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Volume Title: The Evolution of Retirement: An American Economic History, 1880-1990

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Volume Publisher: University of Chicago Press

Volume ISBN: 0-226-11608-5

Volume URL: <http://www.nber.org/books/cost98-1>

Publication Date: January 1998

Chapter Title: Appendix A: Union Army Pensions and Civil War Records

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Chapter URL: <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c6116>

Chapter pages in book: (p. 197 - 212)

Appendix A: Union Army Pensions and Civil War Records

Real data is messy.

Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

The scope of the Union army pension program, run for the benefit of veterans and their dependent children and widows, came to be enormous. What had begun as a program to provide for severely wounded veterans became the first general disability and old-age pension program in the United States. The program was generous both in the level of benefits and in its coverage. The average pension paid to Union army veterans from 1866 to 1912 replaced about 30 percent of the income of an unskilled laborer, making the Union army pension program as generous as Social Security retirement benefits today. The total number of beneficiaries collecting a pension was slightly more than 100,000 in 1866 but reached a peak of almost 1 million in 1902. By 1900 21 percent of all white males age fifty-five or older were on the pension rolls, and the program that had consumed a mere 3 percent of all federal government expenditures in 1866 consumed almost 30 percent.

Running the pension program was an enormous undertaking. Pensioners' claims had to be validated by checking old military service records and sending special examiners to interview men and women who had known the claimant. Guidelines for medical examinations needed to be established, and medical examinations had to be arranged. Finally, the Pension Bureau had to determine what size pension the claimant was entitled to. This entire process generated copious records. Much of the life history of an individual can be reconstructed from the pension records. Additional information can be gathered by linking pension records to military records while in the service and to census records. This appendix describes the records and the pension program that generated them.

Civil War Pensions

Origins

The Civil War affected an entire generation. Forty-one percent of all northern white men born between 1822 and 1845, 60 percent of those born between 1837 and 1845, and 81 percent of those born in 1843 served in the Union army during the Civil War. Union soldiers constituted a fairly representative cross section of their generation. Compared to the general population, recruits came from households that were neither disproportionately rich nor disproportionately poor in 1860 (Fogel 1993). Ninety-five percent of them were volunteers. Because death in the army had come to both rich and poor alike, survivors of the war remained a representative cross section of their generation. Those who survived the war to reach their fifties had life expectancies similar to those of the general population and died of the same causes (Fogel 1993). The soldiers who survived the war were unique in one respect. At a time when private pensions were rare and state old-age pensions had not yet been established, they came to qualify for a Union army pension. Because Union army veterans remained a large fraction of the population, by 1900 35 percent of all white males aged fifty-five to fifty-nine were collecting a Union army pension, 21 percent of all white males aged sixty to sixty-four, 14 percent of all white males aged sixty-five to sixty-nine, and 9 percent of all white males aged seventy and over.

Congress established the Union army pension program on 14 July 1862. In passing this act, Congress founded what later became known as the General Law pension system. This system of pension laws was the only one in force until 1890. It provided pensions for soldiers who had incurred permanent bodily injury or disability while in the service of the Union army after 4 March 1861 and provided for the dependents of soldiers who had died from causes that could be traced directly to injuries received or diseases contracted while in Union army service. The dollar amount that was received depended on the degree of disability, where *total disability* meant “a total disability for the performance of manual labor requiring severe and continuous exertion” and provided enlisted men with a pension of \$8.00 per month, an amount equivalent to 30 percent of the earnings of an unskilled laborer. If the claimant had lesser disabilities, he received an amount proportionate to the degree of his disabilities. A board of surgeons appointed by the Pension Bureau rated applicants’ disabilities, following guidelines established by the bureau. The Pension Bureau compiled lists of physical wounds, pensionable diseases, and allowed ratings.

Inability to perform manual labor remained the standard in this and all subsequent pension laws, regardless of the wealth of the individual, his ability to earn a living by other than manual means, his labor force participation, or his employment in manual labor. The manual labor standard was soon liberalized.

In 1866 Congress raised the pension for total disability for “any manual labor” from \$8.00 per month to \$20.00 and in 1872 to \$24.00, a sum that replaced 76 percent of the monthly earnings of an unskilled laborer. The Pension Bureau construed the words *any manual labor* to include also “the lighter kinds of labor which require education and skill” (1874 *Report of the Commissioner of Pensions*, quoted in Glasson 1918a, 131).

