

**Empty Sleeves and Vacant Virility: Amputations and Disabled Veterans in the Civil  
War Era**

**A Senior Honors Thesis**

**By**

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## Chronology

<b>March 6, 1820</b>	The Missouri Compromise is signed, allowing Maine to be a free state in the Union and Missouri as a slave state, beginning in 1821.
<b>May 30, 1854</b>	The Kansas-Nebraska Act passes, replacing The Missouri Compromise and opens Northern territories up to slavery.
<b>November 6, 1860</b>	Abraham Lincoln is elected as the 16 <sup>th</sup> president, winning 40% of the popular vote.
<b>April 12, 1861</b>	The Civil War begins at South Carolina's Fort Sumter.
<b>February 22, 1862</b>	Jefferson Davis is inaugurated as president of the Confederate States of America.
<b>January 1, 1863</b>	The Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect.
<b>November 8, 1864</b>	Abraham Lincoln is reelected president of the United States.
<b>May 10, 1865</b>	Confederate President Jefferson Davis is captured in Georgia.
<b>May 26, 1865</b>	General Simon Bolivar Buckner arises terms to surrender, which is agreed upon on June 2, 1865. The Civil War officially ends.
<b>April 15, 1865</b>	President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.

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## Introduction

On May 5, 1864, Private George W. Lemon suffered a femoral fracture after being struck by a conoidal musket ball at the battle of the Wilderness.<sup>1</sup> He was then left in a battlefield tent, only to be captured by the Confederate enemy, then recaptured again by Union troops and sent to the Third Division Hospital in Alexandria, Virginia. Civil War surgeons chose not to amputate his leg immediately, but rather focus on the infection, diarrhea and bedsores rapidly degrading Lemon's body.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the following October that Army Surgeon Edwin Bentley removed Lemon's leg at the hip joint successfully, a procedure that was only completed 66 times during the war and held an 83% mortality rate.<sup>3</sup> Remarkably, Private George W. Lemon survived and after making a stunning recovery, was able to walk and received a pension of \$15 per month.<sup>4</sup>

This case of Private Lemon demonstrates the reality for thousands of soldiers fighting in the Civil War. The Civil War was the bloodiest war in American history with over six hundred thousand lives lost. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 364,511 Union soldiers and 133,821 Confederate soldiers died from various causes including battle wounds, diseases, and starvation, but thousands of others suffered grievous injuries and survived.<sup>5</sup> Responding to the carnage and tragedy of the Civil War, new medical advancements paved the way for the development of more successful surgeries and treatments, which continued into the twentieth century. One of the most

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<sup>1</sup> *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion. (1861-65.). Vol.*

<sup>2</sup> Series 3. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, (1883), 145

<sup>2</sup> Laura Cutter. "The Unusual Case of Private George Lemon." *Military Medicine* 180, no. 2: 241-242. (2015) *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO (accessed January 21, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 241

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 242

<sup>5</sup> "America's Wars." U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Accessed January 10, 2018. [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs\\_americas\\_wars.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf).

common and life-threatening surgeries in any war is amputation, which in light of the war created a booming prosthetics industry. Innovators in the prosthetics field such as B.F. Palmer created a life-changing device for those whose limbs had become empty sleeves and pants legs as a result of the Civil War. Following the defeat of the Confederacy, thousands of maimed soldiers returned from war to discover a new obstacle - an internal struggle over their sense of self-worth. For the first time in American history, the country witnessed significant numbers of disabled veterans returning to the home front; often unable to carry out the lives they previously led. The Civil War era generated new medical techniques surrounding amputations. It also created a new demographic in society, one consisting of broken soldiers who needed to come to terms with the support, or lack thereof, of society and governments at all levels.

## Civil War (1861-1865)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Union)	2,213,363
Battle Deaths (Union)	140,414
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Union)	224,097
Non-mortal Woundings (Union)	281,881
Total Servicemembers (Conf.) <sup>2</sup>	1,050,000
Battle Deaths (Confederate) <sup>3</sup>	74,524
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Confederate) <sup>3,4</sup>	59,297
Non-mortal Woundings (Confederate)	Unknown

### Civil War

Last Union verified Veteran, Albert Woolson,  
died 8/2/1956, age 109

Last Confederate verified Veteran, Pleasant Crump,  
died 12/21/1951, age 104

Last Union Widow, Gertrude Janeway,  
died 1/17/2003, age 93

Last Confederate Widow, Maudie Hopkins  
died 8/1/2008, age 93

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“America’s Wars” Office of Public Affairs Washington, DC

Historians have uncovered little regarding the relationship between the boom of the prosthetics industry and the simultaneous emergence of a generation defined by

disabled veterans. While medical advancements of the Civil War have received large-scale attention, the connection between the creation of veterans associations and disability benefits as well as the issues surrounding the mental stability of those veterans has been virtually untouched by historians.

My goal for this project was to analyze how the Civil War, a war that devastated the American landscape and people, can provide a lens for understanding disabled veterans and the development of the prosthetic limb industry. My thesis has examined an array of primary and secondary sources in order to access the perspective of both veterans' and the public and to learn how veterans associations, personal accounts and the creation of a booming industry impacted the United States and still do today. The questions that I formulated to guide my research include:

