South Carolina's African American Confederate Pensioners 1923–1925

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

History's heroes are many, but often little remembered. This publication details the Civil War service of a group of African Americans. In 1860 South Carolina's population included 291,300 white, 402,206 slave, and 9,914 free African Americans. The majority of the South Carolina work force was African American.

Background

Signing the Ordinance of Secession and firing the shot on Fort Sumter drove South Carolina to war. By 1862, visions of a short conflict, of peaceful coexistence with the Union, and of formal European intervention on behalf of the Confederate States had dimmed. South Carolina and the other Confederate States faced a lengthy struggle for survival.

South Carolina needed labor—to support combat troops, to construct and maintain fortifications, to man essential industries, and to produce the foodstuffs to supply military and domestic needs. Since 1720, South Carolina's agricultural economy had been dependent upon African American labor. By 1860, African Americans still constituted the backbone of South Carolina's agriculture but also worked as brick masons, carpenters, in other trades, and as pilots, stevedores, and boat hands.

Within this context of dependence, South Carolina organized for war. With secession and the South Carolina Constitution of 1860, South Carolina viewed herself as an independent nation. On 30 December 1860, Gov. Francis W. Pickens constituted the first Executive Council. This council included a secretary of state, a postmaster general, a secretary of war, a secretary of the treasury, and a secretary of the interior.1 This first (1861) Executive Council functioned as an advisor to Gov. Pickens. It held its last recorded meeting on 23 March.

On 7 January 1862, the Secession Convention passed an ordinance to establish the second Executive Council. To meet changing conditions within the state, it "virtually supplanted [Gov. Pickens] as the state executive authority." Federal troops had captured Port Royal harbor, and Beaufort and other coastal areas lay behind enemy lines. A disastrous fire had broken out in Charleston, and South Carolina's leaders daily expected a Federal attack upon that city. This 1862 council vigorously mobilized for war until the South Carolina legislature abolished it on 18 December 1862.2 Of major concern was manpower for the coastal defenses. The Council's minutes bear eloquent testimony to the dangers it perceived and to its efforts to meet the challenges.
By March 1862, Gen. R. S. Ripley was impressing low-country African Americans to complete fortifications around Charleston. Slaves between the ages of sixteen and fifty were eligible for impressment, but only one-fourth of an individual’s work force could be taken at one time. Similarly, Col. A. M. Manigault was impressing slaves in the Georgetown area to obstruct the mouth of Winyah Bay. Maj. Gen. John C. Pemberton, general in command at Pocotaligo, was requisitioning slaves to complete fortifications there.8

The scope of the task and fear of imminent Federal advance created a steadily increasing demand for labor. On 27 April 1862, Ripley wrote Gov. Pickens:

If you want me to go on with the works in the harbor as the necessity of the time requires, you must send labor as fast as you can. I want a thousand negroes.9

Without centralized coordination, the haphazard impressment produced inequities. Some owners procrastinated or avoided compliance; others saw their workers impressed and retained beyond their terms of service. On 5 May, Gov. F. W. Pickens proclaimed martial law over the City of Charleston within a ten-mile radius and authorized the “Confederate General commanding in South Carolina” to impress labor for “public works and defence” in the Parishes of St. James Sanee, St. Stephen’s, St. John’s Berkeley, St. Thomas and St. Denis, Christ Church, St. Andrew’s, St. George Dorchester, St. James Goose Creek, St. Bartholomew, Prince William’s, St. Luke’s, and St. Peter. On 26 June, the Executive Council asked Gov. Pickens to issue a proclamation asking owners who had not contributed to send a fourth of the slaves “liable to road duty.” In August, the Council extended the call for African American labor from the countryside to include incorporated municipalities.6

The Council and Gen. Pemberton, Confederate general commanding in South Carolina, disagreed about the scope of labor impressment. Pemberton wanted it statewide, while the Council preferred to limit it to the affected areas. By July, Pemberton had prevailed.7 At least 1800 men were requisitioned at a time,a and service was usually for a month. A Newberry resident complained in October, however, that impressed African Americans were being held on the coast beyond their terms.

