

## COMMUNITY

# County's Civil War vets praised well, paid little

Having fought on the losing side, York County veterans of the Civil War were not eligible for the benefits that were offered to Union veterans. Before 1889, South Carolina provided no disability benefits or pensions for military service.

**Louise Pettus**



NEARBY HISTORY

On the other hand, the veterans of the Lost Cause were held in the highest esteem. Parades, pulpits, political platforms, holidays, songs and plays were used to honor the living and eulogize the dead Confederate soldiers.

Finally, the state began to recover financially from the war, and the obvious plight of many old men and their widows resulted in legislation that established classes of disability. Much of the pressure on the legislature came from veterans and their children.

There are three major sets of war records on individual soldiers: federal, state and county of origin.

Confederate records of individual soldiers are located in the National Archives of the United States. The U.S. Army and Navy

*For all but the blind and limbless, the amount of the Confederate pension in 1901 was \$3 a month. The number of York County widows who collected the pittance outnumbered the Confederate veterans 2-1.*

kept records of the Confederates who were captured during the war and surrendered when the war ended in 1865.

From the official Confederate records, one can discover much about the individual soldier and his company as well. For instance, the record of Marion DeKalb Rodgers, Catawba Township, York County, shows that he enlisted as a 20-year-old private in August 1861, in Capt. Cadwallader Jones Company of Dunovants Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers (the company subsequently became Co. H, 12th Regt, S.C. Infantry).

Rodgers reported to Lightwood Knot Spring, near Columbia. He enlisted for the duration. The company muster rolls show when he was paid (every two months). The notation was made that he was in the hospital in November and De-

ember of 1862.

The last two sheets of Rodgers' records were filled in by Union officers. One is headed "Prisoner of War at Harts Island, New York Harbor." Rodgers, still a private, was captured at Southernland Station, Va. The last record states that Rodgers signed the Oath of Allegiance to the United States on June 16, 1865. It gave his place of residence as York District, S.C., and the officer filled in the description: "Complexion fair; hair dark; eyes blue; height 5 ft. 8 in."

York County has a more complete record of identifying its veterans by branch of service, time in service and residence after the war than most S.C. counties. In 1902, in response to the state association of Confederate veterans, York County made a concerted effort to enroll veterans by township.

The Confederate Enrollment Book of York County includes the dead as well as the living. An entry example: "Bethesda Township. Page 1. Abshear, Joseph K., 17th S.C.V. Evans Infantry Private, 30, killed at Petersburg 1864."

The state of South Carolina published the names, addresses and amounts of payment to the veterans and their widows who collected pensions beginning in 1889. These are included in the yearly "Reports and Resolutions of the South Carolina House of Representatives."

A 1910 example, "Class B. Perry, W.C., Fort Mill (Co. B, 6th S.C.T.), lost left hand; wounded right hand; entered payroll 1901."

In 1901 there were 287 York County pensioners on the state rolls. The total of all their pensions was \$1,205.40. For all but the blind and limbless, the amount of the pension was \$3 per month. The number of York County widows who collected the pittance outnumbered the Confederate veterans 2-1.

*Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays. The preceding column originally appeared in 1986.*