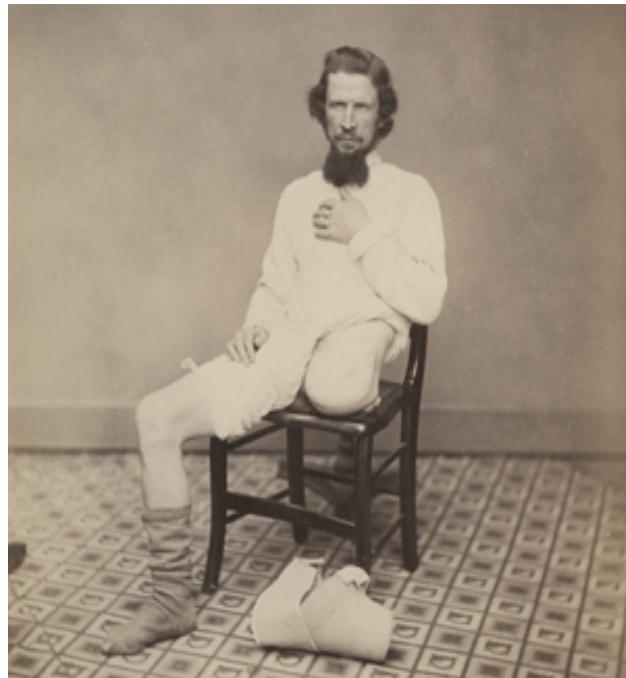
- In which ways did battlefield injuries contribute to the medical development of surgery and amputation?
- How did disabled veterans play into the nation's ideas of masculinity and honor?
- More specifically, how did their new "empty sleeves" affect the self worth and confidence of disabled veterans when returning home to their families?
- What did the post-bellum era bring about for disabled veterans and how did the legislative benefits passed during this time period differ between the states of the Union and the those which had constituted the Confederacy?

In Chapter 1 I address the technical side of amputations and the establishment of the prosthetic limb industry. Key historical figures such as James Edward Hanger and B. F. Palmer paved the way for an industry created to fill the high demand for artificial limbs

during and after the war. Using images and soldiers' letters, I have explored the complications and struggles that accompanied amputations and prosthetic limbs.

In the second chapter, I examine the experiences of disabled veterans after returning home and their response to finding out they could no longer carry out their previous lives. After exploring personal insights to their injuries, as well as their distorted sense of manhood and placement in society, I have concluded that this transition was not without conflict nor did the public accept it easily.

In the final portion, I analyzed disabled Confederate veterans and the different compensation and opportunities that they received after the war. Along with reviewing pensions dispersed to disabled veterans, I found that living arrangements and social services were available to those who felt they could not return to their families or communities now that they were unable to work and were no longer viewed by the general public as providers.



George A. Otis,  
*Drawings,  
Photographs and  
Lithographs  
Illustrating the  
Histories of Seven  
Survivors of the  
Operation of  
Amputation at the  
Hipjoint, During the  
War of the Rebellion,  
Together with  
Abstracts of these  
Seven Successful  
Cases, 1867*

## Chapter 1

### The Boom of the Prosthetic Limb Industry

On June 3, 1861 James Edward Hanger's left leg was severed at the knee after being injured at the battle of Philippi. He entered the Civil War with the Churchville Calvary in Virginia against his parents' wishes only a few months earlier. Hanger had been in school at Washington College, when he decided to follow in his brothers' footsteps and enlist back in his hometown of Churchville.<sup>6</sup> After his injury, a surgeon amputated Hanger's entire leg; which was believed to be the first amputation of the Civil War. According to the historical marker in J. E. Hanger's name, "within three months (of his injury) he had invented the first artificial limb modeled on the human leg and hinged at the knee."<sup>7</sup> In 1861, he had fashioned what became the Hanger Limb, and that same year he was commissioned to develop limbs for soldiers on the side of the Confederacy who had become disabled as a result of the war. Although at the time he did not think of his innovation as revolutionary, the Hanger Limb would forever change the field of prosthetics and emergency surgery. He was granted a U.S. patent in 1891 and he then went on to open factories throughout Virginia to supply prosthetic appendages. The J.E. Hanger Company, now named Hanger, Inc., would become a key component in the artificial limb industry during World War II, both in the United States and overseas. Hanger, Inc. is today the primary provider for orthopedic and prostheses needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Today I am thankful for what seemed then to me nothing but a blunder of fate, but which was to prove instead a great opportunity" Hanger stated when debuting his

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<sup>6</sup> "The J.E. Hanger Story." The J.E. Hanger Story - Hanger, Inc. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.hanger.com/history/Pages/The-J.E.-Hanger-Story.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> James Edward Hanger, § W-156 (Virginia Department of Historic Resources 1956).

artificial limb.<sup>8</sup> Unlike many soldiers in the Civil War, rather than feeling defeated after an injury, Hanger realized this was an opportunity for him to create and adapt to his new way of life. Hanger passed away on June 15, 1919, but his revolutionary contributions to the field of medicine are still very much alive today. The J.E. Hanger Company has expanded far beyond its beginnings of oak barrel wooden legs and has categorized Hanger as one of the leading medical innovators during the Civil War era.

Although Hanger was the first to create a hinged artificial limb, the industry of prosthetics exploded during the Civil War. Another leading player in the practice of prosthesis was Benjamin Franklin Palmer, who soon after Hanger's development began opening factories for artificial limbs. As Megan Kate Nelson discusses in her book, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*, "Palmer argued in an 1859 pamphlet that the present is an age of inventions and exhibitions."<sup>9</sup> B.F. Palmer also lost a limb of his own early in life and was dissatisfied by all existing means of "peg-legs" and prosthetic limbs. In 1847, B.F. Palmer opened his first factory in New Hampshire and later established offices in multiple northern cities. Both J.E. Hanger and B.F. Palmer were large distributors of prosthetic limbs to disabled soldiers, and suppliers for private organizations such as A.R.M.S. which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

This new industry was paved by individuals such as Hanger and Palmer, but the technical side of artificial limbs varied greatly. Nelson discusses how "artificial limb manufacturers tended to ignore the technological causes of limb loss and instead focused on claiming a special space for their practice of mechanical inventiveness within the

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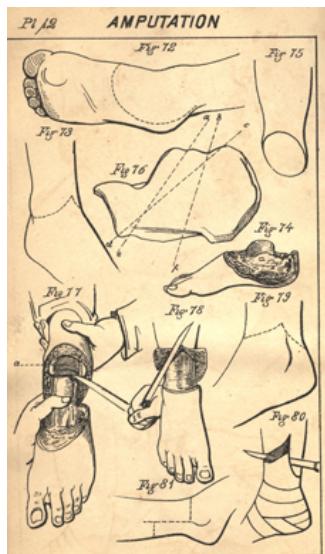
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Megan Kate, Nelson. *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012. pg. 216.

narrative and landscape of American advancement,” almost as if the artificial limb industry was the new Industrial Revolution.<sup>10</sup> The manufacturing behind prosthetics proved challenging depending on the anatomical location. Hinged knees and movable fingers were more difficult to construct, therefore more expensive. As the war waged on, so did the need for prosthetic limbs, and therefore in turn the artificial limb industry boomed.

