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Gender Influenced Social Welfare Reforms at the South Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary: An Institutional History (1908 - 1957)

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Alice Earle, Sophie Swindell, and Benjamin Williams,

for never abandoning their ideals or honor.

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Abstract

The South Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary in Columbia opened in 1909, serving two aged and infirm veterans per county. The last former Confederate state to establish a residential facility for veterans, South Carolina became the first state to reserve positions for women on the managing board. Women on the Board exercised more power there than at any comparable institution in the South, with policy implications that featured an increasingly inclusive policy for accommodation of women as both Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary administrators and occupants. When the institution closed in 1957, it had cared for women for a longer period of time than men for whom it was established. Grounded in the proslavery rebellion and half-grudgingly created by a state government hostile to social welfare initiatives, the Confederate Soldiers' Home, under the cloak of the Lost Cause, became a showcase of the Progressive movement in South Carolina.

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INTRODUCTION

An old veteran in Brunson, South Carolina, received a letter during the spring of 1906 from a soldier formerly under his command who was living in the Confederate Soldiers' Home in Atlanta, Georgia. Nearly half a century before, Will Brunyon had served under Captain Ben S. Williams in Georgia's 'Fighting 47th' infantry regiment. He reported that in honor of Confederate Memorial Day a few weeks prior, on May 10th, he and his comrades "were treated to car fare to Atlanta, where we were placed in chairs on the stage of the grand opera house." There they were the center of a celebration complete with Lost Cause orations and orchestral music.[1] The Atlanta home residents were, in the words of the principal scholar of Confederate veterans' homes, "living monuments."[2]

Aside from such special occasions, however, Brunyon's letter indicated that day-to-day life was harsh at the Georgia Soldiers' Home. His letter criticized the medical care. He noted, "our doctor is not worth a damn, or does not care for us." Not to mention the food, which to Brunyon was "bad, the worst and nastiest," so bad that "we are all suffering indigestion." Despite the ideal of comfort these men expected, Brunyon wrote as well of the staff's lack of respect toward the residents. The staff would dispose of bodies quickly and without the level of honor the Confederacy claimed for its dead soldiers. Brunyon summarized how "one of our inmates drops off and his body is carried

[1] Brunyon to Williams, 30 May 1906, DUKE.
[2] Rosenburg, R.B., *Living Monuments: Confederate Soldiers' Home in the New South.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. xiii.

away, entirely unannounced to us!" So deplorable were the conditions, he claimed, that "perhaps it is the policy of the authorities to kill us off and to be rid of us." The veneration of living Confederate monuments turned out to be quite limited.

The first and only comprehensive history of Confederate veterans' homes was written by R.B. Rosenburg in 1993. He argues that the need to enforce discipline within the homes that were populated mainly by lower class farmers clashed with the ideal of "living monuments." His concluding chapter discusses the role of women as both administrators and residents of the homes. It was not until nearly twenty years later that a closer analysis of a home was presented. In 2010 Rusty Williams focused on the stories of the veterans who resided in the Confederate Home in Kentucky while paying particular attention to gender and social issues. Though awash in Lost Cause rhetoric and sentiment, it provides useful pieces of information and a closer examination of a veterans' home in an otherwise sparse historiography. This study follows in the wake of Rosenburg, discussing the difficulties administrators and supports had convincing veterans to behave like community role models. Prompted by Rosenburg, this study also discovered the unique role of women in the South Carolina Home, from its establishment and increasingly in its administration. The authority and degree of power exerted by South Carolina woman was unmatched or totally absent in other states.

The South Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary, which opened three years after Brunyon's scathing letter from Georgia, would retrace the tension between commemorative fervor and public disregard that Williams's correspondent described. Although awash in Lost Cause sentiment, South Carolina was the last of the former Confederate states to establish a residential institution for its veterans. The

founding of these soldiers' homes began in Richmond, VA, and New Orleans, LA, in the 1880s and swept through the entire former Confederacy as well as former border states Kentucky and Missouri by 1902.[3] Only in 1908 did a narrowly divided South Carolina legislature vote to appoint an unpaid, five-member commission "to establish and manage an infirmary for infirm and destitute Confederate sailors and soldiers of the state."[4] This commission was to consist of at least three veterans, and the infirmary was authorized to admit two veterans from each of South Carolina's forty-two counties.[5] The legislature appropriated funds for the construction of a building on "Bellevue Place on Wallaceland," the former estate of the Wallace family. The property was part of a state purchase that expanded the South Carolina Hospital for the Insane north of the city boundaries; the Hospital deeded it to the Confederate Infirmary with the understanding that it would revert back when the Home closed.[6] Even after the completion of the building, though, several legislators made a determined effort in early 1909 to repeal the establishment of the Home and divert the facility to another use.

Looking back in 1943, the Board Chairman of the Home would find it "hard to understand just why the people of the State that was the first to secede and the state that had furnished more soldiers and sailors in proportion to its population than any other in the South to fight for the cause of the Confederacy should have waited nearly forty three

[3] California was the last state to establish a Veterans' Home when Dixie Manor was opened in 1929 in Los Angeles.
[4] *Report of the Commission to Establish Infirmary for Confederate Veterans*, 18 January 1909. RCPL.
[5] When Dillon County was founded in 1910, the law had to be amended to allow eighty six veterans into the Home.
[6] Colonel Wallace sold his land, consisting of one hundred and ten acres to the South Carolina Hospital for the Insane in 1896. The Hospital relocated his home two blocks down Bull Street from Elmwood Avenue to the north east corner of Richland Street, where it still stands to this day. http://www.digitizingbullstreet.com/ (accessed 21 June 2014).

years after the close of the bloody conflict to establish and maintain a home"[7] The reluctance of South Carolina to establish welfare institutions explains the apparent paradox. *The State* newspaper, a strong voice of Lost Cause sentiment and Columbia's largest daily newspaper, expressed considerable skepticism about the proposed Home during the 1909 repeal debate, noting that the state funded $250,000 in Confederate pensions each year. [8] Welfare housing represented a bolder step than military pensions in a state dominated politically by industrialists and agricultural landowners.

The resolution of the 1909 legislative struggle foreshadowed an important dynamic in the future of the Home. The legislature affirmed its support for the institution by appropriating $12,000 for annual maintenance but made no appropriation to outfit the new facility. For that expense, estimated at $4000, the legislature looked toward the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). The women responded enthusiastically to the invitation and raised the means to furnish the Home. The UDC's prominent role in the establishment of the Home led to their continued involvement in the economic, social and political functions of the Home thereafter.

The Home gradually became a political battlefield between the UDC and former Confederate officers who operated the home in varying capacities. Little did Ben Williams know when he received that letter from an old comrade in the spring of 1906 that he would become the foremost casualty in this struggle when he served as superintendent of the Soldiers' Home. The last former Confederate state to establish a residential facility for veterans, South Carolina became the first state to reserve positions for women on the managing board. The UDC exercised more power there than at any

[7] Annual Report, 1943, p 3. SCDAH.
[8] "Appropriation Bill has been Reported" *State*, 9 February 1909, 6.

comparable institution in the South, with policy implications that featured an increasingly inclusive policy for accommodation of women as both Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary administrators and occupants. Grounded in the proslavery rebellion and half-grudgingly created by a state government hostile to social welfare initiatives, the Confederate Soldiers' Home became a showcase of the Progressive movement in South Carolina.

