confederate ideas about the servant. This act and others like encouraged increased lobbying for pension laws. That

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<sup>19</sup>"Indications of a Fight," *The New York Times*, April 3, 1894, <http://select.nytimes.com> (accessed 13 June 2011); Joseph Baldwin, "Yet Another Occasion When Stonewall Jackson was Known to Laugh," *The Sun*, January 11, 1911, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 11, 2010); "Negro Who Served Lee Pays Visit to Memorial." *The Atlanta Constitution*. November 26, 1926, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed multiple).

<sup>20</sup>"Colored Pensioners: Servants of Confederate Officers in Mississippi," *The New York Times*, February 1, 1892, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); "State Pensions to War Servants," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, February 9, 1904, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); "Race Question Precipitates Fight," *New Orleans Item*, February 24, 1912, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); "A Verdict Against Negro Pensioners," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 23, 1912, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011).

lobbying eventually translated into actual laws. When Tennessee authorized pensions in 1921, the law was hailed “as the first forward move throughout the South to give recognition to those local members of the Race who stood by their slave owners.” The loyal slave myth was a small but significant part of why servants received pensions.<sup>21</sup>

A second Lost Cause myth made body servants the only loyal slave recipients of those pensions. Confederate sympathizers idealized both the leaders of the Confederacy and their former servants. They presented their glorification in both writings and rituals, crafting what has been called a cult. As early as 1862, Southern newspapers called Stonewall Jackson a hero, a Christian martyr, and a patriot. Such a portrayal served a purpose. Mythologized images of Confederate leaders helped to vindicate their acts and those of the Confederate States of America. Because of their close association with these leaders, former body servants often appeared in their portrayals. Soon, they were considered to have some of the leaders’ characteristics.<sup>22</sup>

Former Confederate president Jefferson Davis was among Confederate sympathizers’ favorite subjects. Sympathizers saw him as a useful symbol. As president, he had stood for the Confederacy. In the right circumstances, he still could. Davis also encouraged his depiction. His personal history was contentious. Davis had been considered by many a traitor, fighting an unjust war. Because of this, he wanted to rehabilitate his image. Davis’s actions helped both groups accomplish their goals. He wrote about the Confederacy beginning in 1867; he also made his family a regular

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<sup>21</sup>“A Chance for Some Politician,” *The Dublin Post*, Dublin, GA., January 26, 1887, <http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/tei> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Tennessee Will Pension Negro Confederates,” *The Broad Ax*, Salt Lake City, UT, June 18, 1921, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (accessed June 12, 2011).

<sup>22</sup>Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 104; Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 27; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 122; Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals in War and Memory* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 114, 210; Gary W. Gallagher, “Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal A. Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman,” In *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*. Ed. Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 42.

presence at public events. The effort made a difference. By his death, he became one of the most popular figures in Lost Cause tradition. Confederate Memorial Day was held on June 3, Davis's birthday.<sup>23</sup>

Images of Davis were very popular just after the Civil War. Union soldiers had captured Davis at the end of the war. Accounts differed as to his actions, but one famous story suggested that he had tried to flee dressed as a woman. Northerners used the opportunity to ridicule him and call him a traitor. Southerners wanted to recast the event. In many ways, he stood for the Confederate cause. Renderings of Davis, along with his entourage, could help shape how he was remembered.<sup>24</sup>

In 1878, a writer for Confederate sympathizing *Southern Historical Society Papers* borrowed a body servant to create his own version of Davis's story. The writer wanted to transform Davis from a weak figure into powerful Southern gentleman. Key to his work was the use of a popular postbellum stereotype of manhood. Scholar Craig Thompson Friend described that stereotype as the "masculine martial ideal." Confederate Major W.T. Walthall knew the power of the stereotype. To rehabilitate Davis, he made Davis into that masculine ideal. Davis became a Southern gentleman, in control of his household, always vigilant and willing to face threats when needed. The personal servant became a critical detail in Walthall's story. Walthall depicted Davis's escape, explaining, "Meantime his [Davis's] horse, already saddled, with his bolsters and blanket in place, was in charge of his body servant, and he himself was lying clothed, booted, and even spurred, when a little after day-break, the alarm was given that the camp was attacked." The servant helped challenge the idea that Davis fled as a coward. His placement indicated that Davis intended to escape as a Southern gentleman – head of household, ready of battle complete with slave to show his status. It also made the body servant part of the Confederacy's history.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001), 77, 259.