There were multiple benefits to the rise of a new industry during a divided country stricken with wartime grief. Not only did this new industry create jobs, but it also created revenue for Southern states, which would soon lose a majority of their profits and economy with the loss of slaves due to the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Men who were unable to enlist, and even some men who were already discharged from the war due to disability, were able to work in factories creating limbs for the state governments in the Confederacy. The boom of the prosthetics industry, and the innovations of J.E. Hanger and B.F. Palmer paved the way for modern medicine,

especially wartime and emergency medicine in both  
World War I and World War II.



*A Manual of Military Surgery*, Confederate States of America, Surgeon General's Office.  
1863.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 217..

### From 1860 to Today

The rise of the prosthetic limb industry and the practice of battlefield medicine as a whole during the Civil War can be credited for many of today's medical procedures and resources. Hanger, Inc. is still the leading provider for prosthetics, amputees and any orthopedic needs. Over the years, Hanger, Inc. and other corporations have created new innovations regarding artificial limbs that may have not been achieved or may have been delayed without the Civil War sparking the prosthesis industry. The Civil War also helped put disabled veterans as well as their rights onto the map, as prior to the Civil War there was minimal regard for the assimilation of maimed soldiers back into society. After completing my research, I argue that disabled veterans themselves showed Americans, from both north and south, the true face of war and that it is indeed a struggle with significant deleterious consequences, rather than just a battle between the Blue and the Gray.

Following the Civil War, disabled veterans still found themselves suffering at the hand of the federal government when it came to accessibility of proper medical equipment and funding. In the article *Mobility redux: Post-World War II prosthetics and functional aids for veterans, 1945 to 2010*, James McAleer expands on the March on Washington which took place in 1945 where “many [veterans] defiantly holding their prosthetic legs and arms in the air and shaking them as if wielding clubs and intimidating their enemies--members of the U.S. Congress.”<sup>11</sup> This came as a result of the anger

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<sup>11</sup> James McAleer. "Mobility redux: Post-World War II prosthetics and functional aids for veterans, 1945 to 2010." *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development* 48, no. 2 (2011): vii+. *Academic OneFile* (accessed January 24, 2018). <https://login.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=gai&n=40375&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA251378486&sid=summon&asid=ef8e471d3a052d9c9e0cd&e4c67e30b40>

disabled veterans felt with because their government-provided prosthetics were inferior to those made by larger corporations designed for civilian use. This protest showed that although the government recognized and accommodated disabled veterans eighty years after the end of the Civil War, there was still much to be done on this issue.

Many of the technologies and procedures in use today are targeted at battlefield medicine. The actual model of the hinged artificial leg has changed over time, and in the 1970's innovators were able to incorporate a socket joint, as well as artificial arms, fingers and feet – some designed after J.E. Hanger's sketches. Prosthetics limbs are also now more lightweight and compact, as many servicemen are still on active duty while having a prosthetic limb. These advancements are also in no way limited to the United States. An article in the "European Journal of Trauma and Emergency Surgery" from June 2014 discusses current amputation from a country at war, in this case, Afghanistan. The article discusses a study in which "management practices associated with war-related amputations" as well as surgical practices and rehabilitation were analyzed.<sup>12</sup> The study found that of the 64 amputations studied, 46 were length preserving and primary closure, which ensures as easy adaptation and match with a prosthetic limb. The prosthetic limb industry that took off in the 1860's not only revolutionized medicine in America, but around the world.

The Civil War's introduction of firearms and advanced military tactics created a rise in the number of amputees, which directly led to a new industry, one designing and building artificial limbs. These prosthetics and the key figures involved in their invention, changed wartime medicine, not only in the 1860's but continuing up to present day.

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<sup>12</sup> Marty L. Mathieu, A., Ramaki, A. et al. Eur J Trauma Emerg Surg (2014) 40: 387.  
doi:10.1007/s00068-013-0334-y

When focusing on the injuries of war, we must also focus on those directly affected and what their lives looked like in the years directly following the end of the war. Public and private individuals in both the Union and the Confederacy had their own opinions and policies when it came to disabled veterans and their acculturation back into a new American society. The reality of war and the bloodshed that accompanies it, were for the first time accessible to the public. In some cases, the images of disabled veterans altered societies, and the soldiers themselves, perceptions of honor and valor in this fight between brothers.

“A Morning’s Work” (1865)



## **Chapter 2**

### **Disabled Veterans, Society, and Self Worth**

Although amputations did not arise for the first time during the Civil War, the volume of injuries, the number of survivors, and the lives affected were higher than previously recorded. Civil War injuries were some of the bloodiest and gruesome ever seen, and, because of the development of photography, for the first time the public could witness the true horrors of war. A common theme throughout Civil War texts was the idea of the Blue and the Gray, which takes away from the causes of the war and turns it into a narrative of simply military differences and the clash of brother versus brother. This ideology built up ideals of honor, valor and heroism, but after many soldiers were injured or permanently disabled, they no longer believed they exhibited these characteristics.

In my research I found that the voices of the wounded themselves have been virtually lost in Civil War memory. After a soldier was injured, the post-traumatic stress and mental suffering he endured were extremely debilitating. Letters from soldiers back to their families illustrate this pain and suffering, as well as the widespread epidemic of amputees flooding field hospitals.

After returning to the home front, all veterans, especially those who were left maimed, struggled to regain their place in society. Disabled veterans grappled with the ideals of manhood and honor, as they were no longer able to be sole providers for their families. The self-worth of veterans itself was now in question, as soldiers and officers battled depression, suicidal thoughts and gender identity crises.