Chapter 1 - Early Struggles

"Politics and drunkenness, I suppose, is at the bottom of it"

L. P. Collier, February 1913, Columbia, SC

During its first twelve years, from 1909 to 1921, the Confederate Infirmary fell far short of its sponsors' hopes for a living monument to soldiers' services and civilians' gratitude. The elderly, indigent men who moved into the home refused to behave like lifeless statues. Rather, their human needs made them all but the statues the political and social leadership hoped to make of them. Ironically, the underfunding of the facility provided an opening for Progressive reform. At the prodding of the UDC, the state government conducted several investigations of the veterans' unsatisfactory living conditions. These reports provided a basis not only for repairs to the buildings but also for an overhaul in the governance and administration of the institution.

The UDC's ideals for the role the Home would play in the community and how it should operate were apparent within their advocacy campaign to build the Home. In a letter to *The State* the largest daily newspaper in Columbia, shortly before the Home opened, "A Daughter" appealed to the men of South Carolina for "a home that should be kept beautiful and made beautiful as the Daughters of the Confederacy can and are willing to make it." She made clear the UDC's intention to be involved in the operations as she pleaded to "give us the home and help us in our efforts to make the few remaining

days of these poor suffering old veterans' happy days." The Wade Hampton (Columbia, SC) Chapter of the UDC was prominent in the opening of the Home on June 3, 1909, the birthday of Jefferson Davis.[9]

Lack of financial support hampered the realization of the UDC's goals from the beginning of this project. Architect Charles C. Wilson criticized the construction (see fig. 1), claiming his plans were not completely followed. He wrote on behalf of his firm, Wilson, Sompayrac & Urquhart that "we respectfully call your attention to the fact, that there are some desirable, and even necessary features in the original plans, which we have, as yet, been unable to carry out, on account of the insufficiency of the appropriation." The facility lacked a hospital, Wilson pointed out. There also was need for an additional dormitory, "so as to give adequate accommodation for eighty-four men."[10] His complaints were not addressed by the legislature.

Figure 1.1. Constructed in 1910 by Charles Wilson, Lydia Plantation in Darlington County, South Carolina, closely resembles the South Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home and provides an extant example of its architectural style. (From the author's private collection)

[9] "Plea for Confederate Home," *State*, 22 February 1909, 3.
[10] *Report of the Commission to Establish Infirmary for Confederate Veterans*, 18 January 1909. RCPL.

The Home opened on June 3, 1909 with a large celebration with many dignitaries attending. The first superintendent of the Home, W.D. Starling, was a lifelong Columbia resident and the longtime commander of Camp Hampton, the principal Confederate veterans organization in the state capital. He viewed himself as a commanding officer with broad powers to enforce the Home's rules of order copied from the notable Lee Camp Soldiers' Home in Richmond, VA. "Captain Starling is a strict disciplinarian, but pleasant," an inmate of the Home wrote. "Of course in a crowd of 50 and more inmates from all classes of people you can't expect all to be pleased, but I say any man that grumbles and is dissatisfied here is not worthy to be called a Confederate Soldier."[11] Not all veterans in the institution shared this view of Starling or willingly submitted to his authority.

Several episodes in the first year highlight the tensions between the Captain Starling and veterans who found his iron fist troublesome to their comfort. An inmate who used inappropriate language in front of Starling's wife in the dining hall was given a forced furlough of sixty days. Douglas Walker, the inmate in question, was forced to live in the county almshouse for the duration of his forced furlough to the consternation of the UDC.[12] A more serious incident occurred a few months later when Captain Starling was attacked by an angry inmate with a knife. Starling recovered, despite a painful hand injury and "an attack of vertigo necessitating his confinement to bed."[13] According to the board of commissioners' subsequent inspection report to the Governor Ansel, "the

[11] "The Confederate Home: A Veteran Writes in Praise of the Institution and the Treatment Accorded," *State*, 10 October 1909, 11.
[12] *Newberry Herald and News*, 7 January 1910
[13] "Capt. Starling Cut by Inmate of Home: Commandant in Charge of Confederate Veterans Injured," *State*, 30 April 1910, 6.

commandant acted with great forbearance and only in self defense."[14] Serious damage was done in the court of public opinion, though, as the *State* reported the confrontation at the Confederate Home.

The election of Cole Blease as governor of South Carolina in 1910 led to the appointment of a new board of commissioners and the replacement of Starling with Henry W. Richardson, who had served in the Fourth South Carolina Cavalry during the war and later held patronage positions in Beaufort arranged by his former commander Matthew C. Butler. The women of the UDC strenuously resisted the shift in control of the institution, with the backing of *The State* and other male allies. The newspaper repeatedly criticized the new superintendent for interfering with the liberties of inmates. After an inmate was suspended for bad behavior, the local Columbia court issued "an order temporarily restraining H.W. Richardson and others from interfering with Samuel F. Massey, in the enjoyment of the privileges and benefits of an inmate." Massey appealed to the hearts of the public, notably the UDC, claiming that he was "left to starve except for the charity of the good people of the State, whose hearts go out to Confederate Soldiers, and especially the Daughters of the Confederacy." [15] H.W. Richardson also faced resistance when he accepted the role of treasurer while serving on the Board of Commissioners. The "dual offices" tendered to him went against the rules of the institution, that stipulated that no member of the commission had a right to "draw a salary

[14] Board of Commissioners to Governor Ansel, 6 May 1910. The assailant, "frankly admitted his fault, and was, at his own request, allowed to leave the Home and City, under a suspended sentence." SCDAH Ansel Papers.
[15] "Protect Old Vet by Court Order: Confederate Soldier Returns to State Infirmary Yesterday," *State*, 25 August 1912, 10.

of an officer of the institution."[16] When a lawsuit was brought against him, the court ruled in his favor and he was allowed to continue serving in dual offices.

Accusations of political discrimination pervaded the Home during Richardson's tenure, and inmates' rights to legal counsel and freedom of speech instigated a public discussion about the power of the Board of Commissioners. After one particular inmate was expelled for poor behavior, Richardson explained how "every dismissal since then has been met in the same manner, the plaintiff usually enjoining on the ground of discrimination, but I regard it as coming from outside evil and altogether personal influence. As a result, the rebellious ones (which I am thankful to say, number very few) are at liberty to create any and all kinds of disturbances and dissentions." The authority of the board, he complained "has become a question before the court, and the Board, as well as officials at the Home, are therefore powerless to enforce such rules as they have been made, each attempt bringing on useless and expensive litigation."[17]

Shortly after a series of embarrassing episodes and accusations, the Richland County government was prodded into action. The first outside-investigation into allegations at the Infirmary revealed that the situation was complicated. A.D. McFaddin, Master in Equity for Richland County, interviewed the soldiers who brought the lawsuit against Richardson. A Blease appointee, he unsurprisingly sided with Richardson and the Board; "In this the plaintiffs have absolutely failed. The testimony in this connection is not even flimsy. Not a line of testimony offered even tends to establish such discrimination."[18]

[16] Annual Report, 1912, p. 3. SCDAH
[17] Annual Report, 1913, p 5. SCDAH
[18] A.D. McFaddin's MASTER'S REPORT is printed in the Annual Report, 1913, pp7-8. SCDAH