In addition to the rates enumerated in the act of 14 July 1862, Congress passed acts establishing pension rates for specific disabilities that could be traced to wartime service. By 1872 the statutory rates covered the loss of both hands, both feet, the sight in both eyes, the sight in one eye, and one hand, foot, arm, or leg; total disability in hands, feet, arms, or legs; a disability equivalent to the loss of a hand or foot; requirements of regular aid and attendance; and total deafness. Inconsistency between these separate acts and the General Law led to the passage of the Consolidation Act of 1873. This act established various grades of disabilities. A first-grade disability, providing a pension of \$31.25 per month, was a permanent disability requiring the regular aid and attendance of another person. A second-grade disability, warranting a monthly pension of \$24.00, was a permanent disability that incapacitated the claimant for the performance of any manual labor. Permanent disabilities equivalent to the loss of a hand or foot were third grade and were pensionable at \$18.00 per month. In addition to the grade rates, veterans could receive a proportion of the third-grade rate (\$18.00 per month) for any degree of disability that was not provided for in the Consolidation Act.

The Consolidation Act gave the commissioner of pensions the power to fix rates for disabilities not specified by law. The bureau established a series of rates below \$18.00 per month for specific conditions. Among the rates were \$6.00 per month for the loss of the great toe, \$8.00 per month for ankylosis of the wrist, and \$12.00 per month for the loss of the sight in one eye. These were not only dollar rates but also the rating used by the examining surgeons and were employed as standards of comparison. Thus, a disability equivalent, according to the examining surgeons, to ankylosis of the wrist was rated at \$8.00. In the case of multiple disabilities each disability was rated separately in fractions of eighteen, and the total degree of disability was also rated. Rating disabilities in terms of eighteenthths remained standard procedure even after the grade rates were increased between 1878 and 1883 to \$24.00 per month for a third-grade disability, \$30.00 per month for a second-grade disability, and \$72.00 per month for a first-grade disability. When the new second rate was established, it almost completely replaced the income of a laborer. In addition to ratings in terms of eighteenthths, Congress established ratings in thirtieths for partial deafness in 1888 when it authorized a \$30.00 per month rate for total deafness and proportional payments for partial deafness.

Congressional exertion on behalf of veterans and their dependents was not limited to the construction of statute law. Congress showered its generosity on meritorious individuals who did not fall within the provisions of the laws by

passing private pension acts, often inserted in omnibus bills. The majority of these acts increased existing rates for claimants in reduced financial circumstances. The number of pensions granted by special acts rose from twelve during the tenure of the Thirty-seventh Congress (1861–63) to a high of 9,649 during the Sixty-first Congress (1909–11), still a mere 1 percent of all pensions.

A Disability and Old-Age Pension Program

The act of 27 June 1890 marked the beginning of a universal disability and old-age pension program. Proof of at least ninety days service in the Union army, an honorable discharge, and disability not due to “vicious habits” that prohibited the veteran from the performance of manual labor qualified him for the receipt of a pension ranging from \$6.00 to \$12.00 per month. Dependents of a veteran who had died from any cause qualified for a pension. The veteran’s disability did not need to be related to military service. However, veterans who could trace their disability to their wartime service received far more for the same disability than those who could not. In 1900 a pensioner who could trace his disability to the war was entitled to a monthly sum of \$30.00 for incapacity to perform any manual labor, \$24.00 for a disability equivalent to the loss of a hand or foot, \$17.00 for the loss of one eye, and \$6.00–\$10.00 for a single hernia. His counterpart who could not trace his disability to the war received \$12.00, \$10.00, \$6.00, and \$6.00, respectively, for these ailments. Veterans who could trace their disabilities to the war received up to \$100 per month, almost three times the monthly income of a laborer in 1900, for the loss of both hands, feet, or eyes. However, a veteran blinded in an industrial accident received at most \$12.00 per month, a sum equivalent to one-third the monthly income of an unskilled laborer (U.S. Bureau of Pensions 1899 *Report of the Commissioner of Pensions*).

Table A.1 illustrates average differences in pension amounts according to whether a veteran could trace his disability to the war and thus fell under the 1862 law rather than the 1890 law. Even though men who successfully claimed war-related disabilities were in worse health, on average, than those who could not, pension amounts were still higher among men who could trace their disabilities to the war than among those who could not. Among all men the median pension amount was \$12.00 in 1900, and among men whose disabilities resulted from their wartime service and who were very disabled 84 percent were receiving more than \$12.00 per month. All men whose disabilities did not result from wartime service were collecting \$12.00 a month or less. Among all men on the rolls under either cause, 56 percent of the very disabled were receiving pensions of over \$12.00 and 42 percent pensions of \$12.00 or less.