In this chapter I take the time to examine if society was accepting of these maimed men, and to what extent they aided Confederate veterans in their transition back into the general public.

### Part 1: A Glimpse into The Battlefield

*“After amputating my leg that night, one of the arteries broke out to bleeding but the surgeon being loose by, stopped the blood by placing his thumb over the artery. The sewing had to be torn loose and taken up and tied, which was very painful to me. A few days after another artery came loose, and the surgeon was unable to take it up until putting me under the effects of chloroform and sawing off a piece of the bone and cutting up higher in the flesh, before he could get hold of the artery, which was almost equal to a second amputation. The surgeon says that the wound is doing well now....”<sup>13</sup>*

These are the words of Milton Clark to his brother while he laid on a decrepit bed in Reed's Hospital in Lynchburg, Virginia on August 22, 1864. Clark explained in his letter that he was unable to come home due to his amputation, a procedure that was very painful and not without complications.

*“I remained on the battlefield fourteen days, unable to move or help myself, lying between two corn rows smeared with my own blood. [...] I was finally moved to Chester Hospital, where I had to plead with the doctors to prevent amputation of my leg. It had so decayed that the bone and leaders were visible. [...] I am now old, seventy-seven years of age, living at Wildwood, Fla. , and have a warm place in my heart for all the old boys who wore gray.”<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Lane Mills (ed.), “Dear Mother: Don’t grieve about me. If I get killed, I’ll only be dead.” *Letters from Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), p. 331.

<sup>14</sup> William Paul, “Severe Experiences at Gettysburg,” *The Confederate Veteran*, January 1911, p. 85.

The above quotation is part of an editorial piece in *The Confederate Veteran*, a magazine published in 1911 in Nashville, Tennessee which allowed veterans to tell their stories fifty years after the end of the Civil War. In the magazine, William Paul of Wildwood, Florida also detailed his time serving the 48<sup>th</sup> Georgia Regiment, as well as the injuries he sustained during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Both Milton Clark and William Paul experienced the reality of becoming a victim of the American Civil War and living in a battlefield hospital. Both men lived to tell their story, but thousands of others were unable to do the same. Although Clark nor Paul do not specifically address their feelings of masculinity in these quotations, various soldiers illustrated their concerns for returning home after experiencing these injuries. Many disabled veterans relied on their wives and families to aid them in not only the physical, but also the emotional aspects of life after their return. These two primary sources are also unique in that many veterans chose not to share their experiences or be reminded of the distress they were under. In his book, *Mending Broken Soldiers: The Union and Confederate Programs to Supply Artificial Limbs*, Guy Hassegawa argues that many maimed veterans chose to acquire prosthetics to avoid stares, comments and questions about their conditions.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the mental struggles disabled veterans encountered when asked about their amputations, these men battled with walking, the primary means for transportation in the late 1800s. Milton Clark and William Paul received injuries to their lower appendages, therefore distorting their ability to walk and creating a reliance on either a prosthetic limb or family member for aid. Guy Hasegawa also mentions in his

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<sup>15</sup> Guy R Hasegawa. *Mending Broken Soldiers: The Union and Confederate Programs to Supply Artificial Limbs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012. p. 5.

book the use of local craftsmen and acquaintances in producing “peg legs” for those disabled soldiers who were unable to afford or were did not qualify for a prosthetic limb.

Disabled veterans also penned how they were upset they could not return to the war because of their injuries, seemingly stuck and lost after becoming an amputee. A few soldiers such as Union Brigadier-General William F Bartlett used their prosthetics to aid them in returning to the front lines. Bartlett wrote to Frank Palmer, a leading manufacturer of prosthetics during the Civil War, about the durability of his prosthetic stated, “during most of that time I have been on active duty in the field. It has stood the severe test of campaigning, exposure to all weathers, and constant use in the saddle, admirably; not better than I had hoped, but far better than I expected.”<sup>16</sup>. Bartlett rose from the rank of Captain to General while using his artificial limb after his leg was amputated.<sup>17</sup> This letter differs from those of Milton Clark and William Paul in ways that beg one to question whether a disabled soldier found more meaning in continuing to fight, even with an artificial limb, rather than returning home to an unaccepting society. Milton Clark does not directly explain his fear of changing gender roles he did discuss how he was hesitant about the prosthetic limb, and how his tone is not like Bartlett’s in that he was eager to return to active duty.

Firsthands accounts of these veterans are often overlooked by historians studying the Civil War, as a connection has not previously been made between mental health and amputees. Clark, Paul and Bartlett are some of the few maimed men who shared their grievances and physical discourse with others.

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<sup>16</sup> “The Palmer Arm and Leg, Adopted for the U.S. Army and Navy by the Surgeon-General, U.S.A.” Philadelphia, PA: American Artificial Limb Company, 1865. 30, 41, 42-43

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



"The Letter Home"

This picture depicts a soldier who was injured in the Battle of Gettysburg, narrating a letter back home to a volunteer woman on the battle field.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Eastman Johnson, North American; American, 1824 - 1906, (artist). 1867. The Letter Home. Drawings and Watercolors. Place: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, The Julia B. Bigelow Fund, 74.17, <http://www.artsmia.org/>.  
[http://library.artstor.org/asset/AMICO\\_MINIAPOLIS\\_103821053](http://library.artstor.org/asset/AMICO_MINIAPOLIS_103821053).

## Part 2: Vacant Virility

Disabled veterans returning to their antebellum lives faced an internal struggle: while they did want to continue to fight and help win the war for their side, many were conflicted about their purpose in life and what they could still offer following their shattered sense of virility. These maimed men not only relied on social acceptance, but also the acceptance of altered gender roles, as many white males were unable to work the same jobs and keep up the same appearances as they did prior to the outbreak of war.

