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Mississippi's Role in the Civil War as Seen through the State's Official Records

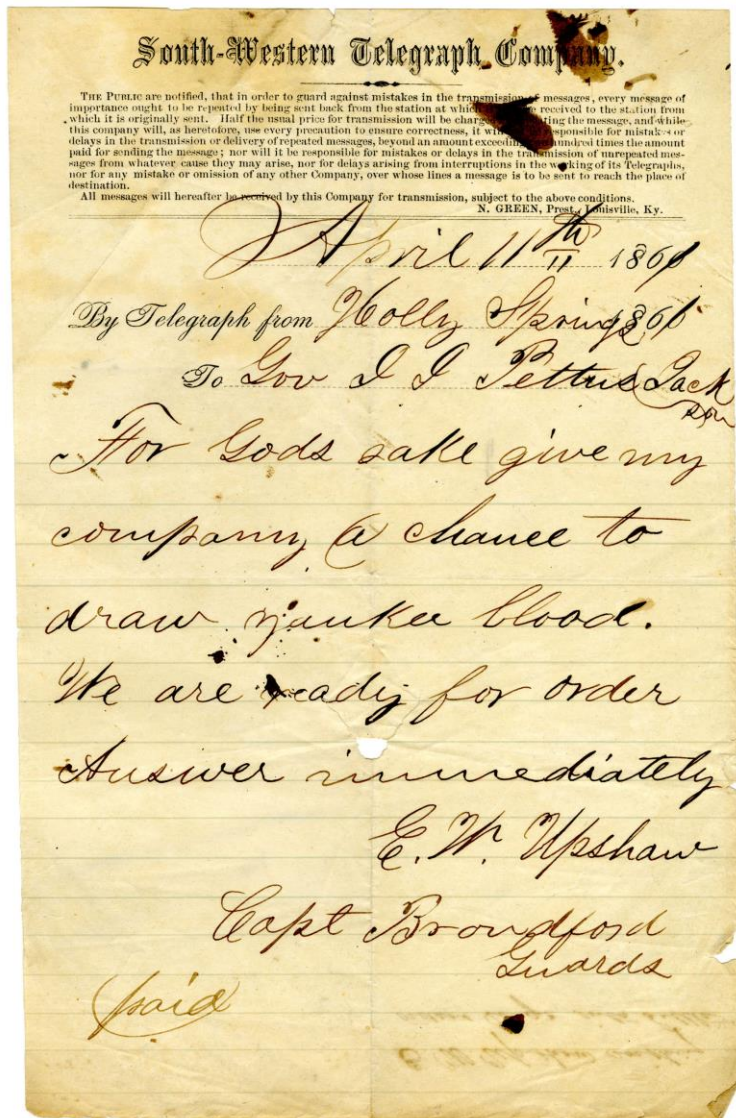
Jim Pitts, Historic Resources Specialist, Miss. Dept. of Archives & History

Mississippi, the second state to secede from the Union, played a major role in the South's bid for independence. The state provided troops to Confederate armies in Virginia and in the Mississippi and Tennessee River valleys. Factories in the state provided military equipment and the farms provided foodstuffs. Much of this is documented in the official records of the state held by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History at the William F. Winter Archives Building, 200 North Street, Jackson. The department was founded in 1902. The first object and purpose of the department, by state law, was "the care and custody of official archives ..."

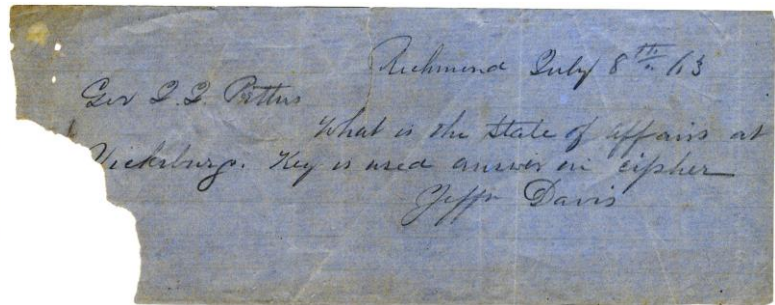
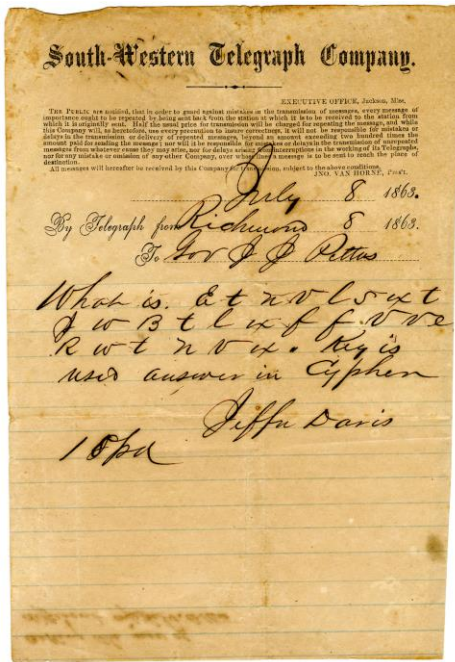
[Miss. Code 1906, §1633 and MCA 1972, § 39-5-1]. The law establishing the department also "... charged [it] with the duty of making special effort to collect and publish data in reference to soldiers from Mississippi in ... the war between the United States and the Confederate States ...