With the passage of the act of 1890 the number of pensioners on the rolls almost doubled between 1889 and 1892. Slightly more than half of all veterans on the rolls were collecting a pension under the 1890 law. The Pension Bureau granted the maximum rate to those seventy-five years of age or older on the

Table A.1 Monthly Pension Means and Percentile by Health Status and Law, 1900 (\$)

	Mean	Percentile				
		10	25	50	75	90
All veterans	12.9	6	8	12	14	24
General Law	17.6	8	12	14.5	24	30
1890 law	9.4	6	8	10	12	12
Health:						
Good	9.8	6	8	8	12	12
Fair	11.4	8	8	12	12	16
Poor	17.5	10	12	15	24	30
General Law and:						
Health good	14.3	8	8	12	15	18
Health fair	14.1	10	12	12	16	17
Health poor	20.1	12	15	17	24	30
1890 law and:						
Health good	8.6	6	6	8	12	12
Health fair	9.6	6	8	10	12	12
Health poor	10.9	8	10	12	12	12

Note: Calculated from the data used in the estimation. The health variable used is based on the ratings of the examining surgeons.

grounds of “senility alone” and the minimum rate to those at least sixty-five years of age, “unless the evidence discloses an unusual vigor and ability for the performance of manual labor on one of that age” (U.S. Bureau of Pensions 1899 *Report of the Commissioner of Pensions*). In the words of the formidable lobby for the privileges of veterans and their dependents, the Grand Army of the Republic, this act was designed to place on the rolls “all survivors of the war whose conditions of health are not practically perfect” (quoted in Glasson 1918a, 233).

After 1900 old-age pension provisions grew even more generous. In 1904, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 78, which authorized the Pension Bureau to grant pensions on the basis of age. The bureau decreed that, at age sixty-two, an applicant was half disabled in the ability to perform manual labor and entitled to a rating of \$6.00 per month and that, at ages sixty-five, sixty-eight, and seventy, he was entitled to \$8.00, \$10.00, and \$12.00 per month, respectively. Congress officially recognized age as sufficient cause to qualify for a pension with the act of 6 February 1907, also called the Service and Age Pension. Provided that the conditions of the 1890 law were met, veterans aged sixty-two to sixty-nine received \$12.00 per month, those aged seventy to seventy-four \$15.00 per month, and those seventy-five years and older \$20.00 per month. This act did not increase the total number of pensioners but led a significant number of pensioners to switch from the 1890 law to the 1907 law. Soon the Service and Age pension system overshadowed the General Law and

1890 systems in number of pensioners. In 1910 64 percent of all veterans were collecting a pension under the 1907 law, 22 percent under the General Law, and 14 percent under the 1890 law (U.S. Bureau of Pensions 1910 *Report of the Commissioner of Pensions*). Pension amount effectively became a function of age and of whether a veteran could trace his disabilities to the war (see table A.2).

The next major pension law was the act of 11 May 1912. According to the new schedule, rates rose with both age and length of service, regardless of disabilities incurred during that service. Most of the veterans receiving pensions under the 1907 law were transferred to the rolls under the 1912 law. Legislation after 1912 consisted mainly of automatic increases in pension ratings for age and service.

Civil War Records

Union army records are being collected as part of a project to study early indicators of later work levels, disease, and death. Information on the enlisted men in a random sample of 331 Union army infantry companies has been gathered from regimental records. These men are being linked to the 1850, 1860, 1900, and 1910 censuses, military service records, army medical records, pen-

Table A.2 Monthly Pension Means and Percentiles by Age, Health Status, and Law, 1910 (\$)

	Mean	Percentile				
		10	25	50	75	90
All veterans	16.5	12	12	15	20	24
General Law	22.3	17	17	24	24	30
1890 law	11.7	12	12	12	12	12
1907 law	14.5	12	12	12	15	20
Good health	16.6	12	12	15	20	24
Poor health	18.0	12	12	15	20	30
Age < 70	15.0	12	12	12	17	24
Age ≥ 70	18.8	15	15	17	20	30
Age < 70 and:						
General Law	21.3	14	17	17	24	30
1890 law	11.7	12	12	12	12	12
1907 law	12.2	12	12	12	12	12
Age ≥ 70 and:						
General Law	23.9	17	17	24	30	30
1890 law	11.5	10	12	12	12	12
1907 law	16.9	15	15	15	20	20

Note: Calculated from the data later used in estimation. The health variable used was based on the ratings of the examining surgeons.

sion records, and the successive medical reports of the examining surgeons of the Pension Bureau.

The first step in this procedure is to link men to their military service and army medical records. The military service records contain information about the individual's enlistment and discharge and where the soldier was during each roll call. Thus, the records might indicate that he was absent because he was in the hospital, ill, on furlough, or with another company or had deserted. Army medical records are generated whenever a soldier spent time in a hospital. They contain a terse description of the condition (e.g., typhoid fever), a description of the type of treatment the soldier underwent, and dates of admission and release.