<sup>24</sup>Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 20; William C. Davis, *An Honorable Defeat: the Last Days of the Confederate Government* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 386.

<sup>25</sup>Craig Thompson Friend, "Southern Manhood to Southern Masculinities: An Introduction," in *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South Since Reconstruction* ed. Craig Thompson Friend (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), xi; Joe Creech, "The

Body servants next featured in discussions of Davis's funeral. Funerals of Confederates brought about a reexamination and reevaluation of their lives. The events helped prove that these men met the old South's definition of gentlemen – honorable, wealthy chivalric men who had dominated their families and their household – through several different means. A eulogy recounted some of the major events of the deceased's life. Those present demonstrated the relationships of the deceased and how those relations were structured. The rituals of the funeral could help valorize or help destroy the Confederacy legacy by showing if former Confederates were honorable men. In these rituals, body servants served a purpose.<sup>26</sup>

The former body servant's presence at the funeral could help alter the image of a Confederate leader. To be classified as a gentleman, a Southerner needed to show that he held a position of honor and respect in his household. Even though the personal servant was no longer enslaved, his devotion to his former master could suggest such respect. Because of what it implied, the presence of the personal servant was regularly noted at funerals. When newspapers presented these individuals as still loyal servants, they also cast the deceased as gentlemen.<sup>27</sup>

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Price of Eternal Honor," in *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South Since Reconstruction* ed. Craig Thompson Friend (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 39; William J. Cooper, Jr. *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 577; W.T. Walthall, "The True Story of the Capture of Jefferson Davis: Letter from Admiral Semmes," *Southern Historical Society, Southern Historical Society Papers (1876-1905)* March 1, 1878, 0\_1, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. , 2005), 20; William C. Davis, *An Honorable Defeat: the Last Days of the Confederate Government* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 386; John William Jones, *The Davis Memorial Volume* (Richmond, VA: R.F. Johnson & Co., 1890), 404.

<sup>26</sup>Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, "Rethinking Southern Masculinity: An Introduction," In *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*. Ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), viii-xi; Jennifer R. Green, "'Stout Chaps Who Can Bear the Distress': Young Men in Antebellum Military Academies," In *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*. Ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 175; "Jackson, Thomas Jonathan," *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition), ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, in Oxford Reference Online, [www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e39828](http://www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e39828) (accessed March 7, 2010); "Lee, Robert E.," *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition), ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, in *Oxford Reference Online*, [www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e39828](http://www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e39828) (accessed March 7, 2010); Emory Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 416; Joan E. Cashin, *First Lady of the Confederacy: Varina Davis's Civil War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2006), 237-238.

<sup>27</sup>Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, "Rethinking Southern Masculinity: An Introduction," In *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*. Ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), viii-xi; Thomas J. Brown, "The Confederate Retreat to Mars and Venus," In *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*. Ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 209; Craig Thompson Friend, "From Southern Manhood to Southern Masculinities: An Introduction," In *Southern Masculinity: Perspectives on Manhood in the South since Reconstruction*. Ed. Craig Thompson

In 1893, Davis's life received that reexamination. That year, the Davis family chose Richmond to be the site of Jefferson Davis's final grave. His body was moved from the grave chosen in 1889. The city's officials arranged an elaborate funeral train to transport the body. That train included Confederate veterans, militia groups, leading politicians, and Davis's body servants. Each piece of the train served a purpose, including the body servants.<sup>28</sup>

The presence of Davis's body servants sent the message that he was an ideal master who merited the loyalty of his former servants. James H. Jones, a former Davis servant, made a statement of his close relationship to Davis back in 1889. Davis's funeral was planned quickly after his death. A frustrated Jones had to miss the event. To explain his absence, Jones sent a well-publicized telegram to a local official. In the telegraph, Jones expressed his disappointment that he had not been able to drive the body to the grave. He continued, "I am deprived of the last opportunity of showing my lasting affection for my best friend." In 1893, Jones fulfilled that supposedly desired role alongside another former servant.<sup>29</sup>

This action served both white Southerners and Jones. White Southerners could see him as a supporter of the Confederate cause. He was a slave – it was only a portion of articles mentioned that Jones was freeborn – honoring his

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Friend (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), x; "The Soldier at Rest: Funeral of Ex-President Davis Yesterday: The Grand Military Procession," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Dec 12, 1889, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 10, 2010); "Wade Hampton Laid to Rest: Many Thousands of Mourners Follow the Body of the Noted Southern to the Grave." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 14, 1902, <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed March 9, 2010).