On 18 December 1862, the South Carolina legislature passed Act #4614, creating a state agent to oversee African American labor raised under the act.9

In general, Confederate forces employed African Americans in limited capacities. Many served as cooks or servants, but, as already discussed, the state also drew large numbers to build coastal fortifications and man essential industries. A letter accompanying the petition of Ben P. Griffin of Pickens mentions that Griffin was sent by his master “by the request of Gov. Pickens for labor” to Fort Sumter. Confederates used impressed labor to free white men for military service. In military camps, African Americans served as teamsters, cooks, and general servants. Towards the end of the Civil War, the Confederate Congress considered using African Americans as auxiliary forces, but South Carolina never adopted that proposal.

The Pension Records10
The South Carolina Confederate pension applications abstracted here were tendered under the act of 1923. Although South Carolina provided a short-lived disability compensation in 1866 and pension relief for regular Confederate soldiers as early as 1887, the state did not recognize the service of South Carolina’s African Americans until 1923. At least four African Americans, M. F. Wharton (Abbeville County), Benjamin Chisolm (Berkeley County), July Galluchat (Clarendon County), and Andrew Richardson (Richland County), applied under the act of 1887.11

On 16 March 1923, the legislature approved “An Act to Provide for Pensions for certain faithful Negroes who were engaged in the service of the State in the War between the States.” Under the act (Act 63), African Americans who served the Confederacy as “servants, cooks or attendants” were eligible for a pension. Additional qualifications included at least six months of service and the recommendation of the County Pension Board. These pensions could not exceed $25 annually.

Many African Americans applied under the 1923 act. In 1924, however, the act was amended to include only South Carolina residents who served the state at least six months as servants or cooks. This provision eliminated laborers, teamsters, and those who served from other states, and laborers impressed for work on the fortifications. Made ineligible by this act were men like Jake Gantt of Aiken, who served as a laborer for the Fourth Tennessee Regiment, and Alfred Grant of Laurens, whose petition was granted in 1923 and subsequently revoked.12

The 1923 petitions often give the type and location of service in detail. Louis Pou of Orangeburg “hauled supplies from the Livingston Mill at Beaver Creek for shipment to troops at Charleston.” William Hook, also from Orangeburg, constructed breastworks on James Island, on Sullivan’s Island, and at “Hampton’s race track near Columbia.” Henry Williams of Greenville “served with Major William Hay at Charleston, South Carolina making salt for distribution among the people of upper South Carolina.”
Many of the laborers served in different parts of the state, but the activities of the servants often involved considerably more mobility. Benjamin Singleton of Beaufort began his service as a servant to Captain John H. Thompson and continued with him until Thompson was killed at the Battle of Second Manassas. Singleton then served under Sergeant William Thompson and Corporal David Thompson in the Beaufort Volunteers “until after the battle of Honey Hill.” Singleton ended the war serving under Robert and James Thompson with the Citadel Cadets and “Columbia School Boys.”

Other petitioners engaged in specialized service. W. S. Lewis, from Charleston, was James Thurston’s servant in the Marine Corps aboard the CSS Atalanta, and William Sanders of Barnwell served Dr. J. B. Baxley, “a surgeon in the army in charge of the Third Georgia Hospital, Augusta, Georgia.” Several of the petitioners mention wounds suffered by the petitioners while in Confederate service. J. K. Knight from Oconee was wounded at Petersburg in 1864. Spencer Copeland of Laurens injured a foot while digging barefoot on the breastworks at Charleston. His leg was later amputated. July Galluchat of Clarendon, one of the 1887 petitioners whose petition survives, had both his left leg and left hand amputated.

The petitions of personal servants often contain poignant references to the circumstances of their service. Anthony Watts from Laurens served until his master died from battle wounds, and then Watts transported the body home. Zack Brown of Fairfield was servant to Robert F. Coleman until Coleman was injured—then Brown “stayed with him in hospital ‘till it was captured.” Wade Childs of Anderson served Captain Cothran in Orr’s Rifles. When Cothran was wounded at Second Manassas, Childs courageously carried him on his back to the rear of the battle line.