Once soldiers have been linked to their records while in the army, they are then linked to their pension records, which include the reports of examining surgeons. Eighty-five percent of all soldiers who survived the war have a pension record because either the veteran or his dependents applied for a pension. Desertion, and hence ineligibility for a pension, was the primary nonrandom factor explaining linkage failure.

A single pension file contains many pension records. A new pension record is generated each time a veteran applied for an increase either because the law had changed, his health had worsened, or he had reached an age that entitled him to a pension increase. The typical veteran filed approximately twelve complaints prior to 1900 and fourteen prior to 1910. Application for a pension was made through a lawyer. Although Glasson (1918a, 150) reports that the advertisements of pension attorneys "represented the advertisers as in the enjoyment of special and peculiar facilities for the successful prosecution of claims," the records themselves provide no evidence that either the ratings of the surgeons or the total pension amount depended on the lawyer that the claimant used.

In order to file for a pension a veteran would fill out a form entitled *declaration for pension* (see fig. A.1). In this form he would indicate his name, age, place of birth, address, and current occupation and, for verification purposes, when and in what company or companies he had served and his height, complexion, hair color, and occupation at enlistment. If he was claiming to be disabled by disease or injuries, he had to specify the diseases or injuries and, if they were war related, how and when they were incurred. Philip Herbold, who served in Company K of the Twenty-first New York Infantry, wrote in 1900 that he was unfit for manual labor because of "his left foot and ankle being diseased by being hurt on the 4th Day of March 1900 and Blood Poisoning Setting in and Stiffening his ankle and cords of his left leg" (certificate 1,149,873). Charles Johnson of Company G of the 196th Ohio Infantry applied for a pension in 1890 at age forty-three because he "contracted chronic diarrhoea caused by exposure and hardships incident to the service" (certificate 748,705). Applicants might submit claims under both the General Law and the 1890 law. In subsequent pension filings Charles Johnson claimed "pension un-

DECLARATION FOR INVALID PENSION

Under the Acts of June 27, 1890, and May 9, 1900, as construed by the Order of March 15, 1904.

NOTICE.—This application should be sworn to before a JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, NOTARY PUBLIC, or before a CLERK OF COURT.

State of Maine County of Washington, ss.

ON THIS 24th day of Oct., A. D. one thousand nine hundred and nine, personally appeared

before me, a Justice of the Peace within and for the County and State aforesaid,
John Chism a resident of Balais County of Washington,

State of Maine who, being duly sworn according to law, declares that he is the identical
John Jackson who was ENROLLED on the 4th day of January 1865 in
Co. B 58th Reg. Mass. Inf. in the service of the United States in the War of
(Here state rank in company, and Regiment in military service, or vessel, if in navy.)

the Rebellion, and served at least ninety days, and was HONORABLY DISCHARGED near Alexandria Va on the
14th day of July, 1865. That he has not been employed in the military or naval service otherwise
than as stated above.

(Here state what that service was, whether prior or subsequent to that stated above, and the dates at which it began and ended.)

That he was not employed in the military or naval service prior to January 4, 1865. That he has not been
employed in the military or naval service since July 14, 1865. That he is 62 years of age. That
he was born at New Bedford Mass on the 27th day of April 1844. That his personal
(Place of birth.)
description at enlistment was as follows: Age, 22 years; height, 5 feet 7^{1/2} inches;
complexion, light; hair, brown eyes, hazel. That he is — (wholly or in part.)

unable to earn a support by manual labor by reason of ACE
(Strike out the word "age" (under 62.) (Here name all diseases or
injuries from which disabled.)

That said disabilities are not due to his vicious habits, and are to the best of his knowledge and belief permanent.

That he has — applied for pension under application No. 1209779. That he is not a pensioner
under Certificate No. —
(Give number of certificate, rate per month and Act under which pensioned. If not a pensioner, give number of former application, if one was made.)

That he makes this declaration for the purpose of being placed on the pension roll of the United States under the
provisions of the Act of June 27, 1890, as amended by the act of May 9, 1900.

He hereby appoints with full power of substitution and revocation,

ELMER C. RICHARDSON, of 37 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.,

his true and lawful attorney to prosecute this claim, and to receive the legal fee as prescribed by law. That his

POST-OFFICE ADDRESS is Box 129 Balais, County of
Washington, State of Maine

1 John de ni Richardson (Claimant's signature—FULL NAME.)

2 Jessiah K. Smith (If claimant signs by mark, two persons who can write sign here.)

ATTY FILED

OCT 25 1896

NOTE.—This declaration should be used by an applicant for invalid pension who draws his pension less than \$1 per month under the old law, or by one who draws no pension.