To understand this sense of “vacant virility,” one must identify the ideals of manhood and valor in a Civil War era America. Megan Kate Nelson analyzes what it was like for these soldiers to come to terms with their injuries and teetering self-worth in her book, *Ruin Nation*. Nelson describes a soldier, Perkins, a disabled veteran of the Civil War whose “wounded body – ragged and bleeding, its internal workings exposed to the public view – and later the absence of a limb that his prosthetic leg both concealed and revealed were material realities of the war and representations of it.”<sup>19</sup> This statement highlights a new perception of war, by both the soldiers themselves and the public, and describes the physical reality of these veterans. Nelson also depicts how for many Americans, the material and visual realities were shocking because it showed the true nature of war and its power to obliterate the idea of “the man.”<sup>20</sup> This idea of “the man,” as Nelson defines, is the honor and bravery that characterizes men, and in her anecdote of Perkins she describes how fragile these characteristics are when it comes to war injuries

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<sup>19</sup> Megan Kate Nelson. *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012. Pg. 160

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

and disabilities.<sup>21</sup> Through research, there is additional evidence of this fragility as well as the mental instability the obliteration of the man creates.

For veterans of the Civil War who were maimed by a musket ball, cannons or other firearms, their transition to a life of disability brought mental impairments along with physical ones. The amputation of a foot, leg, hand or arm relinquished emotions and traumas that some veterans battled for the remainder of their lives. One of these debilitating diseases was depression.

The recovery period for amputations differed for each individual, as for some only a few fingers were removed and therefore their time spent in rehabilitation was short. For others, multiple appendages were removed within a brief time span which forced wounded soldiers to forfeit their independence. In the book *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South*, Brian Craig Miller illustrates the moment when a chaplain aided a Confederate soldier during an amputation procedure. The chaplain remarked that the patients “strong emotional reaction” to the loss of his limb “diminished his masculine status” and brought him back to an infantile state.<sup>22</sup> Miller also argues that the period of waiting and anticipation soldiers experienced after an injury, instilled ideas of disillusionment and disconnection within maimed soldiers who were discharged from the war cause.<sup>23</sup> For some soldiers, the reality of losing a limb along with the war, and the life they once had prior to it was too much to make a full recovery.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

<sup>22</sup> Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

The surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865 marked the end of a four year long blood bath. The former Confederacy was forced to cope with the loss of the war, the end to the institution of slavery, and staggering amounts of destruction throughout the southern United States. In addition to the physical and mental toll the war had on Confederate soldiers, some were unable return to work as a provider for their families, therefore shifting the responsibilities to their wives. This created an enormous change in gender roles in the work force and even politics.

In an era when maimed men viewed themselves as jaded and lacking virility, it was women who ensured this was not accurate. Volunteer women nurses, and care takers were crucial in maintaining an environment in which southern men were still depicted as desirable.<sup>24</sup> During the Civil War, many women were forced to work because a majority of the “working class” was drafted and out fighting. Soon after the war ended, many women quickly realized their work in factories and on farms would now become full-time. The Reconstruction era saw a rise in women who were now manning their plantations, finances and even political agendas. This increase in women’s activism in the labor force and society brought rise for ideas of suffrage and women’s rights in the late 1800s.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.



“Our Watering Places-The Empty Sleeve at Newport” illustrates a headstrong woman operating a horse drawn carriage while beside her is a one-armed veteran. This disabled veteran is now completely dependent on this woman – supporting the shift in gender roles in the post-bellum age.<sup>25</sup>

Injuries sustained by Confederate soldiers during the Civil War brought into question self-worth, honor and manhood. Men found themselves experiencing depression and anxiety over their vacant virility and a shift in gender roles. A majority of Southern families and communities accepted these men after their wounded return, but did the American society as a whole?

Brothers Levi J. and Henry J. Walker of the 13<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Infantry, before the war and consoling one another after each receiving amputations on the left leg below the knee. Levi was a recipient of a prosthetic through ARMS and Henry was granted a limb from the state.<sup>26</sup>



### Part 3: Broken Soldiers Returning to a Broken Society

Throughout the politically and culturally divided country, songs, political cartoons and pictures appeared to help bring amputees and disabled veterans into a positive light within popular culture. Examples of these efforts are provided in this chapter as evidence that the general public revered the sacrifices these soldiers gave and intended to support them after the war ended.

“The Empty Sleeve: A Song with a Chorus,” published by P.A. Hanaford and Reverend J.W. Dadmun published in 1866, used its lyrics to compare soldiers’ physical sacrifices to that of the ongoing valor and honor demonstrated by all Civil War veterans.

*That empty sleeve, it is a badge  
Of bravery and of honor;  
  
It whispers of the dear old flag,  
  
And tells who sav’d our banner  
  
Three hearty cheers for those who lost  
  
An arm in Freedom’s fray,  
  
And bear about an empty sleeve,  
  
But a patriot’s heart today.<sup>27</sup>*

The chorus of the song emphasizes that an empty sleeve is in fact a representation of the honor and bravery one gave for the war. “The Empty Sleeve: A Song with a Chorus” was viewed as an effort made to demonstrate to the public that although these men lost a limb, they remained no less of a soldier or man. Evidence such as this informs historians that disabled veterans for the most part were not shunned completely from

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<sup>27</sup> "The Empty Sleeve. A Song With Chorus. - The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection." Levy. <http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:087.139>

society, but rather society attempted to assimilate them back into the public and glamorize the limbs that fell victim to the Civil War.

“A Man Knows A Man” was a political cartoon published in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1865 to illustrate the common sense of valor two amputees felt when acknowledging one another. Although the cartoon was published in *Harper’s Weekly*, a northern publication supporting the Union cause, it demonstrates the community disabled veterans found within each other. Interestingly, the author drew one black and one white soldier, shaking hands after both losing a leg in the Civil War. The caption reads, “Give me your hand, Comrade! We have each lost a Leg for the good cause; but, thank God, we never lost Heart.”<sup>28</sup> While this cartoon does bring light to the honor and manhood disabled veterans shared no matter their race, this image is still only of two Union soldiers. Accordingly, this cartoon represents the disregard for Confederate veterans, and uses an African American soldier over a white Confederate. The author of this cartoon may not have intentionally used two Union soldiers, but the forgotten nature of former Confederates in this piece plays into a common sentiment of the Reconstruction Era.