Despite the two reports essentially exonerating Richardson and other administrators from allegations of discrimination, the state legislature decided to conduct its own investigations. The appeals of inmates to the public and the UDC resulted in the first major governmental investigation. In February 1913 the 'Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Confederate Veterans' Infirmary' visited the institution and conducted interviews at the State Capitol "for the purpose of investigating certain reports concerning the management."[19] Inmates, the commandant, board members, the matron and employees all gave testimony. Concerns over liquor, grafting and political discrimination the main topics discussed. J.P Caldwell, an inmate who acted as commandant of the veterans, confirmed that depending on the "state side of the political fence a man was on" that "there was a tendency on the part of who have authority over there to discriminate against certain of those old men."[20] Inmate N.W. Jones testified that Richardson threatened him saying "If I ever hear of you speaking about Blease ungentlemanly or in any way out of the way about him, I will be damned if I don't discharge you without giving you a trial."[21] Richardson later countered, claiming that a firm hand was required. "Without being considered egotistical," he stated, "but for my personal influence and hold over the majority of the old soldiers, and the patience, kindness and firmness of the officials under me, we could never have overcome the discord that was begun in 1912."[22] Another solution Richardson administered was the

[19] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1011. SCSL
[20] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1067. SCSL
[21] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1080. SCSL
[22] Annual Report, 1913, p. 6. SCDAH

edict that "forbids(s) the employees to exercise any influence" over the inmates "for political purposes."[23]

After the re-election of Governor Blease in 1912, accusations of discrimination ceased. Other testimony at the state inquiry exposed that the veterans were not behaving as the idealized statues the public and UDC believed them to be. N.W. Jones revealed that religious services were not held regularly because the volunteer chapel preacher was bothered by slamming of doors and cursing and heckling during the services. Jones testified that the preacher "had to quit after some time. He could not hear himself read or pray."[24] This is hardly the behavior the UDC envisioned veterans exhibiting as community role models when the women pushed for the creation of the Home. After all, as inmate L.P Collier pointed out, "not all Confederate Veterans are gentlemen."[25] He reports, "one of our worse drunkards" after leaving the Home and visiting town to imbibe whiskey was "vomiting all over the floor, the stench was so bad that you could not hardly pass the door without vomiting" yourself.[26] He sums up the cause of the behavioral problems in the early years of the Home; "politics and drunkenness, I suppose, is at the bottom of it."[27] Men whose formative years were spent in dirty Virginia back-country army encampments and the soulless bloody battlefields of Antietem and Gettysburg could not become the concrete monuments the state of South Carolina, the UDC, or the pitiless Richardson desired of them.

An important outcome as a result of the Special Committee investigation was that the office of Commandant was absorbed into the role of superintendent. Henceforth,

[23] Annual Report, 1914, p. 3. SCDAH
[24] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1076. SCSL
[25] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1145. SCSL
[26] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1075. SCSL
[27] Journal of SC House, 1913, p. 1082. SCSL

references to commandant are scare in the historical record. Until this point, the role of disciplining the inmates was delegated to the commandant while the superintendent served in more of an administrative capacity. Now, these functions were centralized in one employee.

At the same time as the Special Committee investigation, the Legislative Committee on Penal and Charitable Institutions conducted its own brief inspection. According to this investigation, the root of the problems at the Home was the behavior of the inmates rather than burdensome administrators. "We are of the opinion that discipline should be maintained, even if the last means has to be resorted to of expelling an inmate who will not obey the rules." It also addressed the abundance of inmate complaints. "Of course there are some complaints, but would it be possible to run an institution of this kind *without any complaint*? The inmates are old and a lot of them childish and practically helpless." The report concluded that the "noble and very worthy purpose on the part of the State is being carried out in a reasonably satisfactory manner."[28]

Meanwhile the appropriations coming from the government were continually inadequate. Richardson reported to his patron governor Blease that "the appropriation made by the Legislature was insufficient" and that it directly resulted in the "actual deprivation of many comforts" of the inmates.[29] He complained that "by misrepresentation and interference from outside parties the General Assembly was induced" to cut the funding by twenty-five percent.[30]

[28] Report f the Legislative committee on Penal and Charitable Institutions to the General Assembly of South Carolina at the Regular Session of 1913, p. 687. SCSL.
[29] Annual Report, 1914, p 3. SCDAH
[30] Annual Report, 1913, p 4. SCDAH

Coleman Blease left the governor's office January 14th, 1915. His appointee, Richardson, who was constantly dogged by accusations of discrimination, was replaced as Superintendent at the first Board of Commissioners meeting held during the newly elected governor Richard Manning's administration, April of that year. The new Board, comprised of Manning appointees, elected J. L. Wardlaw as superintendent. A former lieutenant in the First South Carolina Artillery Regiment, he was the son of the jurist Francis Hugh Wardlaw, who drafted the South Carolina Ordinance of Secession. The new chief executive had mostly worked in the shipping and railroad business since moving from Blythewood to Columbia. His first cousin Patterson Wardlaw was a highly visible member of local society as Dean of the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. A complete overhaul of the administration of the Confederate Home was finished when Wardlaw's wife replaced Alice Mixon as Matron, and Dr. E.P. Derrick replaced Dr. F.W.P. Butler as the Home's physician. The board also decided that a name change was required, and in that same year cut "infirmary" from the title and replaced it with "home," though both would be used interchangeably throughout the remainder of the Home's existence.[31]

The new Board of Commissioners had similar grievances regarding funding. "We found the building very much in need of repairs, but owing to the amount appropriated, we do not do the work that was necessary."[32] Six years had passed since establishment of the institution. In the interim, the Special Committee investigation revealed the extent of deficiencies in clothing, food and infrastructure. Frustratingly, the appropriation had only

[31] Colman, James Karl, *State Administration in South Carolina*, (Columbia University Press, 1935), 224.
[32] Annual Report, 1915, p. 3. SCDAH

increased by four thousand dollars from the allotment of money provided for the institution's first year.[33]

The change in administration combined with continued poor funding resulted in a lack of improvements of the conditions during the Home's during Wardlaw administration that lasted from 1915 until 1920. In 1916, the Legislative Committee on Penal and Charitable Institutions re-inspected the Home and found conditions worse than three years prior. Inmates were still not required to clean their rooms, and the Committee reported, "in regards to environments, this place is the limit. We have great reverence for the Confederate Soldiers and we dislike to speak of the filthy conditions of most of the rooms."[34] An immediate solution, it suggested "we think they should be made to keep their rooms decent or leave, or else be provided with servants," because, their room conditions were "a menace to health."[35]

Inmate grievances continued to be aired publically in newspapers and to government officials through more private means, which proved to be both an irritant to Wardlaw and prompt for reform. In September 1920, he received a letter from G. Craft Williams, the secretary of the State Board of Public Welfare, which state; "It has come to our knowledge that no supper is served to the Veterans at the Infirmary on Saturday and Sunday evenings."[36] Williams acknowledged to Wardlaw that he was "not unmindful of the fact that your patience is constantly strained by your wards. It must take a large heart and iron nerves to stand the constant irritations that arise from querulous old men." He

[33] The Annual Reports reveal that 1909's appropriation was $12,000 and 1914's, $16,600.
[34] Report of Legislative Committee on Penal and Charitable Institutions to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina at the Regular Session of 1916, p 621. SCSL,
[35] Report of Legislative Committee on Penal and Charitable Institutions to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina at the Regular Session of 1916, p. 621. SCSL
[36] Williams to Wardlaw, 3 September 1920, SCDAH

nevertheless felt compelled to commence an investigation into the institution. A day or two after receiving this ominous letter, Wardlaw wrote to S.E. Welsh, secretary of the Board of Commissioners, "I decided some time ago that I have been superintendent of the Confederate Infirmary as long as I could. I ask to be relieved as superintendent."[37] Wardlaw was the first superintendent to resign from the post of superintendent as the result of outside parties exerting power. He would not be the last as the Home continued to face funding problems in the years to come. The veterans of the War of Northern Aggression, who slept in the fetid rooms of the Home, and therefore felt the weight of bureaucratic incompetency on their diets and health, were never to become symbols of Southern Reunion. Their humanity, their human need to survive the poverty of being a veteran, outweighed their ability to stand as marble statues, photographed heroes, or literary figures the politicians who exploited the Lost Cause wished them to be.