Fig. A.1 Declaration for pension

Note: Pension of John Chism, Company K, Fifty-eighth Massachusetts Infantry, certificate 1128382.

der the general law for chronic diarrhea” and “pension under the new law on account of piles [hemorrhoids] and rheumatism.”

When he filed for an increase in his pension, a veteran had to provide accompanying information. The records thus contain affidavits or signed statements from the claimant, neighbors, employers, doctors, and men who served in the same company (see fig. A.2). In the case of Charles Johnson, a fellow soldier, Israel Cook, testified that, in 1865, Charles Johnson “contracted chronic diarrhea and it reduced him to such an extent that he became wholly unable for duty.” Neighbors and doctors would recount how long they had known the claimant and how long they had known him to be suffering from either a specific or an ill-defined illness. One neighbor wrote that he had known Charles Wheeler of Company I of the Fifty-fifth Ohio Infantry for forty years and that Charles Wheeler “when drafted into the Army was a sound and hardy man, while from the time of his arrival to his home, following his discharge, he was getting weaker from year to year” (certificate 559,045). Other affidavits might be testimonials to the claimants’ morals.

Men who applied on the basis of age needed to provide proof of their age. The Pension Bureau demanded a copy, verified by a magistrate, of either a public record of birth, a baptismal record, or a family record, that is, a record written in a family Bible. In the case of John Dressender of Company B of the 195th Ohio Infantry, proof consisted of a record of birth in an 1853 Bible that Dressender “placed in the Bible himself given him by a minister of the gospel before he left Germany.” A notary public wrote of this record in Dressender’s Bible, “It appears to be all the same writing know [*sic*] marks of erasure or alteration and from the appearance of the writing he believes the entries to have been made about the same date” (certificate 577,545).

The Pension Bureau would carefully examine the claims of individuals. They would send examiners to interview the claimant, neighbors, doctors, and men who had served in the same company. Claimants would describe in detail how they had contracted their disabilities. Charles Johnson recounted,

We were out in grand review about a mile or a mile and a half from our quarters. The general kept us out until it began to rain. Then he dismissed us and we started on a run for our quarters like a lot of sheep. I was all wet with sweat and very warm from drilling. It rained very hard and the wind blew hard and before I got to camp I was chilled. There on the way to quarters I stopped at a spring and drank a good deal of water as I was very thirsty. In a few days after this the diarrhoea commenced on me. . . . I had the diarrhoea so bad that I had no control of my bowels at all. Finally I got it so bad that I was clear down and could not walk. I weighed one hundred and sixty-nine pounds when I enlisted and after I had recovered some from the diarrhoea I weighed but a hundred pounds. I was sick with it all the balance of my service and came home sick with it after I was discharged.

Charles Johnson’s account was supported by an interview with a man who had served in the same company who testified, “He got very warm the day we

137 THOS. R. KEMMER, M. D.
~~STEE~~ MONROE AVENUE
 GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I have known Mr. Chester Darling, 76 6 N. College Ave. Grand Rapids, Mich. for two years and I have been his family physician during that time.

He is in my opinion, helpless as far as self-support or caring for himself goes. Due to a Palsy(Paralysis agitans) of hands he is unable to dress self without assistance. He cannot see well enough to read ordinary print and has a heart condition (Myocarditis) which confines him to bed a large part of the time.

Thos. R. Kemmer

TRK/EG
 Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2nd day of November, 1926.
Harry E. Wilcox Notary Public

Fig. A.2 Pension affidavit

Note: Pension of Chester Darling, Company I, Tenth Michigan Infantry, certificate 775726.

drilled and when the storm came up he got very wet, and it is reasonable to suppose that this caused the diarrhoea." Not everyone who knew a claimant provided favorable testimony. In 1911 one of the bureau's special examiners wrote to the Pension Commissioner,

I have the honor to report that I have recently been informed by Edgar W. Steele, of Mooers Forks, Clinton Co., N.Y., a Civil War soldier of excellent

reputation, that another ex-soldier of the Civil War at that place, named Peter Facto, of Co. G, 153rd N.Y. Vol. Inf., and a pensioner under Ctf. # 374,285 is in bad shape physically because of too much drinking of bad whiskey and has gone to Plattsburg Hospital. In case the disabilities for which he is pensioned would ordinarily be aggravated by excessive liquor drinking his habits in this respect should be considered or investigated before any increase is made in his pension if any increase claim is pending.

The Pension Bureau's subsequent inquiries proved that Peter Facto had been a heavy drinker ten years ago, and the bureau asked examining surgeons to ascertain whether Peter Facto showed any signs of delirium tremens.