Three petitioners professed to have served in a military regiment: Tom Bing of Hampton as a “private soldier” in Colecock’s Regiment under Captain Bill Peebles; Tom Arch of Spartanburg as a private in Co. B, 1st SC Cavalry; John McKinley, private in Charleston riflemen, 14th Regiment. Unfortunately, no substantiating data has been found. One woman, Lavinia Thompson of Aiken, drew a pension for her service as a cook. Another woman, Nina L. Brown of Sumter, received a widow’s pension (Appendix A). One of the more involved applications belongs to Jacob Washington of Hampton. His application contains considerable information about his life. Washington was born in 1844 and by age twelve was a house servant. In 1861 he accompanied Peter Craddock as cook and hostler in camp at Pocataligo. “When the yankee taken Bay Point and Beaufort,” however, Washington took his “mistress” to refuge. Later Craddock joined Hampton’s Legion, and Washington followed him until Lee’s surrender. Washington succinctly described the aftermath of the war: “after surrender we came Home and made a crop on the Place after which we parted and He went to St. Augustine.”

These applications and supporting documentation contain useful information. Some petitions show evidence of name changes—William Hook was known as William Dannelly during the Civil War, and James Burton of Beaufort served as Larkin Burton. Some petitions have information about former owners and other family connections; James Stoutamire certified that he married the mistress of Joseph Bunch, petitioner from Orangeburg. The applications also bear occasional evidence of the health and literacy of the petitioner.

About this publication
The pension applications abstracted here were submitted by the County Pension Boards to the South Carolina Comptroller General between 1919 and 1925. Not all counties are covered. The applications are filed by county and indexed on Computer Output Microfilm (COM). In preparing this publication, staff examined each application individually and located information on several individuals who were not included on the COM index. The names of those excluded from the COM index are marked with an asterisk (*) in the text.

The abstracts
The applications for pensions under the acts of 1923 and 1924 required the following information: the petitioner’s name, his address, the outfit with which he served, the captain or other officer under whom he served, his length of service, and the signatures of character references. The abstracts contain relevant information from those applications. Also included, if found, is an abstract of the pensioner’s death certificate. The abstracts are arranged in alphabetical order, and the information is included as submitted; no attempt was made to verify unit designations or officer names. Names of the pensioners, because they are in alphabetical order, are not indexed. Names appearing within the abstracts are indexed.

The appendices
This publication also includes four appendices.

The first is on Nina L. Brown, widow.

The second, in alphabetical order by county, is the comptroller general’s pension list for 1926—the first to list African American recipients by name. Names in this appendix are listed alphabetically under each county. Names in this appendix not included in the abstracts have been indexed. The other names have not.

The third is on Frank Rang.
The fourth, in alphabetical order by pensioner, reproduces census SOUNDEX information on applicants. Applicants' names in this appendix are not indexed, but names within the entries are.

Additional Information

Additional information and later applications for pensioners not listed here may be found with the records of the County Pension Boards. The Archives holds county pension records for Anderson, Clarendon, Charleston, Fairfield, Horry, Kershaw, Lexington, Pickens, Spartanburg, Union, and York. Other county records should be found in the county of origin.

Possible sources of additional information on the pensioners listed here include the Federal census schedules, 1870–1920; the 1869 Militia Enrollments; the 1868 Voter Registrations; death certificates, and available county records. For more detailed suggestions, please see African American Genealogical Research by Paul R. Begley, Alexia J. Helsley and Steven D. Tuttle (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1997) and Guide to Civil War Records by Patrick McCawley (South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1994).

These applicants do not appear in the South Carolina Rolls of Provisional Troops nor in the Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers from South Carolina. Consequently, these applications constitute one of the few sources on the Confederate service of South Carolina's African Americans. The records of these men and women offer unique insights into the complexities of racial interdependence in Civil War South Carolina.