<sup>28</sup>Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 119; Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 98; William J. Cooper, Jr. *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 584, 644, 691.

<sup>29</sup>The term "body servant" is open to interpretation when used with Davis's servants. It seems to have been applied after the fact to these men's widely-varying roles. A biography of Davis calls Robert Brown a "former Davis slave who stood steadfastly by his mistress's side" and Jones a "former Davis slave" who "had not seen Davis in fifteen years." William J. Cooper, Jr. *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 584, 691. Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 119; Donald E. Collins, *The Death and Resurrection of Jefferson Davis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 98; William J. Cooper, Jr. *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 584, 644, 691; Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction, Revised Edition* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 121-122; "From an Old Servant," *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 12, 1889, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed 12 June 2011).

well-known master. He helped promote mythological images of both Davis and the master-slave relationship. Jones, a savvy politician, knew the importance of image. He was setting himself up for future fame as Davis's servant.<sup>30</sup>

A former body servant starred in a final discussion of Davis's life in 1911. That body servant used his relationship with Davis to ensure newspaper coverage for what he had to say. James H. Jones, the previously mentioned servant, claimed to have given the official seal of the Confederate States of America. Jones spun elaborate tales of how Davis had generously protected both him and the records of the Confederate States of America. Jones made sure he had the central role in the story. He explained repeatedly, "I gave my word of honor that I'd never tell a living soul where the seal was hidden." His argument bought him income, respect and much more. There was criticism that the story was faked, but it never amounted to much. The first of many such articles appeared in 1907; another in 1915. All were ignored. The interest in Davis kept Jones in the spotlight on and off until he died in 1921. A connection with Davis was able to give his former servant esteem.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to cementing Davis's reputation, these stories cemented the reputation of Davis's former body servants. Being cast in the same light as a Confederate leader granted personal servants a certain level of cachet. Jones's actions indicate just how far that prestige could reach. To sympathizers, the servants became trustworthy supporters of the Confederate cause. They were the guardians of Confederate symbols. It was a sentiment body servants exploited.

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<sup>30</sup>"Negro Servant Tells of Jefferson Davis," *The Omaha World-Herald*, July 4, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed repeatedly); "Secret of the Great Seal of the Confederate States," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 29, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed repeatedly); "The Confederate Seal, Its History and Fate," *The Constitution*, Atlanta, Ga., July 14, 1907, <http://www.footnote.com> (accessed 13 June 2011); "Will Make Fight in Senate," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 24, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 10 June 2011); "Letters to the Telegraph," *Macon Telegraph*, August 5, 1915, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 10 June 2011); "Negro Dies Silent on Secret Hiding Place of Confederate Seal," *The Telegraph-Herald*, April 10, 1921, <http://news.google.com> (accessed 13 June 2011).

<sup>31</sup>"Negro Servant Tells of Jefferson Davis," *The Omaha World-Herald*, July 4, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed repeatedly); "Secret of the Great Seal of the Confederate States," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 29, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed repeatedly); "The Confederate Seal, Its History and Fate," *The Constitution*, Atlanta, Ga., July 14, 1907, <http://www.footnote.com> (accessed 13 June 2011); "Will Make Fight in Senate," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 24, 1911, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 10 June 2011); "Letters to the Telegraph," *Macon Telegraph*, August 5, 1915, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 10 June 2011); "Negro Dies Silent on Secret Hiding Place of Confederate Seal," *The Telegraph-Herald*, April 10, 1921, <http://news.google.com> (accessed 13 June 2011).