The Pension Bureau examined war records to check the veteran's age, whether he had any of the alleged conditions while in the army, and whether his enlistment records indicated that he had any of the conditions prior to entering the service. The Pension Bureau rejected the claim of Israel Cook of Company G of the 196th Ohio Infantry for a pension increase on the grounds that he was age sixty-nine, not seventy (certificate 497,484). The file of Frank Sovereign (Company G, 195th Ohio Infantry) contains a letter from the War Department stating that his wartime hospital records showed that he was treated for diarrhea (certificate 885,848). An example of a pension ruling is given in figure A.3. By 1900, of the average of twelve complaints that had been filed, about two were rejected. Complaints might be rejected because there was no evidence of a disability or of an increase in disability or because the disability was judged to be unrelated to the war. Often the grounds for rejection are not known. By 1900 the most common ground for rejection (in 24 percent of cases) was because a veteran's disabilities were judged to be unrelated to the war.

The Pension Bureau required a medical examination by a board of three examining surgeons. The surgeons were to investigate whether a condition existed and how severe it was. The examination report contains the statement of the claimant concerning his disabilities, birthplace, age, height, weight, complexion, hair color, occupation, permanent marks or scars, pulse rate, respiration, and temperature and detailed descriptions of each condition and a rating of each. Since many men claimed various disabilities, and since the Pension Bureau would often instruct the examining surgeons to check if related conditions were present, many conditions are described. In the case of John Meitzler of Company B of the 195th Ohio Infantry, a man who was in particularly bad health in 1899 at age sixty-five, the examining surgeons wrote,

Fracture of left clavicle. His tongue is coated, his teeth are nearly all gone, applicant is debilitated, had the appearance [*sic*] of a man in very poor health, he walks with difficulty, cannot walk without the aid of a cane, his hands are tremulous, his muscles are flabby. Six eighths for disability.

He suffers from an intense chronic naso-pharyngeal catarrh, the tonsils are atrophied, the posterior and anterior nares are inflamed. $\frac{6}{30}$.

The membrana of tympani of either ear is depressed and thickened, slight

Increase INVALID PENSION.

Claimant, *Samuel Gullett*

P.O., *Maguon* Rank, *Priv*
County, *Knott* Company, *F*
State, *Ill.* Regiment, *148 Ill. Inf. Regt.*

Rate, \$..... per month, commencing

Disabled by

RECOGNIZED ATTORNEY:

Name, *Wm. Buskhatt* Fee \$ *2.* Agent

P.O., *Maguon Ill* Article filed 18.....

APPROVALS:

Submitted for *Wm. Buskhatt* 1899. Examiner, *Gallinger*

Approved for Approved for *Wm. Buskhatt*
8/18 *Wm. Buskhatt*

..... 18..... Legal Reviewer, *Wm. L. 1892* Medical Reviewer, *Wm. L. 1892*

Discharged *Sept 5* 1892. Last paid to at \$ *5.*

Pensioned from *Oct 9* 1892, at \$ *4* for *dis. of eyes*.

Original declaration filed *Oct 9* 1892, alleged *dis. of eyes*.

Inc to \$6.00 Dec 2 1892
" " 8.00 Apr 9 1892

Amount allowed from 18..... to 18..... at \$.....

Fig. A.3 Pension ruling

Note: Pension of Samuel Gullet, Company F, 148th Illinois Infantry, certificate 271398.

deafness of right ear, can not hear ordinary conversation at 6 feet, can hear loud conversation at 3 feet, slight deafness of left ear, can not hear ordinary conversation at 6 feet, can hear loud conversation at 3 feet. $\frac{6}{30}$.

Applicant suffers from rheumatism in both shoulder- and knee-joints and lumbago, the shoulder joints are stiff, crepitant and impaired in motion, he is not able to bring his arms to a level with the shoulder-joints, the knee-joints are stiff, crepitant and impaired in motion about $\frac{1}{2}$, bending backward and forward causes severe pain, no swelling or enlargement of joints at the present time. Ten eighteenths.

The action of his heart is very irregular, the first sound is prolonged into a slight blowing murmur, apex heart beat is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below and 1 inch internal to left nipple, cardiac dullness [*sic*] extends from $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch above left nipple to the left border of the sternum, he suffers from intense dyspnoea, no signs of oedema or cyanosis, pulse-rate sitting 30, standing 96, after exercise 118. Six eighteenths.

Right eye, arcus senilis is well marked, the lens is cloudy, vision 20/100, left eye, arcus senilis is well marked, lens is cloudy. Vision 20/100. Four eighteenths.