[Miss. Code 1906, §1639]. These records were collected almost from the first day. Some of the earliest collections were Confederate records hidden by state officials in the archives of the Jackson Masonic fraternity in the attic of the Jackson City Hall. Revealed to the first director, Dunbar Rowland, by Colonel E. E. Baldwin, they were added to the department's holdings thirty-nine years after they had been hidden. Over the decades since then, many more Civil War-era state government records have been transferred to the care and control of the State Archives. This article will briefly discuss what is available and will highlight some of the more significant, and sometimes unappreciated, collections.

Governor's Office: Mississippi's three Civil War governors were John J. Pettus, Charles Clark, and William L. Sharkey. Their administrations left the state with a considerable group of records primarily consisting of correspondence and other papers, military telegrams, military orders, and amnesty oaths. The military telegrams are, in my opinion, the most interesting, containing such telegrams as one from a newly raised unit's fervent desire to "draw some Yankee blood" and one from a mother wishing for her son and only support to be released from military service (both from 1861)



to a coded telegram dated July 8, 1863, from President Jefferson Davis to Governor Pettus asking "What is the state of affairs at Vicksburg?"



All of these records yield much information on the governor’s interaction with Confederate authorities, various state agencies, and the state’s militia, especially in the latter years as they tried to raise troops to resist Union incursions into the eastern half of the state from bases in Memphis, Vicksburg, and Natchez and moved the state capital from Jackson to Columbus and then Macon to keep from being overrun by Union troops.

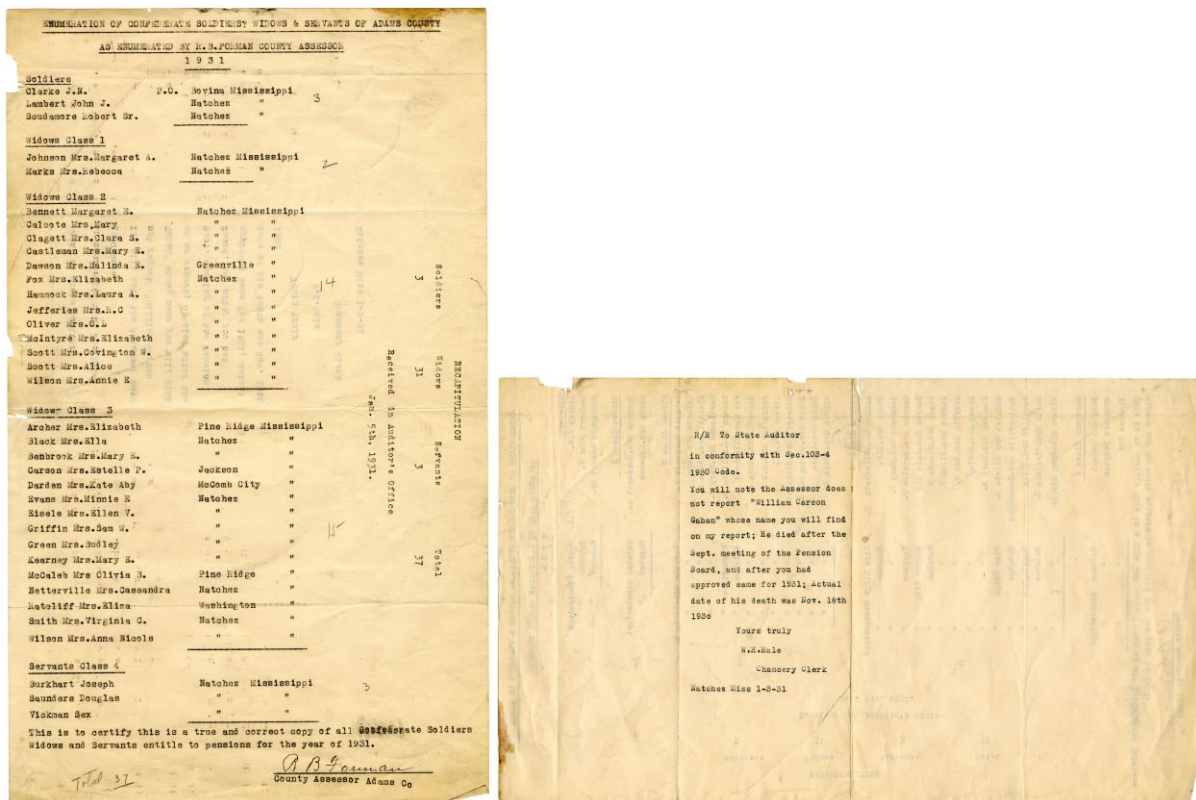
Legislature: The legislative records contain the bills and resolutions that were introduced, debated, and sometimes passed during the legislative sessions. The journals record the daily activities of the two houses while they were in session. There are two memorials passed by the