[37] Wardlaw to Welch, 7 September 1920, SCDAH

Chapter 2 – The Confederate Home in Transition

"With just feeling of pride and pleasure we turn a new leaf

in this History of the Confederate Home"

Sophie Swindell, Columbia, SC

Wardlaw's resignation in 1920 took place in a context significantly different from the circumstances that surrounded the departure of Richardson five years earlier. Six months before Wardlaw announced his intention to leave, the South Carolina legislature created the State Board of Public Welfare. Three weeks before Wardlaw's notice, the Nineteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution took effect upon ratification by three-fourths of the states. These watersheds of the state and national Progressive movements would have a profound impact on the Home unforeseen by the commissioners or the man selected to replace Wardlaw. The short tenure of Benjamin S. Williams as superintendent would feature an institutional transformation in which the Home shifted from a bivouac for old soldiers into a showcase for modern, more liberal government.

Much less connected to Columbia politics than any of his three predecessors, Williams was unprepared for the challenges the Home provided. He was not even aware he was being considered for the position when he received word he was elected.[38] Born in

[38] Williams Press Release, Brunson, SC, November 1920, DUKE.

1843, Williams served as adjutant in the 47th Georgia Volunteers commanded by his father and had held the brevet rank of major. He was active in the Red Shirt campaign to disenfranchise black voters during Reconstruction, and served as auditor of Hampton County after Redemption. He thereafter settled into farming in the tiny community of Peeples, SC. When he took the position of superintendent in Columbia in December 1920 his wife remained at their home in Brunson, and Williams regularly visited her on weekends. He wrote to her in March 1921 that "I am feeling awfully lazy this beautiful Sunday morn. The Home is quiet, sitting in chairs on the ground with their backs against the house, in sunshine are old boy vet, in full view from a window of my office where I am writing." [39] This idyll would soon shatter.

The State Board of Public Welfare superseded the State Board of Charities and Corrections established in 1916 and assumed responsibility for public or private charitable or custodial institutions. The legislation directed the Board to hire a salaried secretary to coordinate this work. University of South Carolina sociology professor G. Croft Williams, a leading reform advocate, was the first secretary. He and board member Robert Moorman inspected the Confederate Home on November 17, 1920. They reported that the main building was "badly in need of general repairs." The roof leaked badly, the plumbing was "in a deplorable condition," and the heating system did not work. They compiled a list of recommended repairs that they estimated would cost $21,000.[40]

The revolution in women's political power led to a radical overhaul of the Home. South Carolina Democrats obliged to accept woman's suffrage sought to ensure that

[39] Ben Williams to Mrs. Williams, 13 March 1921, DUKE.
[40] "South Carolina Confederate Home," *First Annual Report of the State Board of Public Welfare of South Carolina*, 1920 (Columbia: Gonzales and Bryan, 1920-21), 66-68; *State* 27 December 1920. The newspaper notes how Moorman and Williams visited the Home on multiple occasions before compiling the report. The article quotes the report extensively and agreed that the Home was in need of repairs.

white women would be more politically active than black women.[41] The United Daughters of the Confederacy was perhaps the most visible women's civic organization in the state and an obvious candidate for heading the transition into a role in governance. The state division of the UDC, and especially the Hampton Chapter in Columbia, seized this opportunity energetically.

Columbia representative Claud Sapp, a Progressive leader best known as an advocate of compulsory public education, chaired a joint legislative investigation at the Home in February 1921 as part of the response to the report from the Board of Public Welfare. Sapp's report was even more scathing than Moorman and Williams' submission three months earlier. The joint committee found that South Carolina had been "woefully derelict in its duty to these old soldiers who were entitled to be its proudest wards." It expressed disbelief that the conditions at the Home "can be found to exist in the most poorly kept jail in South Carolina" and scoffed that "no dog house kept by any gentleman in this State would be quite so unsightly and unsanitary." Sapp's committee maintained that it would "false economy" to rebuild the dilapidated firetrap and suggest an appropriation of $75,000 to construct an entirely new Home. In the alternative, it suggested that repairs and new supplies would cost at least $36,000. In either event, the committee concluded, administrative reform was essential.[42]

[41] Gilmore, Glenda. *Gender and Jim Crow.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 204.
[42] The full report is contained in Senate Journal, 1921, pp 587 – 592, SCSL. The *State* newspaper nearly printed the report line for line on February 23rd of that year.

Figure 2.1. The South Carolina Confederate Veterans' Home around the time of the 1920 Sapp Investigation. Taken by Columbia Photographer Blanchard, the institution is referred to as "Old Soldiers Home." *Photo Courtesy of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Museum.*

the conditions" even as it indicated that "either due to mismanagement or lack of proper interest the Home in the past has not been properly cared for." The solution was to enlist Confederate veterans' best friends. The committee strongly recommended that "at least a minority" of the Home board should be "ladies, for the very good reason that it will only take a glance around the premises to convince one that the helpful influence and beneficial touch of the good women has been lacking in the past, and we believe that if they be given a voice in the administration of the affairs of the Home that a recurrence of the present condition at the Home will be impossible."[43]

The legislature embraced these suggestions. A bill introduced by state senator John Marion of Chester, also a prominent Progressive, expanded the Board of Commissioners from five to nine members. The restructuring approved in February 1921

[43] Senate Journal, 1921, pp 587 – 592, SCSL

specified that the four additional board members were to be members of the UDC and further specified that the Governor were to appoint these members "upon recommendation" of UDC.[44] Within six weeks, the president of the South Carolina division of the UDC had nominated four women, whom Governor Robert A. Cooper promptly approved. The key figures on the list were Columbia residents Sophie Swindell and Alice Earle, who had taken the lead in UDC lobbying in support of the call by the Board of Public Welfare for a substantial appropriation to repair the Home. Earle's inherited commitment to the Lost Cause was reflected in the names of her twin brothers, Jefferson Davis Earle and Fort Sumter Earle. The latter was a judge, mayor of Columbia, and the developer of Earlewood in the northern portion of the city.