Notes
1. Journals of the South Carolina Executive Councils of 1861 and 1862, ed. Charles E. Caughen. The State Records of South Carolina (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1956), x.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., xii.
4. Ibid., 105, 111, 114–15.
5. Ibid., 160
6. Ibid., 166, 248–49, 278, 309, 2165.
8. Another source that documents the Civil War service of South Carolina's African Americans are the Records of the State Auditor. The State Auditor's annual reports list claims allowed for slaves who died in public service. These claims often include the name of the deceased, the name of the owner, the dates of impressment and occasionally, the date and cause of death. In November 1865 James Tupper, State Auditor, reported approved claims totalling $218,100 for "slaves lost in the public service." Report of the State Auditor, Reports and Resolutions.
9. The following discussion is based, in part, upon "Black Confederates" by Alexia J. Helsley which appeared under Notes and News from the Archives in the South Carolina Historical Magazine, LXXIV (1973), 184–87.
11. R. Burton Hicks, probate judge for Spartanburg County, wrote to the comptroller general's office on 17 June 1924, asking him to strike the following names from the Spartanburg County pension roll "as they went in as laborers or were not cooks nor servants": Simpson Alexander, Simp Foster, Albert Gray, Darty Winn, Prince Reeder, and Dave Cunningham. Confederate Pension Applications, 1919–1926, #1111b, Records of SC Comptroller General.
12. The annual reports of the comptroller general, who supervised the pension system, give the total appropriations and expenditures for African American and white pensioners. In 1924, for example, the state appropriated $750,000 for white pensions and expended $744,672.85. For the same period, $3,000 was designated for African American pensions and $2,840 spent. In 1946, the last appropriation for African American pension relief was made, but none of the $75 allotted was expended. Annual Report of the Comptroller General for 1924, Reports and Resolutions, 1925; Annual Report of the Comptroller General for 1946, Reports and Resolutions, 1947.
State of South Carolina,
County of Hampton

TO THE COUNTY PENSION BOARD.

The undersigned applies for enrollment under the Act of 1923. I served the State of South Carolina in the War between the States as who was in Company , Regiment Captain I went in the service in Fall of 186 
remained faithful to the Confederacy throughout the said war, and my conduct since the war has been such that I am entitled to a pension under the above Act. I reside at in Hampton County, S. C.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 24th day of May, 1923

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,
County of Hampton

Personally appeared before me and and being duly sworn, each of them deposes and says that they know who is an applicant for a pension, and they have read the said application; that they know of their own knowledge that the applicant served the State of South Carolina for more than six (6) months during the War between the States and remained faithful to the Confederacy during the said war and that his conduct since then has been such that will entitle him to a pension under the Act of 1923; that the applicant is a resident of the State and resides in Hampton County, S. C.

Sworn to before me this 24th day of May, 1923

Approved by Chairman Board of Honor, County, this day of , 1923

Tom Bing’s application to the Hampton County Pension Board. Records of the Comptroller General, Pension Applications, 1919–1926, #6082. South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH).

BLACK, Jeff
Abbeville, Abbeville County
Cook under Lewis Perrin, Capt. J. W. Perrin
Served 1863–end of war
Applied 5 May 1923 for service as a laborer. Clerk noted 27 May 1924 that “the amendment to the Act cuts out all Laborers and only covers those that went as Body Servants or Camp Cooks and were actually in the Army.” Application amended and approved 28 May 1924
Application #16: Jefferson Black, a widower, died in Abbeville County on 18 August 1930. Born in 1845, Black, a day laborer, was 85 years old at his death. On 20 August 1930, he was buried at Campfield. Informant—Tena White, Abbeville, SC. (SC Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death 1930 #18123)*

BOLD, Sam
Beaufort, Beaufort County
Servant of M. Jenkins, Capt. H. M. Stuart, Beaufort Volunteer Artillery
Served 1861–1865
Approved 1 February 1924
Affidavit: H. M. Stuart said that to the “best of his knowledge and belief” Sam Bold served under “his master.” Affidavit of Ben Singleton says Bold was a servant of Michael Jenkins.
Application #1520

BOULWARE, Ed
Rt 2 Leeds, Fairfield County
Cook and laundryman under Pink Boulware, Co. B, 17th Regt
Applied 17 April 1923; approved 21 April 1923
Affidavit: T. E. Dye and M. (Mell) P. Dickerson
Application #3672

BOWIE, Jefferson
Bradley, Greenwood County
Servant under J. W. Bush, Co. B, 7th Regt
Served 1861–1865
April 6, 1923.

Hon. Herman E. Bailey, Probate Judge, City.