Legislature that I think are interesting. The first is a 12 page memorial, dated August 3, 1861, sent to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States professing Mississippi's total support for the Confederate cause. Not all Mississippians were in total support, but the voices that might have been raised against such an action were not represented in the Legislature. The second memorial is a five-page document from the Mississippi legislature to President Andrew Johnson asking that he release Jefferson Davis. It ends with this plea, "Open the prison doors of Jefferson Davis! Let him breathe once more the air of personal freedom! Return him to the state of Mississippi! Make her his bondsman! He will answer as readily to any call here, as when guarded and confined as he now is. Let our fortunes be his; and the halo of honor that surrounds your position and name will become radiant with the true and undimmed glory of official and personal magnanimity." Of course Davis was not released from prison until 1867 so this petition did not seem to do any good.

Secretary of State: The Secretary of State was one of the important state officials. He handled the bonds and oaths for elected officials and the commissions for the officers appointed to lead the various state military units. Additionally, he oversaw the elections just as the office does now. He was also the repository for the official copy of the bills enacted into law by the legislature and the governor.

Auditor: The auditor's files contain information about the his office's role in the Civil War. Included are warrants about payments made to government and private individuals, including those made to move the state government to Columbus and Macon and detailed records about the pensions that were provided beginning in 1888 to indigent Confederate soldiers, their widows,

and the servants who accompanied them into battle. In addition to the actual pension applications, the auditor's files also contain reports from the counties listing who was paid what type of pension. The important thing about these lists is that the county clerks would indicate when a pensioner had died, moved out of or into the county, or other details about the person's eligibility for the pension.



The auditor's records also include the county tax rolls that show what taxes were paid on personal property and on land during the war years. There are two newly discovered records. The first are penitentiary files that record the monthly pay to various artisans who either supervised or worked in the penitentiary when it was a military manufactory. The monthly

returns abruptly end in April 1863. The other is a list of state prisoners who had been sent to Alabama but who were offered clemency if they volunteered for military service.

Treasurer: Not many records remain from the Civil War Treasurer's office. What exists includes monies allocated to the various state agencies and boards for their expenses, monies advanced and sometimes redeemed on cotton bonds, and registers of Treasury notes issued and redeemed.