The restructuring provided the South Carolina UDC with more power in the governance of the Home than their counterparts exercised at any comparable state institution in the South. In 1918 the Kentucky Confederate Home had established a three-member women's advisory committee that met with the board of trustees. Also nominated by the state division of the UDC, this committee achieved considerable influence in the management of the Kentucky facility.[45] However, the South Carolina women were full-fledged commissioners of the state agency.[46] South Carolina became the first state to have women serve on the governing Board of Control for its Confederate Veterans' Home. Shortly thereafter, in 1922, Camp Nichols in Louisiana saw the

[44] Act No. 85, Acts and Joint Resolutions of General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, Passed at the Regular Session of 1921, p 119-120, SCSL.
[45] Rusty Williams, *My Old Confederate Home: A Respectable Place for Civil War Veterans* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), p. 203-204.
[46]Rosenburg explains how beginning in Louisiana in 1922 and Alabama in 1927 (and before then from 1910 to 1927 in an "auxiliary committee) women served as voting members of the Boards of Control, p.141 Though Rusty Williams asserts women held powerful advisory roles in Kentucky, he stops short of claiming they were full-fledged members, p. 192.

appointment of women to the board followed by the appointment of one woman in Alabama in 1927.[47]

This new legislation, which left the UDC bloc only one vote short of a board majority, alarmed some of the continuing commissioners. S. E. Welch, who lived on South Battery in Charleston, was well aware that the burden of travel that prevented the trustees from making quorum on a regular basis. He wanted local, Columbia UDC women to serve on the board so business could proceed. "Owing to the difficulty of getting quorum I suggested to Governor Cooper," he explained to Wardlaw, that he "add two women members of the Daughters of the Confederacy of Columbia, who would be subject to the call of the superintendent."[48] Taken by surprise by the new legislation, Welch was no longer confident in his role as Board member. "Surely, four (women) would be too many" he confided to Williams. He expressed a wish that the governor would retain the present Board members because of their experience and institutional knowledge. "If the State Institutions would only keep politics out of them," the inmates would be better cared for Welch claimed.[49]

The new superintendent and the new Board soon came into conflict. Though the Sapp Report stated that "the present Superintendent is doing the best he can under the circumstances," it also indicated that changes were needed at the Soldiers' Home beyond the renovation of the building.[50] The UDC sought to take the lead in making these changes. One of "the first official acts of the ladies of the Board" was "to have the cellar cleaned," including "all mattresses renovated, beds and furniture repaired and enameled."

[47] Rosenburg, *Living Monuments*, 141.
[48] Welch to Wardlaw, 6 December 1920, DUKE.
[49] Welch to Williams, 12 February 1920, DUKE.
[50] Senate Journal, 1921, pp 587 – 592, SCSL.

The Wade Hampton Chapter collected almost $800 from statewide UDC members to buy new bed linens, towels, night shirts, and bath robes for the hospital. With the support of the UDC bloc, the board appointed an auditing committee that imposed new financial record-keeping obligations on the superintendent. The committee hired an accountant who conducted an extensive review of the books. As a result of this initiative, "some members of the Board were amazed" to learn that Wardlaw had set up "contingent funds" for the Home at the Carolina National Bank and the Columbia Bank without establishing clearly the source of those deposits. The Board eliminated these discretionary accounts, which Wardlaw had transferred to Williams. The Board also expressed its displeasure with Williams' habit of spending occasional weekends with his wife in Hampton County, claiming that he left "no responsible person in charge of the Institution during his absence."[51]

Some women soon aimed to displace Williams from his office. Mrs. P. J. Rawe of Charleston accused him of mismanagement and not treating the inmates of the home kindly in March 1921. Inmates were stealing from each other and that he was not doing anything about it, she claimed. Fundamental changes were needed at the Home. In the vein of Progressive era thinking the women of the UDC and their Columbia allies judged that these measures should come from the top-down, from governments that previous Southern traditions would have judged as intrusive. Inmates were afraid to speak up for fear of reprisals, she stated. "For the sake of the veterans in your charge" she wrote, "it is

[51] Swindell to UDC, November 1921. SCDAH.

my sincere desire that you put a man (or woman) who will take rank next to yours that will put a stop to the thieving in the Home."[52]

Williams battled to remain in control of the institution. He reported to the board in July 1921 that "the old soldier inmates of the Home are faring well, being given an abundance of nourishing food, and appear contented and happy." The superintendent reported that "there is marked improvement in their appearance in every respect. I have purchased for them many suits of cool underclothes, light shoes and hats for summer and to all who have needed them, new thin suits." He added that "we have had many visitors at the Home of late, whose complimentary remarks as to existing conditions in the hospital and home are highly gratifying." Welch replied that "it is a joy to know that everything is working so smoothly – could not be otherwise under your management." Williams denied that he or Wardlaw had used the bank accounts in any improper way. He maintained that he "NEVER once left the Home without leaving a steward in charge," and he recoiled from the board's insistence on control over his whereabouts. He complained that a city official had told him that "should I go beyond the city limits, I should provide myself with evidence that before leaving I had said, 'please mam.'"[53]

The women and Williams took different views of several personnel situations at the Home. The UDC faction on the board charged Williams with "frequent failures in securing the steward and the matron" and claimed to have "found it necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the Home to assume that responsibility."[54] Williams answered that the short gaps between the tenures of stewards and matrons had been unavoidable. He had also hired a new nurse in accordance with the recommendations of

[52] Rawe to Williams, 26 March 1921. DUKE
[53] Williams to Board, 8 July 1921 and Welch to Williams, 29 July 1921. DUKE.
[54] Swindel to UDC, Nov 1921. SCDAH.

the Moorman and Williams report and the Sapp committee that the veterans should have access to professional medical assistance throughout the day and night. Unfortunately, the new nurse turned out to have a morphine habit. Swindell claimed that "the Board found it necessary to supply her place," but Williams answered that he had handled the problem properly and that "I was doing what I knew was best for 'the vital interest of the home:' the unhindered and unbossed."[55]

These tensions over personnel matters were crucial because they threatened to reduce the chief executive officer of the Home from something like the commander of a military post to one of several employees at the state agency. The diminution of the superintendent's authority and expansion of the Board's oversight led to a decisive clash in September. The UDC block brought three controversial proposals to the quarterly meeting of the commission. Following up on Mrs. Rawe's report that "information could not be easily obtained from the inmates of the Home because many of them have no other place to go" and were "intimidated from fear of being 'sent down' by the Captain and sergeant," one proposal sought to overturn Williams's rule that veterans should submit written complaints to the superintendent for forwarding to the board. Swindell argued that a resident should be able "to lodge his complaint with anyone" and should have direct access to the Board. The UDC bloc also proposed that the Board should elect the steward, previously a position appointed by the superintendent. Most explosive, however, was the parallel proposal that the Board should elect the clerk, also previously appointed by the superintendent.

[55] Williams to Clark, 7 October 1921. DUKE

Treating the Home as a domestic institution that the superintendent supported as a member of a family, Starling, Richardson and Wardlaw had appointed their wives as matrons during their tenures. Williams' wife remained at their estate in Brunson, but his daughter accompanied him to Columbia to serve as his appointed clerk. The new board canceled that arrangement and elected Sophie Swindell to the office of clerk in a hotly contested board meeting. Swindell elected to "give her services" so that what she would have earned would go into a fund controlled by the Board "to be expended for the comfort of the Veterans in the Home."[56] Board President W. A. Clark protested against another board member serving in the role of a paid employee of the Home. If forced to choose between the position of commissioner and the position of clerk, she maintained, she would gladly step down from the Board to serve as clerk.[57]

The UDC maneuvered the Board of the Home to earn power in hopes of removing the intransigent William from leadership. Their old allies W. D. Starling and J. P. Caldwell joined the women in electing Swindell to the position of clerk without requiring her to resign from the board. Board chairman W. A. Clarke and D. R. Fleniken, both residents of Columbia, promptly resigned in protest. Welch who had left the meeting early, confided to Williams "had I remained, I should unhesitatingly have opposed a Commissioner taking a paid position of an employee of the Home." [58] *The State* reported shortly afterward that it fully expected Welch to resign and that Williams too "will tender his resignation as superintendent to the board of control in the very near future."[59] The next day Welch told Williams that he considered resigning but opted to stay on because if

[56] Swindell to UDC, Autumn 1921. SCDAH
[57] Welch to Williams, 29 July 1921
[58] Welch to Williams, 24 Sept 1921. DUKE.
[59] "To Resign Place as Home's Head Williams to Leave Confederate Infirmary, *State*, 23 September 1921, 2.

he were quit, it "would only play right into their hands." He pledged to remain on the board and "be a thorn in their side for awhile" and theorized that Starling "had a hand in it."[60] Welch was true to his word and served contentedly on the board until his death, suggesting he may have been in tenuous alliance with the UDC.