Davis's former body servants were not the only ones respected because of their association with a Confederate leader. William Mack Lee, a former body servant of Robert E. Lee, supported himself on his relationship to his former master. He was a popular speaker and representative of the Confederate government. He staged certain scenes that were sure to appear in newspapers. An article from 1925 depicted Mack Lee's actions at the unveiling of a statue of Robert E. Lee: "Nothing would please him until a news photographer had 'made a picture of him holding the stirrup of Lee's horse, as he did other days.'" Mack Lee was no doubt driven by the money involved. He supported at least one church through his speaking. White newspapers mentioned, but never focused on that. They were interested only in the fact that "one who served in that capacity [body servant] is still in the flesh, a particular gratification to hear that he served in the Lee family."<sup>32</sup>

This change in status was so considerable that one man even claimed to have been a body servant when he was not. As a humorous incident, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* of November 4, 1915 presented a story entitled "'Uncle Fred' Joins Ranks of Stuart's Body Servants." Fred Thomas, an eighty-four year old man, sought out Virginia's governor to present his case. He claimed to be the body servant of J.E.B. Stuart and said that he had been with Stuart when he died. He was turned away. As the paper recounted, "the old negro was greatly disappointed when Mr. Forward informed him that Governor Stuart had not returned to the city." Whites likely used the story to ridicule Thomas, but the article demonstrates something else. Thomas thought he could achieve something by claiming to have been J.E.B. Stuart's servant.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ray Hanley and Steven G. Hanley, *Remembering Arkansas Confederates and the 1911 Little Rock Veterans Reunion* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 90; Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: the Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 96; William Mack Lee, *History of the Life of Rev. Wm. Mack Lee Body Servant of Robert E. Lee Through the Civil War: Cook from 1861 to 1865* (N.p.: n.p., 1918), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/leewilliam/lee.html> (accessed multiple); "Negro Who Served Lee Pays Visit to Memorial." *The Atlanta Constitution*. November 26, 1926, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed multiple); "Gen. Lee's Negro Servant Addresses Virginia Senate," *Broad Axe*, Illinois January 1, 1926, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 15 June 2011); "Lee's Body Servant," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 4, 1915, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 13 June 2011).

<sup>33</sup>"'Uncle Fred' Joins Ranks of Stuart's Body Servants," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 4, 1915, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 9 June 2011).

Newspapers articles suggest that such esteem extended beyond the body servants of these elites to any servant associated with a Confederate leader. Like the Confederate veterans, personal servants were aged by the end of the nineteenth century. Their passing encouraged local newspapers to remember their lives. Funeral notices presented them in high regard, but only because of their association with a local Confederate leader. A funeral notice for William Gantz explained was the “body servant of Gen. Albert Sydney Johnston.” Johnston, a Confederate general, had been killed early in the war. His entire community came out to honor the former body servant. The funeral “was the largest gathering ever witnessed in Indianola.” Even local businesses were closed “as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.” Robert Harris’s funeral was noted because it “recall[ed] the interesting relation which existed between the men of the Old South and the faithful servants of the black race during the historic War Between the States period.” Another example was flowery. Joe Levan, a body servant, was described as “simply faithful, courteous, honest and industrious throughout his life.” Occasionally even relatives of the body servants gained this esteem. A funeral notice indicated that John Longley of Washington County, Virginia had died in and would be buried by the family of his former master. The article prominently mentioned something else – his son Sam was the body servant of the youngest family member. At least in white newspapers, having been a body servant made you worthy of respect.<sup>34</sup>

Legislators relied on that status when choosing which loyal slave to pension. Body servants were not the only African-Americans who served the Confederacy during the Civil War. Some African-Americans – both free and enslaved – acted as teamsters, trench diggers, factory workers and in many other roles in the Confederate Army. Yet, when it came to pensions, body servants were the only ones consistently recognized. Mississippi only pensioned servants. Tennessee and South Carolina included cooks in their pension laws. North Carolina and Virginia added teamsters. Even if a state recognized others roles, often a body servant had a much easier time applying for and

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<sup>34</sup>“Davis Body Servant Dead: Negro Dies of a Gun Shot Wound Received Years Ago,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 5, 1901, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); “Johnston’s Body Servant: A Devoted Negro to the Confederate General Dies in Mississippi,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 12, 1894, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> (accessed various) ; “Faithful Old Negro of the South Dies in Charlottesville,” *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 31, 1921, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed 13 June 2011); Article appears to be a reprint, but the original source is unclear. “Honoring a Negro,” *Evening World Herald*, Omaha, NE, August 17, 1907, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 12, 2011); “Death of a famous Old Negro,” *The Washington Post*, Dec 13, 1898, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/> (accessed March 9, 2010); “Aged and Loved Old Servant,” *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 30, 1908, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011).