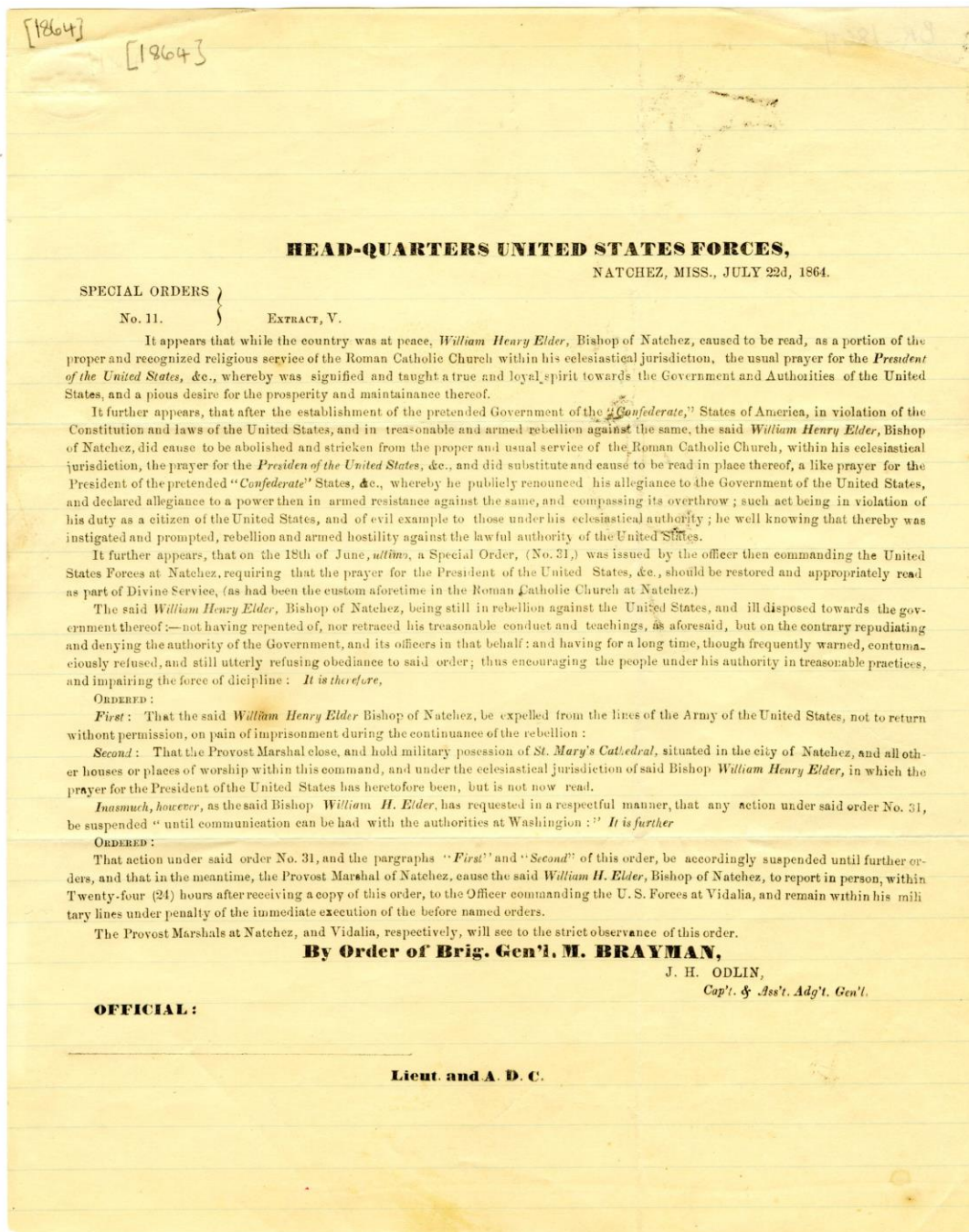
Five other groups of records are of importance for researching the state government's activities in the Civil War:

Military Department (Adjutant General's Office): The register of military commissions, although stopping short of the beginning of the war, will list the officers of the state militia in 1860. Additional state military records will be discussed later.

Veterans Affairs Board: Although not established until the mid 20th Century, the Veterans Affairs Board records contain pension information for widows and indigent children that complements the information contained in the Auditors records.

U.S. Military Records: This is an artificial records group that gathers all of the Mississippi related United States military records in the department's collection. Included are records about several Union Army units that were either raised from or associated with Mississippi: the 1st Mississippi Mounted Rifles, a white unit raised in Memphis and used throughout the state in

various roles; the Mississippi Marine Brigade, raised in St. Louis and named after the river, an Army unit serving with the Union naval forces along the Mississippi River and its tributaries; morning reports for two United States Colored Troop regiments; a number of orders from various Union headquarters; and other documents.



Work Projects (or Works Progress, as it was later known) Administration: The WPA had teams of researchers scouring the county courthouses, cemeteries, and memories of the older residents to gather historical data. Some of that data concerns the Civil War and includes county rosters of military veterans and the records of the military graves registration project.

Memorial, Monument, and Exhibitions Commissions: The Vicksburg National Military Park photographs are some of the oldest extant and many show the fortifications almost as they were during the siege. Other material from the park includes Confederate veterans reunion programs.



County Records: Many county records are available on microfilm at the Archives thanks to the efforts of the Utah Genealogical Society and Family Search. Individual county inventories are accessible through the department's on-line catalog and can include Confederate reunion records; Confederate soldiers and sailors histories and rosters; enumeration of Confederate soldiers and widows; lists of destitute Confederate soldiers, widows, and children; minutes of county Confederate Pension Boards; pension records; and records of Confederate soldiers and sailors.