In early October 1921, an outnumbered and disgusted Williams officially resigned as superintendent of the Confederate Soldiers' Home. The female forces allied against his failing regime had pushed a Progressive agenda, based essentially on gendered principles of domestic care and the increasingly feminized Lost Cause, to help better care for their state's elderly veterans. Refusing to submit the authority the Board of Commissioners now exerted, Williams opted to return to a life of retirement in his estate in Brunson. His parting words were sharp and to the point; "Declining to serve under rules and regulations adopted by the Board of Control of this Institution, unprecedented, and in my estimation, disgraceful to any state institution of South Carolina, I hereby tender my resignation as Commandant of the Confederate Home." By describing himself as a commandant, he subtly asserted his view that he was in charge of an army camp, and that the leader of the Home was to exercise supreme power over the inmates who ranked below him.[61]

The Board gladly accepted Williams's resignation at a special meeting in mid October. Content with its maneuverings and exertion of authority, the new Board of Commissioners were ready to install a superintendent of their choosing, one who would quickly fall in line with their views which were becoming feminized by the increasingly influential power of the UDC over Board policy. "With just feeling of pride and pleasure

[60] Welch to Williams, 24 September 1921. DUKE.
[61] Williams to Welch, 3 October 1921. DUKE.

we turn a new leaf in this History of the Confederate Home" Sophie Swindell triumphantly wrote expecting that she and other female Progressives would change the Home to the monument the South desired.[62]

[62] Swindell to UDC, Autumn 1921, SCDAH.

Chapter 3 - The Progressive Confederate Home

"It would be a pity to have the soldier buried as a pauper
after being so long an inmate of the Soldiers' Home."
S.E. Welch, September 1923, Charleston, SC

The Board of Commissioners elected W. H. Stewart to replace Williams as superintendent. Seventy-four years old when he took office in October, 1921, the Fort Mill, SC, native had served as a private and later a sergeant in the 1st South Carolina Infantry Regiment. After the war he returned to Fort Mill, which he represented in the state legislature from 1886 to 1890. He then moved to Rock Hill, SC, where he played a prominent role in the relocation of Winthrop Normal and Industrial College from Columbia. His support for the state's pre-eminent women's educational institution highlighted his sympathy with UDC concerns. To provide a residence for the president Stewart donated the grand town house he had built in the early 1890s. He also supervised the convict laborers who constructed the main building of the new campus. His political experience and his work as a builder provided excellent preparation for heading an institution that had suffered four highly critical inspections in the previous eight years and was now in the midst of a massive renovation. His tenure would prove to be a period of not only physical renewal but also a feminized institutional redefinition of the Home.

Rather than completely rebuilding the infrastructure as the Sapp report suggested, the state legislature appropriated $35,000 to update the facilities.[63] At the end of 1921, just two months into Stewart's tenure and a testament to speedy craftsmanship, the Board reported that after renovation, remodeling and enlargement, the home was "very attractive in appearance, and provided with every necessary sanitary convenience" to care for the elderly inmates.[64] Stewart, an experienced builder, was proudly praised as "the right man in the right place" by his overseers.[65] Proving that point, according to the architects' final report the cost for the project was $29,092.90, well under budget.[66] The work both improved and substantially expanded the facility. By January 1923, the number of residents was forty percent higher than it had been one year earlier. [67]

Other building improvements expanded the realm of care provided by the institution during this period. The Confederate Soldiers' Home now aimed to manage its battle-scarred patients with mild psychological ailments. Rather than sending them to the South Carolina Hospital for the Insane across Bull Street, it designed to provide treatment in house. From the very first year of its operation, a number of inmates were regularly sent across Bull Street to be committed to that state institution. A new policy of administering to the "mild Insane in the Home" is embodied by the 1923 remodeling of one wing of the hospital into a special-built ward for inmates suffering mental disabilities.[68] Caring for a greater amount of inmates with a wider array of ailments brought additional challenges to the institution.

[63] The appropriation was just $1,000 less than the $36,000 Moorman & Williams suggested.
[64] Annual Report, 1922, p. 3. SCDAH
[65] Annual Report, 1922, p. 3. SCDAH
[66] Architects' Final Report, undated and unsigned carbon copy, SCDAH.
[67] Annual Report, 1923, p. 3. SCDAH
[68] Annual Report, 1923, p. 3. SCDAH

The Board continued some of the reforms that it had begun upon the election of UDC members, including the improvement of record keeping. Beginning in 1921, the matron and cook of the institution were required to write down the contents of every meal in ledgers.[69] Now if inmates complained about food, there was a detailed and exact record to consult. The Board recorded extensive minutes of every board meeting, and the superintendent provided the Board with monthly updates. Until that time, it can only be speculated if meeting minutes were recorded. The Board no longer failed to issue an annual report, which had happened in several previous years. It also took extra precaution in protecting all this paperwork by placing it in a fireproof safe on the premises.[70]

The friendly relationship between the Board and the superintendent was evident in a key personnel issue. One of W.H. Stewart's first acts was to appoint his son, Paul B. Stewart to act as steward for the salary of seventy five dollars per month.[71] While the Board of Commissioners just months before voiced its displeasure at Ben William's nepotism in hiring his daughter as clerk, they approved the younger Stewart and the "splendid services" he provided.[72] This occurrence shows that under the new Progressive regime, nepotism was still allowed to prevail, so long as the family member hired was thoroughly vetted by the Board.

The engagement of the UDC in the operations and administration of the home did not translate to better behavior exhibited by the veterans. In June 1923, an inmate was

[69] These ledgers are stored at the SC Dept of Archives and History (SCDAH). Every meal served from 1921 to until the day the Home closed in 1957 is astonishingly listed.
[70] Annual Report, 1924, p. 5. SCDAH.
[71] Duncan to Williams, 23 April 1923. DUKE. Walter Duncan, the State's Comproller General furnished Ben Williams' daughter and former Confederate Home clerk, Josie, a current list of employees and their salaries. She underlined the younger Stewart's name and noted "Illegal for one Supt to employ his daughter as clerk, but his successor could employ his son as steward." The Williams Family was evidently still bitter about their ouster. It is noted on the same letter that by November 1924, the younger Stewart was earning $125 per month, only $25 less than his superintendent-father.
[72] Annual Report, 1924, p. 5. SCDAH.

arrested for "criminal conduct on a little white girl." Stewart told veteran's family that "from what I can learn he is guilty of the charge." The old men residing within the Home were hardly the faultless marble statues the UDC yearned for.[73]

This new era of the Confederate Soldiers' Home was signified in no greater way than the granting of admission to women to the institution. In 1925, the legislature admitted women to the Home while at the same time granting greater power to the Board. The act read in part, the "Commission is hereby empowered to admit to the Confederate Home the indigent widows and wives of Confederate soldiers or sailors when in its judgment" one woman would be admitted to the Home per county.[74] Rather than specifying the criteria for admitted women, the legislature essentially turned over this power to the Board of Commissioners and made no mention whether males or females would get priority. The only rule regarding women on admittance was that they should be seventy years of age at the time of application. No longer a bivouac exclusively for male veterans, the Home became even more progressive by theoretically admitting women on the same established criteria of two patients per county.[75] Progressive minded politicians were able to pursue a welfare agenda while proclaiming their actions as Lost Cause.