We find callus as evidence of a former fracture of left clavicle at the junction of inner and middle third, motion of left shoulder joint is impaired about $\frac{1}{2}$, he is not able to bring his arm to a level with the shoulder-joint. Four eighteenths.

Applicant suffers from left hemiplegia, the tongue, when protuded, deflects toward the left side, the articulation of words is somewhat indistinct, the naso-labial fold is less marked, than on the right side, the upper lip is less arched and the angle of the mouth droops somewhat on the left side, grip of left hand is very much impaired, in walking he drags the toes on left side, there is some impairment of cutaneous sensibility on left side. This claimant is so disabled from left hemiplegia, rheumatism and disease of heart, as to be incapacitated for performing any manual labor and is entitled to \$30 a month. (certificate 24,375)

Another example of a surgeons' certificate is given in figure A.4.

The surgeons' certificates illustrate just how few tools the nineteenth-century doctor had at his disposal. He was limited to what he could see, hear, feel, or smell. Cancers would go undetected. Recurring conditions, such as chronic diarrhea, might also go undetected. Charles Johnson, who was judged to have chronic diarrhea in 1890, 1897, 1900, and 1903, was not found to have chronic diarrhea in 1893 after the examining surgeons wrote, "Diarrhoea probably has existed but no evidence now except an ulcerated condition of the rectum." Average health in the veteran population was therefore probably much worse than the surgeons' certificates would indicate. But it is unlikely that the examining surgeons attributed poor health to individuals on the basis of characteristics other than health. Within the veteran sample the degree of disability can be measured by the rating assigned by the examining surgeons. These ratings are related to health measures such as pulse rate and weight adjusted for height. There is no evidence that the characteristics of the pen-

Attention is invited to the outlines of the human skeleton and figure upon the back of this certificate, and they should be used whenever it is possible to indicate precisely the location of a disease or injury, the entrance and exit of a missile, an amputation, &c. The absence of a member from a session of a board and the reason therefor, if known, and the name of the absentee, must be indorsed upon each certificate.

Form with fields for Name and rank of claimant (John H. Meitzler), Pension Claim No. (24,375), Rank (Pri), Company (C, 49 Reg't Ohio Inf), and State (Piquette, O.).

We hereby certify that in compliance with the requirements of the law we have carefully examined this applicant, who states that he is suffering from the following disability, incurred in the service, viz: fracture of left clavicle, disability of left side of chest affecting left shoulder & left leg, & also resulting in certain heart & impaired vision, and that he receives a pension of twenty dollars per month.

He makes the following statement upon which he bases his claim for increased pension: Present rating too low. Disabilities for which pension was increased. Now more pain in left shoulder & the heart action is more rapid than when present rating was granted. Now there is pain in left shoulder & side. Vision has been bad about ten years. Can't see to read without glasses. Has been a Carpenter. Can't do any labor.

Upon examination we find the following objective conditions: Pulse rate, 116-120-126. respiration, 20; temperature, 102; height, 5 feet 10 1/2 inches, weight, 143 pounds, age, 38 years.

1. Left Clavicle - There has been fracture of the left clavicle in three parts which have not united. The injury to the bone was at the middle third & the fragments are displaced & the bone now presents this shape - See fig. The left shoulder droops 1" lower than the right & there is slight stiffness in the movements of the left shoulder joint. The hand has shown no rating ten eighths for injury to left clavicle.

2. Chest: Flat, 35" at rest, 36 1/2" full, 34" exp. No dullness on percussion. The rate & force normal in every respect.

3. Left leg. No disability or left varicose veins.

4. Rheum. Complains of rheu. pains in left shoulder & in other parts of the body. As stated above there is slight stiffness in the left shoulder. No enlarged joints, no contracted tendons or stiff muscles except as above stated. Think he has them for eight months.

5. Heart. The apex beat is found by auscultation between the 6th & 7th ribs 4 1/2" from median line of the sternum. Dullness on percussion 1" beyond the normal limit over the cardiac region. Action rapid. Pulsed

He is, in our opinion entitled to a ten eighths rating for the disability caused by fractured left clavicle for eight months for that caused by rheu. and ten eighths for that caused by disease of the heart & six eighths for varicose veins.

How give a full description of the disability, in accordance with Book of Instructions.

How give the claimant's statement as fully and as accurately as possible.

How give the cause of disability.

Fig. A.4 Surgeons' examination

Note: Pension of John H. Meitzler, Company B, 195th Ohio Infantry, and Company C, Forty-ninth Ohio Infantry, certificate 24375.

sioner or of his region of residence predict the ratings of the examining surgeon. The ratings are also internally consistent. Conditions worsen with age.