Dear Sir:-

I am taking the liberty to send to you the application for pension made by old Wade Childs under the new act. The negro is old and his memory is infirm and he cannot remember anybody now living who can swear to his service. I am sending you my affidavit, which it seems to me should be sufficient to establish his service, because when he told me he carried Colonel Cotman off the field at Second Manassas, he did not know that I had heard Colonel Cotman years before state the same fact. I am afraid that the Board of Pensions are disposed to be a little technical in passing upon these applications.

Please do what you can for old Wade in the matter. He is a deserving old negro.

Yours very truly,

MLB: M

African American Confederate Pensioners

Served 1863–1864
Applied 10 May 1923; approved 10 May 1923

Application #216

YOUNG, Limus
Holly Hill, Orangeburg County
Cook, servant, and teamster under William Bull, Capts. Elias Venning and Fred Schultz
Served October 1863–end of war 1865 (discharged Hillsboro, North Carolina)
Applied 2 May 1923; approved 26 May 1923.

Affidavits: John M. Shingler and J. L. Smith

Application #9543: Lymus Young, widower, 77 years old, died 5 November 1928 in Orangeburg County. He was buried in Bruier Graveyard. Informant—Matthew Stouamire, Holly Hill, SC. (SC Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, 1928 #20548.)

YOUNG, Ross
Laurens, Laurens County
Laborer under Hydrick (overseer), sea island fortifications
Served more than six months
 Applied 7 May 1923; approved 8 May 1923

Affidavits: Cinda Young and Henry Montgomery

Application #7378: Ross Young, widower, 83 years old, died 26 October 1925 in Laurens County. He was buried at Poplar Springs. Informant—John Elmore, Laurens, SC. (SC Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, 1925 #17404.)

Appendix A—Nina L. Brown

An interesting sidelight to the search for African American Confederate pensioners is the application of Nina L. Brown. Brown, the widow of R. Sebastian Brown, filed for a pension under the Act of 1919. Her application, dated 26 April 1919, said her husband had served under Capt. James Span in Co. G, Hampton’s Legion and in Co. K, 7th Regiment, SC Cavalry. R. Sebastian Brown died 18 January 1918. The Browns were married on 15 June 1879. In 1919, the widow, aged 69, lived near Rembert in Sumter County.

What separated this application from the hundreds of other applications for Confederate pensions in South Carolina was the race of the widow. The South Carolina Attorney General rendered the following opinion on 23 May 1919:

"the widow to whom you refer having been the reputed wife of a man who served as a soldier in the confederate army, will be entitled to a pension, under the Act of the recent General Assembly, provided, of course, her marriage was consummated on the 15th day of June, of the year, 1879, as the Act prohibiting such marriages was not approved until December 12th, of that year."

Nina Brown, a widowed housekeeper, died 22 January 1925. Her death certificate listed Agnes Saunders as her mother. E. W. Saunders, Rembert, SC., provided the information. She was buried in Pisgah 12 January 1925.

## Appendix B—Comptroller General’s list

In his 1926 report to the General Assembly, the comptroller general, for the first time, listed the African American Confederate pensioners individually. It is reproduced below and preserves the spelling of the original. Applications do not exist at the state level for all pensioners.

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African American Confederate Pensioners

Florence County
Anderson, Friday
Beon, Joe B.
Brown, Leonard
Davis, Beverly
Edwards, Bright
Garland, Prince
Hinds, Smart
Ison, Isaac
John, Jack
Kelly, Carolina
Laney, Isaac
Lee, Isaac
Robinson, Lewis
Sanders, Sallie
Sims, Alford
Singetary, Evander
Sparks, Simon
Small, George
Stephenson, Olive
Sweet, Tom
Thames, John
Thomas, J. T.
Wilson, Simon

Georgetown County
Avery, John
Brown, Quakoo
Cooper, Amus
Ford, Edwin P.
Ford, Frederick
Ford, Henry James
Gasque, John
Hardee, Derry
Lawrence, Esau
Moultrie, Shederick
Pringle, Aaron
Smith, Madison
Vareen, Wesley

Greenville County
Abercrombie, Edom

Abercrombie, Silas
Clardy, Yancy
Davis, Nelson
Dawkins, Mallery
Garrett, Robert
Gentry, Samuel
Gray, George
Keith, Elias
Rector, Will
Ring, Peter
Stenhouse, Wash
Walker, Thomas