receiving a pension. For white Southern legislatures, body servants were first on the list of those who deserved a pension.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., “Looking for Bob: Black Confederate Pensioners After the Civil War,” Mississippi Department of Archives and History <http://mdah.state.ms.us/pubs/pensioners.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2010); “Colored Confederate Pension Applications,” Tennessee State Library and Archives <http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/history/collections/ccpa/ColoredConfederatePensionApplications.pdf> (accessed June 19, 2011); State Agency Records, *Guide to Research Material in the North Carolina State Archives* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resource, Division of Archives and History, 1995), 652; “About the Confederate Pension Rolls, Veterans and Widows Database,” Library of Virginia <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/opac/conpenabout.htm> (accessed June 19, 2011); Grace Cordial, “Beaufort County Black Confederate Pensioners,” Beaufort County Library <http://www.beaufortcountylibrary.org/bdc-blog/beaufort-county-black-confederate-pensioners> (accessed June 19, 2011).

## Duty

This recasting of the body servant did not always lead to pensions laws. Only five states passed laws authorizing the payment of pensions to body servants. Their treasuries paid around \$25.00 per year per servant. In 1926, Virginia paid out \$6730.25. Two other states allowed body servants to receive pensions under laws designed to pension only white Confederates. Arkansas and Texas both supported a small number of body servants. The remaining Confederate states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana – never offered pensions to African-Americans. Although an altered depiction of the body servant made it easier for legislators to consider pensions, they needed an additional push to actually write the laws.<sup>36</sup>

Part of their struggle came from the previous use of pension laws. Prior to the Civil War, the use of pensions was limited. Governmental pensions were issued solely to the “invalids, widows, and orphans made dependent by the earlier wars.” These pensions were designed to support veterans and their families when the veterans, due to their activities in the military, could no longer support themselves. Under these terms, Confederate soldiers could be offered pensions. Justifying pensions for Confederate servants should have been much harder. However, some Confederate sympathizers developed a sense of obligation towards those servants.<sup>37</sup>

The origin of that sense of duty is unclear, but that feeling’s impact is not. Confederate sympathizers might have been motivated by several factors. They could have seen themselves as fulfilling a traditional role in the master-slave relationship. In the ideal master-slave relationship, the slave owner was a father figure who was supposed to care for his or her slaves. Former slave owners and their families might have still felt paternalist toward their former slaves.

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<sup>36</sup>Jordan, Ervin L. *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 198-199; Linda McDowell to Bryna O’Sullivan, email, 9 January 2008, privately held by O’Sullivan, Middletown, CT; “Arkansas Confederate Pensions,” Arkansas History Commission, [http://www.ark-ives.com/documenting/confed\\_pensions.asp](http://www.ark-ives.com/documenting/confed_pensions.asp) (accessed 12 June 2011); Donaly E. Brice to Bryna O’Sullivan, email, 7 January 2008, privately held by O’Sullivan, Middletown, CT.

<sup>37</sup>John William Oliver, *History of the Civil War Military Pensions, 1861-1865* (Madison, WI: Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, 1917), 5.

Body servants were also famous figures who represented the Confederate cause. If they were left to starve, their former masters – and the Confederate cause – would be critiqued. In either case, this sense of duty translated into a belief that body servants needed financial support.<sup>38</sup>

Initially that assistance came from the Confederate sympathizers themselves. Stories of body servants dying in the poor-house may have spurred them into action, especially when articles emphasized the body servants' relationship with the Confederacy. United Daughters of the Confederacy and United Confederate Veterans chapters made the first move. By June 1907, a United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter supported a former body servant single-handedly. They believed that the former servant of Jefferson Davis was owed their aid. While some campaigns were destined to remain local, others expanded their efforts using the newspapers. In 1910, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* started a campaign to fund the livelihood of “‘Uncle Ramsall,’ the negro body servant of General J.E.B. Stuart.” The paper’s writers channeled any attention they gained into further assistance for Ramsall. The following article described the campaign:

The Knoxville Journal and Tribune says that the appeal (for contributions for the support of “Uncle Ransell,” the body-servant of J.E.B. Stuart) “does credit to the heart and soul of the Times-Dispatch.” It would do more credit to the heart and soul of the people of Virginia who do not forget if they would increase their contribution for this purpose.