<sup>28</sup> "A Man Knows A Man." Cartoon. *Harper's Weekly*, April 22, 1865.

Private entities also rallied in support of disabled Confederate veterans who returned to a broken society. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) was a prominent organization following the Civil War which fought for financial and moral support for maimed soldiers, widows and children who were made orphans in the post-bellum era. The UDC provided housing for some veterans as well as establishing hospitals for those still experiencing complications from their combat wounds. Along with aiding disabled veterans and their families normalize the results of the war, the UDC used their platform to push political agendas. The UDC addressed the blatant unequal opportunities granted to Union and Confederate veterans after the war such as access to prosthetics, pension and public housing. The UDC is still relevant today with the discussion of Civil War memory and Confederate statues, as many of them were funded by the UDC in the early 1900's.

With the help of such organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the United Confederate Veterans, a fraternal self-help group, disabled veterans could feel supported by a large majority of the general public. As soldiers lay ill on hospital beds, they often questioned their self-worth and value to society. Songs, political cartoons, and pictures demonstrate that these maimed men were accepted and even esteemed for their heroism and sacrifice.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Southern Losses**

In the post-bellum era, many veterans became very dependent on federal and/or state governments as well as government-subsidized programs because of their lack of money and income. For Union veterans during the Reconstruction Era, the federal government came to their assistance, but for Confederate soldiers it was the state governments who stepped in when the federal government refused to provide funds for those soldiers who fought against the Union. Disabled veterans in particular needed assistance with obtaining and funding prosthetic limbs as well as programs to aid in their rehabilitation. Both the government and the public grappled with what to do with the large numbers of disabled veterans and amputees who returned home penniless. Directly after the war, benefits and pensions provided by the federal government were only granted to Union soldiers, forcing former Confederate states to create their own organizations and aid for Southern veterans. Confederate veterans suffered greatly because of the lack of involvement on the part of the federal government for years after the war and especially during the Reconstruction era. Confederate veterans were viewed as anti-American throughout this post-war period and these views continued until 1958, when the United States Congress pardoned Confederate veterans for waging war against their own nation.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> An Act to increase the monthly rates of pension payable to widows and former widows of deceased veterans of the Spanish-American War, Civil War, Indian War, and Mexican War, and provide pensions to widows of veterans who served in the military or naval forces of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, 72 133-134 §§ 72 Stat. 133-133-134 (U.S. Government Printing Office 1958).

## Part 1: Filling the Empty Sleeves

Confederate states found themselves responsible for supplying disabled veterans with artificial limbs, pensions and even in some cases, public housing. The supply of these limbs is something not widely studied, therefore research findings are limited. From what has been uncovered, there are sparse accounts of state governments providing the relief needed by siphoning their state budgets. But, it was not only governments who found themselves responsible, but also civilians, which in turn led to the creation of the Confederate Association for the Relief of Maimed Soldiers (ARMS) in Richmond in 1864. As Guy R. Hasegawa points out in his book *Mending Broken Soldiers: The Union and Confederate Programs to Supply Artificial Limbs*, “artificial limb producers were scarce in the South, and their wartime work was hampered by the dearth of skilled workers (a result of the Confederate conscription acts), shortages of vital materials due to the Union blockade, and skyrocketing inflation.”<sup>30</sup> This is where ARMS came into play as it ordered and manufactured limbs for those in need.

Hasegawa is one of the few individuals who have published work on ARMS as well as its impact on the former Confederate states such as Virginia and Tennessee. In the fifth chapter of his book, “An Act of Esteem and Gratitude,” he begins with an anecdote regarding Richmond’s African Church. A few days prior to January 22, 1864 a committee had assembled to draft a constitution for the creation of a private entity, one that would supply maimed veterans in the former Confederate States of America with limbs.<sup>31</sup> How this committee came to be is credited to Reverend Charles K. Marshall of

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<sup>30</sup> Guy R Hasegawa. *Mending Broken Soldiers: The Union and Confederate Programs to Supply Artificial Limbs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

Mississippi, who visited a battlefield hospital and was entranced by the suffering of the wounded. He witnessed a soldier being fitted for a limb, which cost \$300 in Confederate currency, and Marshall quickly realized this was above the pay grade for the average wounded veteran and therefore access to prosthetics was limited to the upper class.<sup>32</sup> After legal action was taken to obtain approval, ARMS, the Association for the Relief of Maimed Soldiers was started. Elections took place at the first meeting, in which Marshall was elected president. From its beginnings, ARMS gained monetary support from prominent figures in channels of the Confederate government, and the private organization was also supported by the Confederate Army Medical Department.<sup>33</sup> ARMS was unique in that for the first time, society was rallying together in full-scale to openly support the physical ailments of disabled veterans. In the long run, donations and funds for ARMS dwindled out yet not completely, as they were able to still supply veterans with prosthetics even after the war ended.

Other states such as Mississippi were not fortunate enough to have a large amount of prosthetics supplied by ARMS or other private organizations. In cases like this, state governments felt the pressure to be responsible for using their own budgets to acquire limbs for their veterans. In some states the only option available was to use public funds, so much that “in 1866, the State of Mississippi spent more than half its yearly budget providing veterans with artificial limbs.”<sup>34</sup> Mississippi is one example in which the state funded large-scale orders for prosthetics, expending close to \$26,600 in the few years

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 47

<sup>34</sup> Hunter Oatman-Stanford. "War and Prosthetics: How Veterans Fought for the Perfect Artificial Limb." Collectors Weekly. Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/war-and-prosthetics/>.

after the Civil War.<sup>35</sup> In the book *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* by Brian Craig Miller, there is an outline of the states' spending on prosthetics compared to their total annual budget, which is included below.