The first woman resident chosen by Stewart and the Board was not likely to raise any apprehension that the new arrangement challenged traditional gender relations. Emanuel Holman had been granted admission to the Home but had joined his wife at the

[73] Stewart to Blackwell, 14 June 1923. Stewart urged Blackwell's family to convince their jailed kin to "plead guilty and throw himself on the mercy of the court, the punishment would doubtless be lighter."
[74] Act. No. 79, Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Soith Carolina, 1925. Closer examination in the House and Senate Journals in 1925 reveal that the original wording of the bill when first introduced also admitted "un-married women of the Confederacy." Hardy G. Crouch , a representative from Saluda County vehemently opposed allowing in this demographic and succeeded and getting the quoted wording struck from the final Act. SCSL.
[75] Rosenburg, *Living Monuments*, reveals that "only the Florida home excluded women," 210.

Richland County almshouse rather than reporting to Columbia. *The State* praised Holman for refusing to leave his wife's side. They entered the Home together in April 1925, a demonstration that the Lost Cause remained a family affair.[76] Within a year, the policy of caring for and administering to women was showing benefits in the morale of the inmates. The Board of Commissioners relished their improvements. "The last days of the veterans and their wives and widows are made more cheery than many of them have experienced before they came to the Home," they proudly reported to the legislature.[77]

The Confederate Soldiers' Home burial plots and monument in Elmwood Cemetery illustrate the changes the institution underwent during Stewart's tenure. No burial records exist from the twelve years before Stewart became superintendent. Bodies may have been sent home to family plots, or in the cases when no such option was available, buried in the cemetery of the Hospital for the Insane a short distance away or in the paupers' field adjacent to Elmwood Cemetery. When one soldier was about to die in 1923, S.E. Welch noted that "it would be a pity to have the soldier buried as a pauper after being so long an inmate of the Soldiers' Home."[78] The institution soon made an effort to handle the deceased in a methodical but commemorative way.

Stewart bought three plots in Elmwood Cemetery contiguous to the existing Confederate burial plots. He and board members F.H. McMaster and Sophie Swindell contracted for a monument that lists the sixty men buried there until its erection on May 10th, 1926. A short time before the Confederate Memorial Day unveiling ceremony Stewart died, and the next year the plot was filled to capacity and a few additional names

[76] "Confederate Home Receives Women: Mrs. Emanuel Holman to Be First Admitted," *State*, 12 April 1925, 12.
[77] Annual Report, 1927, p. 3. SCDAH.
[78] Welch to Bates, 17 September 1923, SCDAH

were etched into the stone. Included in this addition is memorial to Stewart crediting him with improving the Confederate Soldiers' Home: "Through the love, foresight and economy / of Captain W.H. Stewart, / superintendent of the Confederate / Home, for five years this / monument was erected."[79] These changes ensured that veterans were not only cared for in life but in death as well.

Figure 3.1. Confederate Home monument in Elmwood Cemetery. (From the Author's private collection)

[79] Inscription is in all capital letters.

The next superintendent was a member of Stewart's staff who continued working closely with the Board to improve and expand the services of the Confederate Soldiers' Home. Thomas Ewart Cumings, from Bamberg, SC, was also the last superintendent, holding the position until 1957. Ultimately, he served in the position nearly twice as long as all the five other superintendents *combined.*

The earlier years of Cumings' tenure saw major changes at the Confederate Soldiers' Home because the generation of Civil War veterans was quickly dying off. By 1925, an old soldier who was twenty during the bombardment of Ft. Sumter would have been eighty-four. Veterans at the Home were dying off at a quicker pace than being admitted.[80]

A bill introduced by South Carolina's first female senator further expanded the demographics of admission to the Confederate Soldiers' Home. On Valentine's Day, 1929, Senator Mary Gordon Ellis from Jasper County introduced a bill "to Provide for the Indigent Sisters of Confederate Veterans." Ellis, a champion of civil rights and education, was a former superintendent of education in Jasper County who advocated equal opportunity for African American schoolchildren under her care. After she was fired for her views she ran for state senate against the men who orchestrated her firing.[81] Ultimately successful in the campaign, her passion translated well to the state senate. Her

[80] In 1924, seventy-one veterans were in the Home at the beginning of the year, fifty four at the end. In 1927, those numbers were forty and thirty-six, (1925 and 1928 Annual Reports).

[81] Act. No. 158, Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, 1925. SCSL. House Bill H-17 introduced by the Cherokee County delegation precluded Senator Ellis' Bill (S-446) by a month. It was withdrawn on March 8th after Senator Ellis' bill was sent to the House a week prior. Strong support of Confederate Home Expansion of services is evident because the House passed the bill in under a week, and the Senate in under a month.

bill faced little opposition in the House and Senate chambers and was signed into law a month later by Governor John Gardiner Richards Jr.[82]

Shortly after sisters of veterans were admitted to the Confederate Soldiers' Home, the board of commissioners felt the pangs of the Great Depression and reconsidered the recent expansions. Considering the rising age of inmates and falling application rates, "under no circumstances will the need of the Home be required for many more years," Chairman Fitz Hugh McMaster wrote in January 1930. He suggested that soon "other means of care" should be implemented. Leaving the decision about the future of the institution to the legislature, the board chose to "make no recommendation for the present."[83] By the next year that stance changed. "The Board of Commissioners does not believe that the State should then be charged with the care of the sisters and widows, but rather that such should be cared for in their several communities," McMaster stated.[84] By 1931, the future of the Home was very much in question.

[82] Carol Sears Botsch, "Mary Gordon Ellis" in *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*, ed. Marjorie Julian Spruill, et al, (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2012) vol.3, 45.
[83] Annual Report, 1930. SCDAH.
[84] Annual Report, 1931. SCDAH. The Annual Report for 1931 is un-bound and printed on standard office paper, the only report presented as such, which perhaps reflects the parsimonious time in which it was produced.

Conclusion

The final years of the Confederate Soldiers' Home were marked by a steady decline in the number of inmates with intermittent state legislation that expanded the criteria for admittance of women to the Home. T.E. Cumings continued in the role of superintendent and served in the same capacity as Stewart before him answering to the UDC and Board of Commissioners, all the while with an eye on the eventual closing of the institution.