Such campaigns gradually transformed local support for a single body servant into a state-wide movement.<sup>39</sup>

Realizing that local efforts could not achieve their goals, some sympathizers pushed for the states to cover the gap. Leading Confederate figures in Virginia, Florida and South Carolina advocated for state pensions for specific body servants. The reasons were always the same: poverty or disability. Seventy-five year old South Carolinian Calvin Harper was unable to do any work. A Virginia body servant named “Uncle Toon” was equally impaired and impoverished. Dock Kemp Williams of Florida and his wife were also struggling with poverty. Lost Cause

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<sup>38</sup>Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: the Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 515.

<sup>39</sup>Untitled, *The Morning Tribune*, Tampa, FL, July 21, 1907, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); Untitled, *The Galveston Daily News*, Houston, TX, June 5. 1879, <http://infotrac.galegroup.com> (accessed June 12, 2011); Untitled, *The Richmond Times Dispatch*, October 18, 1910, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 12, 2011).

organizations such as the United Confederate Veterans advocated for laws with a wider reach. In the Columbia, SC *State* of January 18, 1922, the United Confederate Veterans Camps of South Carolina proposed a pension law. They wanted body servants pensioned because they “faithfully served their masters in the field the war of 1861 to 1865” and because they were living “in great poverty.” If these proposals were presented at the right time and to the right people, they could make a significant difference. Legislators who may have already been considering offering pensions had to take notice. In Virginia and South Carolina, efforts did result in pension laws.<sup>40</sup>

That pressure continued even after the pension laws were created. Articles recount the acts of white Southerners who intervened and helped body servants gain pensions. Phil Roseboro, an eighty-seven year-old from Shelby, North Carolina, had struggled for years to make a living. Roseboro had been body servant for several members of the same family during the Civil War. After the war, he supported his master’s wife. He completed his application but never received a check. White Confederate sympathizers bought his case to the pension committee. That resolved the problem. Without their white neighbors, he would have continued to struggle in poverty.<sup>41</sup>

This sense of duty provided an added reason to offer pensions. Legislators had already been molded by the Lost Cause to believe that the body servants had been loyal to the Confederate cause and that they were worthy of esteem. They could likely see the importance of memorializing their actions. Individual Confederate veterans and influential groups were now arguing that body servants were owed their state’s care. In some states, they had enough power to reach their state legislators. Legislators could be – and sometimes were – convinced they were right.

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<sup>40</sup>No evidence has been located that Florida ever pensioned a servant. “Lobby Talk,” *The State*, Columbia, SC, February 2, 1908, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Urges a Pension for ‘Uncle Toon,’” *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 30, 1922, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Florida Solon Would Pension an Aged Negro Confederate,” *Broad Axe*, Salt Lake City, UT, May 2, 1925, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); M.M. Buford, “Confederate Veteran Makes Appeal,” *The State*, Columbia, SC, January 18, 1922, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>41</sup>“Shelby Negro Yet to Drawn Pension,” *The Gastonia N.C. Daily Gazette*, January 26, 1926, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 12, 2011).

## Reinforcement

The words of African-Americans helped convince legislators who had doubts about offering pensions. Between 1880 and 1920, African-Americans regularly requested pensions for their service in the Confederate Army. Legislators had already been encouraged to believe that servants were owed a pension. The requests pushed them steps closer to actually writing the laws. First, the demands indicated that African-Americans wanted pensions. Second, they suggested that the pension laws would be politically popular. Pension laws would appeal to white Confederates as a socially acceptable way of dealing with African-Americans and to African-Americans because of their financial reward. Finally, the requests confirmed much of what the Lost Cause had already taught legislators about body servants.<sup>42</sup>

A few requests were dismissed as humorous. A 1907 article in the *Trenton Evening Times* was entitled “Rebel Veteran Seeks a Pension.” The story recounted Lewis Sallie’s efforts to gain a pension for his service in the Confederate Army – from the federal government. Sallie was presented as too ignorant to understand why he was applying to the wrong government. Although it told a Northern story, it was undoubtedly reprinted in the South. It would have been considered amusing in both areas. Such disregard was rare, however.<sup>43</sup>

Most pension requests helped confirm that servants were the loyal slaves of myth. Newspapers regularly documented requests for pensions from former servants. Most came from residents of Texas. Their reason for applying was always the same: they served in the Confederate Army, had been somehow damaged or impacted by their service, and were now in need of financial support. Some specified their role or unit; others simply stated that they were paid

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<sup>42</sup>“Race Question Precipitates Fight,” *New Orleans Item*, February 24, 1912, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “A Verdict Against Negro Pensioners,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, February 23, 1912, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011).