Dates	Amount spent on prosthetic limbs (\$)	Total state budget (\$)
May 1866 - April 1867	203.00	555,627.00
May 1867 - April 1868	24,712.25	576,934.72
May 1868 - April 1869	444.00	502,723.11
May 1869 - April 1870	1180.00	684,247.97
Totals	26,539.25	2,319,532.80

*Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi, 1866-71, MS.*

This table supports the argument that the former Confederacy and its veterans, were not recognized in the federal governments efforts for aiding disabled soldiers. During the Reconstruction era, the former Union was able to focus its state budgets on projects promoting industrialization and urban growth, but this was not the case in the South. Although states had to allocate funds for these prosthetics, a benefit of this was that in turn it created a ferocious competition within the false limb industry. For those who were able to afford their own prosthetics and rehabilitation, pensions were significantly less than those of former Unions soldiers, only furthering the disparities within a broken country.

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<sup>35</sup> Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 153. *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi, 1866-71, MS.*

## Part 2: Mismatched Monies

In 1890, the United States Congress passed the Dependent and Disability Pension Act, but only applied it to Union veterans. The conditions of this act were that one must have served in the armed forces for at least ninety days, was honorably discharged and additionally, unable to perform manual labor because of their disability.<sup>36</sup> Although the act was not passed until 1890, other smaller and less comprehensive pension systems for both Union and the Confederate veterans existed both during and directly after the end of the Civil War. A majority of disabled veterans relied only on their pensions, as some were no longer able to be sole providers for themselves and their families. Something not widely studied is how the South coped with this lack of federal pension system, and how disabled Confederate veterans were left to recover on their own.

To paint a picture illustrating the differences former Union and Confederate soldiers faced regarding compensation, we must first review what the South was deprived of in comparison to the North. In 1862, Union soldiers who were disabled as a result of their service were granted eligibility for pensions; the amount provided was dependent on the severity and anatomical location of their disability. Early pension records indicate that Union veterans were given around eight dollars a month, but this number increased as the war waged on and the demand for soldiers grew. As for the Confederacy, the funds of the state governments and the topography were in constant conflict as the carnage of the war continued. Although the Confederate government did not provide an official pension system, it was able to make available limited artificial limbs and pensions to Confederate veterans starting in the mid 1860's. The main problem was funding – as the South could

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<sup>36</sup> Theda, Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press, 1992.

not use federal taxes, so states were forced to find alternative means. Scholars from Virginia Tech along with the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies have researched the Civil War pension system in the post-bellum South. They concluded in their initial report that “the Confederate pension system [...] relied on patronage” and that veterans had to produce comrades who would attest to their heroism.<sup>37</sup>

An aspect to Confederate veterans’ relief funds that is also crucial to note is the Lost Cause ideology fueling this patronage. This “lost cause” is the name given to a popular intellectual and literary movement during the era of Reconstruction, and continuing through the early twentieth century. The Lost Cause ideology was a common belief that the federal government had victimized the South, and that the North did not have grounds to interfere with states’ rights or the institution of slavery. This belief also coincided with the idea that the Old South must be restored, creating a new nation of white supremacy and black subordination. The reliance on patronage to fund Confederate pensions and artificial limbs for disabled veterans, fueled this Lost Cause ideology even more, as veterans found they must adhere to these values to obtain a monetary gain.

Additional to the state budget information provided in the book *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South*, Brian Craig Miller also provides a table detailing Florida pension payments as an example supporting this idea of state dependency in the South. In 1885, Florida had fifty-eight disabled veterans receiving a pension, therefore the state had to allocate close to two thousand dollars to provide for them.<sup>38</sup> If this were a northern state, these funds would not be subtracted from the state government but rather

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 183.

federal taxes and public veterans associations. Miller notes in his book that in 1890, the state of Florida revised the law to require the variation of pension amounts depending on the severity of the disability, therefore the table represents a drop in pensioners.<sup>39</sup>

Year	Number of pensioners in Florida	Amount spent by State of Florida on pensions (\$)
1885	58	1,777.50
1886	100	7,653.80
1887	167	9,368.83
1888	318	32,647.76
1889	384	34,486.38
1890	218	35,000.00

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“Report of Surgeon General, 1892,” United Confederate Veterans Association Records, LSU.

Florida pension statistics from 1885-1890 represent the issues all Southern states faced regarding maimed soldiers. During and after the Civil War, monetary relief for disabled veterans in the form of pensions was mismatched and those who suffered the most from this were the veterans themselves. As previously argued, the federal government refused to provide limbs for Confederate veterans, and the Confederate government did not have the money to accommodate every veteran. Therefore, if a disabled soldier was awarded a pension, significant funds were drained purchasing an artificial limb.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 183. “Report of Surgeon General, 1892,” United Confederate Veterans Association Records, LSU.

### Part 3: Creating a New Place for Disabled Veterans

For those Confederate veterans who returned from the Civil War injured and poor, there was a struggle to find housing as well as a new life. As discussed in Chapter 2, some disabled veterans were not accepted back into their communities and families, therefore they had to search for a new community, often an artificial one composed of other veterans, both disabled and non-disabled.

Public housing in the Union was federally sponsored, but similarly to other public services, Confederate veterans were viewed as traitors and so were excluded from these benefits. The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, established March 3, 1865, was a direct result of Abraham Lincoln's attempt to aid Union soldiers' return to a welcoming home.<sup>40</sup> According to The National Park Service "Confederate veterans were never allowed at the National Home branches, but several Southern states established similar homes which were funded and managed by either state governments or private organizations."<sup>41</sup>

These veteran homes were often large campuses and were usually not close to any surrounding towns. This was purposely contrived to prevent veterans from entering town to drink, participate in other vices and to keep these maimed reminders of the failed war out of sight. Each home contained rooms, dining halls, a hospital, recreational facilities, parks, libraries and even opportunities to work. Jobs kept the soldiers on a normal

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<sup>40</sup>Trevor K. Plante. "The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers." National Archives and Records Administration. Spring 2004. Accessed February 20, 2018.

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring/soldiers-home.html>.

<sup>41</sup> "Veterans Affairs National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers: A Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary." National Parks Service. Accessed August 17, 2017.  
[https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/veterans\\_affairs/history.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/veterans_affairs/history.html).

schedule and were catered depending on the type of disability. The homes were also run by a military structure, mainly for the familiarity.