The few veterans still alive and residing in the Home were still celebrated by the community. Eben Yarbrough of Camden lived in the Home from 1922 until his death in 1940, serving for the last six years as commander of the state division of the United Confederate Veterans. During the South Carolina State Fair in 1935, he was treated to a "spectacular" airplane ride to "view the fair from the air." Among those in attendance that day was Governor Olin Johnston. The Governor was also instrumental in the continuation of the institution.[85] On May 11, 1935, the day after Confederate Memorial Day celebrations, he signed Act No. 275, which admitted "daughters of any Confederate

[85] United Confederate Veterans South Carolina Division Press Release, "General Yarbrough views the Fair from the Air," October 23, 1935. SCDAH; "Ebin Neimus Yarbrough," Camden Chronicle, Sept. 27, 1940, http://www.genealogybuff.com/ucd/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/3048

soldier or sailor who were born prior to the year 1865."[86] Undoubtedly proud, the UDC had managed to arrange for their fellow daughters to be admitted to the institution.

By stipulating a date of birth of prior to 1865, the legislature essentially committed to shutting the institution down sooner rather than later.[87] Daughters born to elderly veterans would not be allowed to enter the Home. The next year, the *born prior* date was shifted six years later to 1871, allowing daughters of veterans who were born shortly after the war admittance to the Institution. Another important stipulation for the daughters' admittance was that "they must be spinsters" – unwed, and without family support.[88] In 1943, the S.C. Legislature granted admission to nieces and daughters of the veterans born prior to 1873, meaning that they must be at least seventy years of age.[89] Nieces were the last demographic granted admission to the Home.[90]

[86] Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, Regular Session of 1935, p 386. SCSL.
[87] The 1932 Annual Report, and a 1931 Sophie Swindell letter to the UDC, curiously lists two daughters as admitted to the Home, three years prior to the legislation that officially allowed them in.
[88] Cumings to Young, 25 March 1935. SCDAH.
[89] Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, Regular Session of 1943. SCSL.
[90] Sons of Confederate Veterans were never granted admission, nor were African Americans.

Figure. 4.1. By the early 1940s, very few Veterans were left at the Home. Wives, daughters and nieces clearly outnumber men in this undated photograph. (Photo courtesy of SCDAH)

By January 1944, the last veteran in the institution had passed away. For the next thirteen years, it catered only to women, relatives of Confederate veterans. During this time, the Home more closely resembled a state welfare institution caring for elderly women than a shrine full of living monuments (Fig. 4.1).

The South Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home and Infirmary ceased operations on the last day of June, 1957. The State Legislature ruled that the final twenty-one residents were to be looked after by State Department of Public Welfare, or otherwise "placed as may be deemed best."[91] T.E. Cumings, who himself was nearing eighty years of age, was allowed to stay in the Superintendent's Cottage, the place he had called home for the previous thirty-one years. No longer tasked with looking after aged residents, his main duty was to inspect the buildings "as often as may be necessary for their

[91] Acts and Joint Resolutions, Number 347, Section 35, 1957.

preservation."[92] Another reward for his years of devotional service was his continued use of the state-owned Buick car.

Figure 4.2. In May of 1963, the Confederate Soldiers' Home, overgrown with vines and trees was still standing, being taken down piece by piece. The *State* on May 23rd explained it was being "torn down at a more leisurely pace." (Photo Courtesy of SCDAH)

A number of alternate uses were proposed for the facility. In April of 1957, shortly before the Home closed, Dr. William S. Hall, the Superintendent of the South Carolina State Hospital, felt obliged to write to Governor George Timmerman. He explained the arrangement the Hospital Board of Regents made with the Commission to Establish the Infirmary for Confederate Veterans in 1908, that when the Home ceased operations "the land and improvements thereon would revert to the Regents or their

[92] Acts and Joint Resolutions, Number 347, Section 35, 1957.

successors."[93] Citing the loss of land to the recent Harden Street extension and lack of proper housing for white male bachelor attendants, Hall was considering placing them in the Confederate Home. This reversion never transpired because of the poor condition of the Home. Another proposal submitted on behalf of the Tree of Life Congregation in Columbia was to use it as a Home for as a workshop for "physically handicapped" and "mentally retarded."[94] Hall entertained this option if the Congregation was willing to fix the deficiencies listed in the architectural report he furnished. Among the costly issues highlighted that ultimately halted this proposal were the needs for a "complete replacement" of the plumbing system, "extensive replastering," and roof repairs. The electrical system was in such poor shape that the house was seen as a "serious fire hazard." In total, it was concluded that it would be "advisable to raze the building rather than repair it."[95]

Demolition commenced in March of 1963 and carried on for a number of months (Fig.4.2). Today few physical reminders remain on the site except for portions of foundation, old trees and bushes, and a simple historical marker erected by the UDC. Nothing on the marker explains the struggle that occurred that transformed the institution from a bivouac for veterans to a modern state welfare institution. Nor does it discuss the fragile relationship that the UDC had with administrators and veteran-inmates of the Home, who successfully enacted a feminized Progressive policy that came to define the unique history of the South Carolina Confederate Soldier's Home.[96]

[93] Hall to Timmerman, 16 April 1957. SCDAH
[94] Gruber to Hall, 22 August 1960.
[95] Hall to Smith, 29 August 1959. SCDAH, DMH Papers.
[96] Through the support of the Richland County Conservation Commission and the South Carolina Civil War Sesquicentennial Advisory Board the author secured funding for a South Carolina Historical Marker to be erected on the site, tentatively scheduled for March of 2015.

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Appendix A: Confederate Soldiers' Home Superintendents

Table A.1 Confederate Soldiers' Home Superintendents

Name	Start	End
W.D. Starling	June 1909	March 1913
H.W. Richardson	March 1913	April 1915
J.L. Wardlaw	April 1915	November 1920
Ben Williams	November 1920	October 1921
W. H. Stewart	October 1921	March 1926
T. E. Cumings	March 1926	June 1957

Appendix B: Confederate Home Board of Commissioners (1908 – 1918)

Table B.1 Confederate Home Board of Commissioners (1908 – 1918)

Name	Date Start	Date End
J.Q Marshall	April 1908	December 1908
J. W. Reed	April 1908	March 1910
David Cardwell	April 1908	December 1910
E. B. Cantey	April 1908	January 1911
Wilie Jones	April 1908	
Milledge L. Bonham	December 1908	January 1911
R.A. Thompson	March 1910	March 1913
J. Fuller Lyon	December 1910	January 1911
Thomas B. Crews	January 1911	May 1911
H. W. Richardson	January 1911	March 1913
D. A. Dickert	January 1911	
Jas. T. Crew	May 1911	
F. W. P. Butler	March 1912	March 1912
F. S. Earle		March 1912
J. G. Long	March 1913	
A. W. Todd	March 1913	January 1914
M.C. Welch	March 1913	January 1914
H.C. Paulling	January 1914	
I. McD. Hood	January 1914	
Stephen E. Welch	March 1915	
W. H. Drummond	March 1915	May 1917
H. E. Thompson	March 1915	November 1918
J. E. Craig	May 1917	
A. M. Brailsford	November 1918	

Appendix C: Confederate Home Board of Commissioners (1921 – 1925)

Table C.1 Confederate Home Board of Commissioners (1921 – 1925)

Name
W. A Clark
D. R. Flenniken
J.P. Caldwell
Ms. Sophie S. Swindell
Ms. Alice M. Earle
W.D. Starling
Robert D. Wright
S.E. Welch
Mrs. St. John A. Lawton
W.TC. Bates
D. J. Griffith
J. A. Meetze
Mrs. Chapman J. Milling
Fitz Hugh McMaster
Mrs. O. D. Black
August Kohn