<sup>43</sup>“Rebel Veteran Seeks a Pension,” *Trenton Evening Times*, July 20, 1907, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Confederate Soldier Asks Pension,” *New York Daily People*, August 1, 1907, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 21, 2011).

regularly by branches of the Army. All demonstrated that they had been loyal to the Confederate cause. They did not, however, clearly demonstrate their loyalty to a master.<sup>44</sup>

Audiences would have read that loyalty into their words. Texas had a pension law that required servants to phrase their applications carefully. Texas never pensioned body servants. However, it permitted African-Americans to be pensioned as soldiers. All they had to prove was that they “enlisted and served in the military service of the Confederate States during the war between the States of the United States.” The standards for proof were low. Men applied for pensions who had “stood guard at mules” or been “detailed as a laborer to construct breastworks.” They usually had some close association with a member of their regiment, often a former master. A few even stated that they were body servants. These men presented themselves as loyal to the Confederacy and to their former masters— and they too, were expecting to be rewarded for it.<sup>45</sup>

Adding to the influence of these demands from Texas were appeals for pensions from two men. The first was named Eli Pickett. Pickett had strong ties to Confederate leadership; he was the son of one of General George Pickett’s slaves. Although freeborn, Eli Pickett claimed “his sympathies were with the south and southern institutions, and he was willing to risk his life in their support.” Pickett supposedly fought with an artillery company and was wounded during the war. Twenty-four years later, he requested a pension. His request was printed in newspapers throughout the South. The second was James Clark. Clark, also freeborn, claimed to have been a member of the 28<sup>th</sup> Georgia Infantry. Neither of these men actually enlisted. Clark was a company servant. He was never employed by the Confederate government; the soldiers paid for his work themselves. Eli Pickett likely served a company as well. There is no record

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<sup>44</sup>“Ex-Confederate,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 13, 1905, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011); “Colored Confederate,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, November 18, 1906, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “A Negro Ex-Confederate,” *Broad Axe*, Salt Lake City, UT, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Kicked, Asks Pension,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 16, 1906, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011); “Negro Asks for Confederate Pension,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 29, 1908, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>45</sup>Soldier’s Application for a Pension, 9 May 1917, Henry Phillips; Confederate Pension Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, TX; Soldier’s Application for a Pension, 21 August 1925, Peter Brown; Confederate Pension Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, TX; Soldier’s Application for a Pension, 3 February 1919, Wash White; Confederate Pension Files, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, TX.

of his war activities. These men had issues in proving their service. Yet each believed they were justified in demanding a pension for their time with the Confederate Army.<sup>46</sup>

Newspaper writers chose to avoid discussing these men's freeborn status in order to send a message. They did not mention how these men likely joined the Army for the income it would provide or to gain the protection of elite whites. Instead, they emphasized the men's supposed support of "Southern Institutions." The term was a euphemism for slavery. These men were born of slave parents and were just one step out of slavery. According to newspaper writers, they were still loyal to the system. They were even willing to risk their lives to protect it. To the reader, their example suggested that other African-American men had been equally loyal.<sup>47</sup>

Other appeals for pensions would have reaffirmed a legislator's sense of obligation. Anthony Massey sought a pension in Georgia in 1907. He was a former slave and body servant, but had lost track of his former master. Massey needed money. Local whites read the situation differently: a master had avoided his duty. Popular ideas of the master-slave relationship demanded that the master be located. A writer explained the situation: "In his old age, far from home and among strangers, [Massey] naturally turns to his 'young marster' to help him." The article went on to imply that if the master could not be located, the community should fill in and care for the former servant. That community could be a local one or a state-wide one.<sup>48</sup>

These examples helped legislators believe that body servants were owed a pension. Not only had writers recast the body servant as a loyal slave, but they had also offered reasons why that slave should be supported by the state.