Two of the most documented Confederate soldiers' homes were in Alabama and Missouri. The Alabama Confederate Soldier's Home was located in Chilton Creek and is now a state memorial park. Jefferson Manly Faulkner, a former Confederate officer and public official who donated 102 acres of land, founded the home in 1901.<sup>42</sup> The home began as a private entity and to fundraise for the construction, Faulkner sold subscriptions and tickets to listen to prominent speakers at the home when it opened. After two years, Faulkner and his staff reached out to the state of Alabama for assistance and in October 1903 it was completely taken over as a state home. The home consisted of twenty-two buildings total, including a hospital, theater and barn and as many as one hundred and four residents lived there at its peak. A September 3, 1902 article published in *The Atlanta Constitution* describes the residents' satisfaction with Faulkner's efforts as well as "the fraternal sentiment that's alive in the heart of every old soldier."<sup>43</sup> Today, the Alabama Confederate Soldier's Home buildings are no longer there, and the space has been converted to a park in remembrance of the Confederate veterans who once lived there, but the cemetery from the original property is still in existence.

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<sup>42</sup> History of Confederate Memorial Park, accessed March 18, 2018.  
<http://ahc.alabama.gov/ConfederateMemorialParkHistoryFacts.aspx>.

<sup>43</sup> A soldier's sentiments. 1902. *The Atlanta Constitution* (1881-1945), Sep 03, 1902. (accessed March 17, 2018).



Post Card printed in 1906 detailing the Confederate Soldier's Home in Chilton Creek, Alabama<sup>44</sup>

The idea for the Confederate Home located in Higginsville, Missouri occurred in 1890 when the Daughters of the Confederacy believed that the public should aid Confederate Civil War veterans after the federal government had failed to do so.<sup>45</sup> The Daughters of the Confederacy raised over \$25,000 to purchase the site's 135 acres and begin construction.<sup>46</sup> The home opened on June 9, 1893 sporting a southern aesthetic and included dorms, a chapel and farmland. This farmland was open and free to all of the resident veteran to work and produce their own food as well as generate their own electricity.<sup>47</sup> The state of Missouri took control in 1897 and operated the home until May

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<sup>44</sup> The Clan Akins in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, accessed April 1, 2018  
<https://clanakins.weebly.com/20th-century.html>

<sup>45</sup> Karen L. Cox, Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 15-6.

<sup>46</sup> The Physical Condition and Future Use of the Confederate Home at Higginsville, Mo. Jefferson City, MO, 1944. The Making of Modern Law: Primary Sources. Web. March 19, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Norine, Albers. "Visit Confederate Soldier's Home Historic Site," Daily guide (Waynesville, MO), March 2, 2013: 1, accessed March 19, 2018.  
<http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/news/144D7A0777F009Bo?p=WORLDNEWS>.

1950, when the last remaining Missouri Confederate veteran, Johnny Graves, died at 108 years old.<sup>48</sup>

Residents of the Missouri Confederate Home, which housed a total of 1,600 Civil War veterans and their families for over fifty years.<sup>49</sup>



After returning to the home front after fighting in the Civil War, many disabled veterans found themselves looking for a new sense of community. The federal government refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Confederate veterans, and therefore resulted in years of Southern losses. State governments were now the ones responsible for the well-being of these veterans, and as a result these maimed soldiers were often overlooked. Private entities such as ARMS and individuals such as Jefferson Manly Faulkner recognized these grievances and came to the aid of disabled veterans.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Missouri State Parks: <https://mostateparks.com/park/confederate-memorial-state-historic-site>

Prosthetic limbs, pensions and public housing were all now the Confederate veteran's responsibility in addition to their mental stability and emotional healing.

**For Disabled Confederate Veterans.**

COLUMBIA, S. C., Nov. 25.—In the Senate today Senator Abbott introduced a bill to establish a home for aged and disabled Confederate veterans of South Carolina. The building is to be located in Columbia, and to cost \$10,000, with a per capita cost of \$120 per year for the inmates.

Newspaper clipping from The Washington Post, November 26, 1892.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> For disabled confederate veterans. 1892. The Washington Post (1877-1922), Nov 26, 1892. (Accessed April 1, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The American Civil War and the destruction it caused are still remembered in memory and American culture today. Amputations, amputees and the beginnings of a booming prosthetic limb industry have little place in this historical memory, however. Very few historians have studied the unique relationship between how a generation of veterans defined by disability was accepted back into society.

My goal for this project was to bring these issues to light and analyze how the Civil War, a war defined by states' rights and slavery, was very different for those fighting the fight. My thesis first examined the boom of the prosthetics industry, and how this industry exploded as well as who the two leading individuals were in this new technological wave. Chapter 1 also details how this industry has impacted medicine and military advancements in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Secondly, I detailed the experiences the soldiers themselves experienced while lying dormant in a hospital bed after being injured. These disabled veterans now faced uncertain futures, and well as a vacant sense of virility after realizing they could no longer live the lives they previously did. And lastly, I focused on the Confederate States of America and the differing treatment these veterans received in comparison to their brothers in the North. The access to prosthetic limbs, pensions and public housing became the individual states responsibilities.

My thesis was centered around four main research questions, as well as primary and secondary sources I found in my research. The questions that I formulated to guide me, and ones that I hope will guide future historians interested in this topic are:

- In which ways did battlefield injuries contribute to the medical development of surgery and amputation?
- How did disabled veterans play into the nation's ideas of masculinity and honor?
- More specifically, how did their new "empty sleeves" affect the self worth and confidence of disabled veterans when returning home to their families?
- What did the post-bellum era bring about for disabled veterans and how did the legislative benefits passed during this time period differ between the states of the Union and those which had constituted the Confederacy?

My hope for my research is that historians in the future may dive deeper into the connection between the prosthetics industry and the mental health of maimed soldiers during the American Civil War, as well as, how this connection is still prevalent and important today.

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