Finally, and perhaps best known, is Records Group 9, Confederate Records. This artificial grouping contains the largest collection of records about the state's military involvement in the war. Some of the categories are: correspondence and records from state Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, and Ordnance offices; commissions, appointments, resignations, oaths, paroles, etc.; military discharges, furloughs, travel passports; and deceased, indigent, disabled soldier files. Most of these are probably not as well used as the unit records, but there is a tremendous amount of information in them about how Mississippi raised and supported her troops throughout the Confederacy. The department also has original and later-period documents about Mississippi and other Confederate units and organizations, as well as about individuals. These documents range from company muster rolls to 1905 veteran information forms. They may also include letters and reports, such as a letter from S.M. Gassaway of the Anding Hussars (officially Company K of Wirt Adams' Cavalry Regiment) to Lieutenant W.S. Yerger describing his capture and subsequent imprisonment by Union troops near Bowling Green, Kentucky, on February 14, 1862. An interesting document is a copy of a report made by

Colonel McRae to Brigadier General Little, commanding the 1st Brigade, Army of the West, at Rienzi, April 21, 1862. The report describes the condition of the 36th Mississippi Infantry Regiment which had just arrived from mustering in at Meridian. In early 1863, the commander of the Mississippi State troops defending Columbus received a number of slaves who were impressed to build fortifications there. A document lists these 386 slaves by name and includes each one's age and description, his owner's name, and any implements (shovels, axes, etc.) that he brought with him. The list is organized by county.

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Negroes Received & their Description from Newton County

Owners Names	Negroes Names	Age	Complexion	Height	Implements
March 6 th 1863					
J. D. Finer	Tom	20	Yellow	5-7	Shovel
"	Simon	22	Black	5-6	axe
John W. Kelly	William	22	"	5-9	"
John S. Beale	Tom	35	"	5-7	Spade
of P. Sutton	Subordin	35	"	5-7	"
William Barnett	Mose	44	"	5-5	—
"	Ludley	40	"	5-7	axe
A. W. Glover	Jeff	21	"	5-4	"
George S. Moore	Billy	40	"	5-4	"
"	Levis	30	"	5-4	"
"	Robater	20	"	5-9	Shovel
"	Wright	30	"	5-6	Spade
James L. Hardy	Alfred	35	"	5-7	axe
John Matthews	Sam	25	"	5-6	Shovel
"	Eli	22	"	5-6	axe
Laughlin M. Fisher	Allen	20	"	5-6	"
<i>Clark County</i>					
March 3 rd					
W. A. Ward	Lewis	25	"	5-5	"
Reese Price	Anthony	35	"	5-6	"
J. M. Hand	Lewis	38	"	5-6	—
Thomas Woodstone	Sick	28	"	5-4	axe
Jack Green	Hamp	38	"	5-1	"
John Evans	Henry	25	"	5-9	"
J. B. Jones	Moses	28	"	5-4	"
W. F. Bates	George	36	Yellow	5-7	Shovel
J. F. Hicks	Henry	20	Black	5-5	axe
J. Br. Gilmer	Thom	22	"	5-8	"
"	David	20	"	5-7	"
"	John	18	L "	5-6	"
"	Henry	18	"	5-7	—
C. M. Barnett	Bob	25	"	5-9	axe
J. M. Dearing	Samuel	23	L "	5-9	axe
Bra Cowley	Peter	34	"	5-7	"
S. C. Woodberry	Charles	37	"	5-6	"

As you can see, the activities of the state government during the Civil War are well documented. All of these collections are available for researchers at the Winter Archives Building. Some of the collections, such as the tax rolls and pension records from the Auditor's Office and the Vicksburg National Military Park photographs, have been scanned and the images are available through our online catalog on the department's website: www.mdah.state.ms.us .

Brief biographical sketch of author: Jim Pitts is a state government records archivist with the Archives and Records Services Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, where he has worked for 20 years. He is a retired U.S. Army officer and a graduate of Mississippi State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in history.

Note: All images must be sub-titled with:
Credit: Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

List of Images, in order of appearance in article:

<u>Image file name</u>	<u>Suggested image title</u>
Ordinance of Secession	Ordinance of Secession
Draw Blood telegram	"Draw Yankee Blood" telegram
Mother's Plea telegram	"A Mother's Plea" telegram
Davis coded telegram	Coded telegram from President Davis
Davis decoded telegram	Decode of Davis telegram
County pension report obverse	County pension report, front
County pension report reverse	County pension report, back
SO 11, expulsion of bishop	Expulsion of Bishop Elder from Natchez
Confederate Railroad Redoubt	Confederate Railroad Redoubt, Vicksburg
Columbus laborers list	List of Slave Laborers at Columbus