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<sup>46</sup>"Eli Pickett, Barlow County, Ga.," *Marietta Journal*, August 8, 1889, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 21, 2011); "A Negro Soldier," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, August 10, 1889, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 11, 2011); This article was likely recopied from another paper, but the original source is unfamiliar. "A Negro Confederate Soldier," *The Philadelphia Record*, September 11, 1904, <http://news.google.com> (accessed June 20, 2011); J.H. Segars and Charles Kelly Barrow, ed., *Black Southerners in Confederate Armies: A Collection of Historical Accounts* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2007), 98; "Soldier Names," *Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database* <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm> (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>47</sup>"Eli Pickett, Barlow County, Ga.," *Marietta Journal*, August 8, 1889, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>48</sup>"His Old Body Servant in Old Age Wants Aid," *Macon Telegraph*, October 11, 1907, <http://www.genealogybank.com> (accessed June 10, 2011).

These last articles might have given legislators the final push they needed to write pension laws and to offer pensions to former Confederate body servants.



## Conclusion

Though there are no sources describing his views, it seems likely that the average white Southern legislator struggled with the idea of pensioning body servants. Many legislators embraced the Jim Crow system. A system of formal and informal segregation, Jim Crow was designed to isolate African-Americans. It denied them access to a variety of institutions and programs, including government services. At the same time, Confederate sympathizers had power over legislators. Many had direct ties to the Confederacy. They were veterans or the sons of veterans. Others accepted some, if not all, of sympathizers' ideas. They read idealized versions of plantation life and embraced those writers' words. These pressures must have competed for legislators' attentions<sup>49</sup>

Under the right conditions, legislators could be swayed to one side or the other. By 1927, five states had created pensions laws specifically for body servants and at least one other state permitted them to be pensioned under other laws. Three considerations helped persuade them to issue pensions. First, they were impacted by Lost Cause myths which idealized body servants. Second, legislators were encouraged to feel a sense of obligation towards the care of the servants. Third, they found reinforcements for their ideas in the words of African-Americans. These factors help account for why legislators decided to provide pensions.

These factors do not explain why pensions were offered when they were. Advocates started lobbying for pension laws as early as the 1880s. Pension for white Confederates were granted in that decade. One would have expected African-Americans to be pensioned soon after. Yet only one state considered laws pensioning African-

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<sup>49</sup>David B. Kesterson, "Joel Chandler Harris, 1848-1908," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Documenting the American South* <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/harrisj/bio.html> (accessed June 10, 2011); Yates Snowden, ed. *History of South Carolina, Volume IX* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1920), 20, 50, 94, 109, 209, 222, 248, 306.

Americans before 1921. Four states authorized pensions in the next six years. Something not documented triggered a sudden rush of pension laws. That something still needs to be addressed.<sup>50</sup>

The timing of pension laws might be related to the timing of another, better studied, monument. In 1923, United Daughters of the Confederacy members almost succeeded in erecting a controversial monument. That year, they convinced the U.S. Senate to help fund a monument to the black mammy. Daughters claimed that they were only trying to honor loyal African-American women. Their motivations were likely more complicated. Historian Micki McEyla suggested that the mammy monument was a white Southern response to the racial unrest of the 1910s. It demonstrated a situation in which segregation supposedly functioned and in which African-Americans behaved as white elites expected. The mammy myth provided a model that white Southern elites wished to see copied. Pension laws might have been another example of the same thinking.<sup>51</sup>

Fully answering the question of timing will require further research. Each state had a variety of social and political factors which might have changed the date of pension laws. A new industry, a new social movement, or a new political race might all impact legislators. Strong personalities could also affect the writing of laws. Delving into each state's legislative history will be a necessary next step in understanding body servant pensions.

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<sup>50</sup>James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., "Looking for Bob: Black Confederate Pensioners After the Civil War," Mississippi Department of Archives and History <http://mdah.state.ms.us/pubs/pensioners.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2010).

<sup>51</sup>Micki McEyla, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 116-117; Micki McEyla, "Commemorating the Color Line: The National Mammy Monument Controversy of the 1920s," In *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*. Ed. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 204, 205, 208, 211.

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