North Central Texas Civil War Round Table

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Granbury, Texas

Volume 5, Issue 9 September 2025

Meeting Schedule

Sep 8 BRIAN MATTHEW JORDAN, Ph.D.

Oct 13 Lorien Foote, PhD

Nov 10 Julie Holcomb, PhD

Dec 8 Michael Moore

Inside this issue:

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Next Meeting: 8 September at Spring Creek BBQ **Program starts at 6:30**
Dr. Brian Jordan will speak about:
"Challenges of Civil War Veterans Returning to Civilian Life."

Dr. Jordan is associate professor of history and chair of the Department of History at Sam Houston State University, where he teaches courses on the Civil War and Reconstruction, American military history, historical methodology, and the U.S. history survey. A cultural and military historian of the nation's fratricidal conflict, he is interested in the human longitude of the Civil War battles and the problem of memory. Dr. Jordan is the author of Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War (Liveright/W.W. Norton, 2015), a narrative history of the men who won the war but couldn't bear the peace. The book was a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in History and, in its dissertation form, won the George Washington Egleston Prize (for best U.S. history dissertation at Yale) and Yale's John Addison Porter Prize. In 2020, with Evan C. Rothera, he edited The War Went On: Reconsidering the Lives of Civil War Veterans (Louisiana State University Press). A Thousand May Fall: An Immigrant Regiment's Civil War, followed in 2021; it earned a starred review from Publisher's Weekly, and was a selection of the History Book Club. With Chris Mackowski, he edited a daring collection of essays on the war's contingencies in 2022. A volume co-edited with the Lincoln scholar Jonathan White, Final Resting Places: Reflections on the Meaning of Civil War Graves, appeared in 2023. Liveright/W.W. Norton plans to publish his major interpretive synthesis of the Civil War era in 2026, and with Lorien Foote and Holly Pinheiro, Jr., he is bringing work on an edited volume on the Black military experience during the Civil War to a close.

A native of Akron, Ohio, Dr. Jordan has served as the Book Review Editor for The Civil War Monitor for the last eleven years. He is the founding co-editor of the Veterans Book Series (University of Massachusetts Press). His more than 150 articles, reviews, or essays have appeared in The Journal of the Civil War Era, Civil War History, and The New York Times. He has delivered more than 150 invited lectures in thirty states, has appeared on C-SPAN eleven times, and, in 2020, was featured in the HISTORY Channel's three-part mini-series on the life of Ulysses S. Grant.

Our purpose is education and information. From our inception we have kept a calculated balance mixing subjects, people, events and battles so as to appeal to all interests. If you examine our schedule of past speakers which is available on this website you will find this to be true. Speakers have included authors, professors, lecturers, dramatists, curators, and others who have some expertise in the subject of the Civil War.

Did You Know

When hostilities first broke out, roughly 13% of Americans were foreign-born, the vast majority concentrated in northern cities; subsequently, foreign enlistment largely favored the Union, which was also far more successful at attracting volunteers. Roughly a quarter to a third of the Union Army was foreign-born. Immigrants were not as present in the Confederate Army, but tens of thousands of foreigners also served with the Confederacy.

Civil War Pensions

https://boft.org/pensions

By Sarah Falck, Historical Interpreter and Education Coordinator, Battle of Franklin Trust

Originally published in the Battlefield Dispatch Vol. 3 No. 7 Summer 2019

Union Pensions:

On March 4, 1865, as the nation braced itself for the final struggles of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln gave his second inaugural address. His words spoke of the necessity of national reconciliation and reunification's prescription. Part of the reunion, Lincoln stated, was "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." Through these words he affirmed the government's promise to care for its veterans and provide for the families of those who perished on the battlefield.

Caring for Civil War veterans became a unique and difficult task. Nearly two million soldiers survived the war, a much higher percentage than previous wars due to medical advances. Most US soldiers were North American born white men under the age of thirty. A quarter had not been born in the United States — the largest group from Germany. While black men had been serving in official capacities in the Army throughout the entire war, in 1863 the US War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops and enabled roughly 180,000 African Americans to fight too. Almost half of the soldiers were farmers before the war. So, when one in thirteen men returned home missing one or more limbs, their previous livelihood of farm work and manual labor became impossible. Hometowns threw celebrations, and families were elated to see loved ones finally home, but these communities were already often overextended financially by the long war and by the needs of their orphans and widows. Many veterans needed financial aid that their communities could not give them and thus relied on pensions.

Compensation for military service had been given to veterans since the Revolutionary War. The Bureau of Pensions was created in 1833 to help administer the benefits to Revolutionary veterans. But after the Civil War, pensions became more complicated and more expansive. Soldiers wounded during combat and families of those killed in action were eligible for up to $8.00 per month in 1862. In the years during and after the war, the restrictions lessened, and the number of pensioners grew. Eventually disabled veterans, even those who were disabled only due to age, children of veterans, and their widows all collected monthly allowances. By 1863 more than a million men were on the pension rolls, and pensions consisted of more than 40% of the federal government's expenses. In 1910, 562,615 invalid Civil War veterans received pensions equaling $106,433,465 with over 300,000 widows, orphans, and other dependents also receiving aid.

African American veterans were also covered by federal pensions. There was nothing in the application process mandating candidates be white. However, former USCT soldiers were rejected at disproportionate rates and often faced more challenges. Ex-soldiers who abandoned their slave names had a tough time documenting their service. They were also less likely to be assigned combat roles and less likely to be taken to a hospital if injured so they often could not produce the appropriate documentation needed for a pension. Many freedmen were illiterate and did not have the money to travel to Pension Boards. Less than one-third of all USCT veterans even applied for a pension. Veteran organizations, like the Grand Army of the Republic, though, actively campaigned for black veterans to be granted pensions just like their white counterparts.

Civil War Pensions (con't)

https://boft.org/pensions

Confederate pensions

Confederate Pensions were much more complicated. Just like US soldiers, most Confederates were under the age of thirty and farmers, so they faced the same problems of homecoming US soldiers. Ex-Confederates were ineligible for federal pensions. Each individual southern state provided for their own veterans. Most southern states initially only provided for artificial limbs and small payments, then for widows and men disabled in the war. Georgia's pensions first varied from $5.00 to $150.00 per year based on the injuries sustained. Although the eligibility requirements varied considerably from state to state, each state required the veteran to have been honorably discharged from Confederate service and to currently be a resident of that state. The rewarding of pensions relied heavily on patronage. Confederate pensions gradually expanded those covered in the years after the war, although never quite to the extent of Federal pensions. Some states, like Arkansas, had to borrow heavily to cover pension costs. This was partly because a substantial segment of the states' budgets went to pensions — Georgia spent 20% of its budget on pensions between 1900 and 1910.

Despite their high cost, there was limited political debate in the South about providing pensions to veterans. Confederate veterans were viewed as unsung heroes, and opposing pensions was in some ways opposing the Confederacy and the war itself. State pensions existed until 1958, ninety-three years after the Civil War, when Congress offered Confederate soldiers every benefit available to the US veterans. Although there is some debate, most consider the last pensioner to be Albert Woolson who died in 1956 with at least two dependents still receiving benefits in 2012.

Tennessee Board of Pensioners:

BOARD OF PENSION EXAMINERS.