The job of the examining surgeons was purely descriptive. They could not determine whether a condition was related to wartime service. Sometimes the surgeons clearly stated this. In the case of John Dressender, who claimed a war-related pension because he had dislocated his knee when thrown by a blind horse, the surgeons wrote, "It is possible that the cartilages have been injured [*sic*], but the exact cause of the disability is not clearly apparent to us, yet there is evidently a disability." The decision as to whether a condition was related to wartime service rested with the Pension Bureau and was based on the veteran's war record and on the medical theories of the time. Examining surgeons could, however, determine whether a condition was due to "vicious habits" and hence not pensionable. In the case of Andrew Benell of Company F of the 148th Illinois Infantry, the examining surgeons wrote, "We do not find any objective signs of syphilis and we believe paralysis due to cerebral hemorrhages" (certificate 935,336).

Approximately 88 percent of the men found in the pension records have surgeons' certificates. Those who did not consist of two types: those who applied on the grounds of age alone and those who were so severely disabled during the war that a medical exam was not required to establish ill health. By 1900 men without a surgeons' record were, on average, more likely to be collecting a higher pension, to have been discharged for disability, to have entered the pension rolls earlier, and to be out of the labor force. The sample of men without a surgeons' certificate may, therefore, be slightly healthier than those without, but inferences based only on the sample of men with a surgeons' certificate are still likely to be valid since the findings remain unaffected even when those known to be unhealthy were deleted from the sample.

Once the Pension Bureau was in possession of all the necessary information, it ruled on the pension amount. This ruling generated a form containing the name of the claimant's pension attorney, what the claimant was approved for, any rejections and the reasons for the rejections, and the total dollar amount. Occasionally, information, including pension amount, is missing. These slips appear to have been random lapses on the part of the bureaucracy.

Additional information on the life history of a veteran was generated incidental to the pension process. The claimant's financial status is sometimes described in the claimant's or neighbors' affidavits or in the claimant's cover letter to the Pension Bureau. Therefore, we learn that Horace Stephens of Company I of the Twenty-third Michigan Infantry "had a helpless family of children dependent upon him for support, not one of them able to assist him or support themselves that he is dependent upon Charity partially of Hancock Post GAR and partially upon Clare County" (certificate 384,261). Information of this sort is extremely rare. There was no gain to pleading poverty. Those who did were not statistically more likely to have a higher pension. Further information on financial status comes from the claims of the veteran's widow. To qualify for a

pension a widow needed to prove that she was dependent on her husband's earnings for support. Therefore, we learn that George Smith of Company H of the 137th New York Infantry left real estate worth \$320, three horses worth \$35.00, five cattle worth \$59.00, and farm implements and furniture worth \$11.00 (certificate 521,276). At other times we learn that the veteran was very well off when he died. Families of impoverished veterans would ask the Pension Bureau to pay for the veterans' burial costs. Faced in 1912 with doctor and burial expenses of \$39.00, and left an estate consisting of "nothing but a few heirlooms and some clothing," the family of Samuel Gullet of Company F of the 148th Illinois Infantry made just such a request (certificate 271,398). The poverty of these men had not helped them when they were still alive to gain a larger pension.

Other information can be found in the pension records as well. To facilitate later filings by dependents, the Pension Bureau asked veterans to fill out a form listing their wives' and their children's names and birth dates and their marriage dates. When the pensioner's wife applied for a pension, her affidavit sometimes contained information on her husband's life history since the date of his marriage. Widows often provided copies of their marriage certificates and of their husbands' death certificates, thus providing information on cause of death and on occupation at time of death.

Individuals are linked from the pension records to the manuscript censuses. Searches in the 1900 and 1910 censuses were limited to men found in the pension records because address information is required for linkage and this information is available only from the pension records. Also, restricting the sample to men in the pension records limits searches to men who did not die before the census dates because the pension records provide death dates. Seventy-three percent of men at risk to be linked to the 1900 census were linked. Somewhat fewer (65 percent) were linked to the 1910 census because this census is only partially indexed.

The censuses provide information on occupation, family structure, and home ownership. Although some of the same information appears in the pension records, the census records provide information for every veteran at the same point in time. The census information can also be easily compared with the public-use samples to determine how the Union army veteran sample differs from a random sample of the elderly population. In both 1900 and 1910, the Union army veteran sample resembles a national sample of the northern-born Civil War cohort in terms of marital status, property ownership, and illiteracy. The sample contains a larger proportion of men who are rural, native born, and farmers, but there is enough variation in the sample to control for the effect of these characteristics. Union army veterans were more likely to be retired and were more likely to head their own households, suggesting that being a Union army veteran affected economic decisions.