Greenwood County
Bowie, Jefferson
Butler, Ed
Chappell, Ben
Christie, Sam
Cohen, Abram
Dean, Elias
Harrison, Warren
Hearst, Wesley
Hodges, George
Howard, Stephen
Hutchinson, Charlie
Jackson, Griffith
Logan, West
Makin, Matthew
Sullivan, Milton
Washington, Will

Hampton County
Bing, Tom, Furman
Campbell, Tom, Brunson
Datta, Lazarus, Estill
Ginn, Ransom, Hampton
Haynes, Jenkins, Brunson, R-1
McTeer, Caesar, Hampton
Youmans, John, Hampton

Jasper County
Laurell, Bill, Pineland

Kershaw County
Boykin, Henry
Drakeford, Wash

Lacon County
Barnes, Robert
Blakeney, Alfred
Clyburn, Joe

Laurens County
Adair, Alfred, Renno
Barksdale, Wash, Barksdale
Conway, Lonnie, Cross Hill
Franks, Ben, Fountain Inn
Fuller, Dan, Waterloo
Henry, Addison, Laurens
Hunter, Tom, Ora
Rhodes, Primus, Gray Court
Watts, Anthony, Cross Hill
Wilson, Mart, Clinton
Wilson, Martin, Laurens
Wilson, Squire, Laurens

Lee County
Bristow, McDonald
Daniels, Jake
Oliver, Solomon

Lexington County
Dennis, Wesley, Leesville
Hartley, Robert, Batesburg
Johnson, Albert, Irmo
Jones, Isaiah, Lexington
Jones, Jackson, Swansea
Moseley, Ed, Leesville

McCormick County
Alfred, T. M.
Brown, Nelson
Mims, Dallas
Tompkins, Mat

Marion County
Donnelly, Ben, Marion
Franklin, Trus, Marion
Miller, Berry, Latta
Page, Alfred, Nichols

Newberry County
Cannon, Josh, Newberry
Haltiwanger, Abe, Newberry

Mitchell, Theodore, Pomaria
Pitts, Hessie, Chappells
Renwick, George, Pomaria
Sanders, John M., Whitmire
Wallace, Marshall, Newberry
Williams, Ambrose, Helena

Oconee County
Cherry, J. E., Seneca
Crayton, Jacob, Walhalla
Wiggins, Harrison, Seneca
Wilson, James, Westminster

Orangeburg County
Baxter, Charles, Rowesville
Burgess, William T., Ellrose
Clark, Henry, Orangeburg
Grover, Frank, Vance
Holmes, Gilbert, Orangeburg
Jenkins, Nelson, Norway
Jones, William, Orangeburg
Lawton, Charles, Orangeburg
McLeod, John, North
Mitchell, June, Orangeburg
Swinton, Paul, Eutawville
Washington, Daniel W., Ellrose
Young, Limus C., Holly Hill

Richland County
Able, Anderson, Richland County
Chapman, General, Irmo
Hinton, Joseph, Eastover
Johnson, Noah, Columbia
McDonald, Bob, State Park
Pollock, John, Richland County
Ruff, Sancho, Columbia
Williams, Charles, Richland County

Saluda County
Clary, Santaanna
Hill, Adam
Mobley, Richmond
Smith, Jeff

Spartanburg County
Bivins, Patrick
Brown, Green
Appendix C—Frank Rangs

Not all South Carolina African Americans who were attached to Confederate service applied for or received pensions from the state. Joseph Gainey of Spartanburg shared the following account with the author.

According to the Greenville News of 29 August 1930 (section 2, page 21, columns 2-4), Frank Rangs, aged 93 years, not only had accompanied his young master Hut Boler from Newberry into Civil War service but also had served with Gen. Robert E. Lee. According to Rangs, he entered service with Boler and served until Boler lost his right arm. Boler and Rangs then returned to Newberry, and Jim Boler, the younger Boler’s father, again sent Rangs to serve with the Army of Northern Virginia. At that time, Rangs began cooking and washing for General Lee. Rangs’ service ended at Appomattox.

Preliminary checking located a James M. Boland (1841–1922) of Newberry County who served in Confederate forces. Boland has a CSA marker and is buried in Hinson Cemetery near Pomaria.1