



The Rebs Took My Money!

In honor of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, this is the sixteenth in a series of articles about records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., that are useful in researching the war and its participants.

When a soldier was taken prisoner he was likely to be robbed of his money and valuable possessions by the men who captured him, or they might be confiscated at prison. If he kept his money he was lucky, for it enabled him to buy better quality and quantities of food, clothing, and personal items from sutlers than prison officials could afford to provide.¹ Nearly 195,000 Union and 215,000 Confederate men were incarcerated as prisoners of war (POW).²

This article discusses claims by 798 former Union prisoners of war for money confiscated from them by the Confederates.

When war ended, Rebel authorities surrendered thousands of dollars that had belonged to Union prisoners of war to Brevet Brigadier General John E. Mulford, U.S. Agent

for Exchange. Mulford returned some funds to their rightful owners based upon receipts and invoices in Confederate prison records. By April 1866, over \$27,000 still remained in the custody of Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, the Commissary General of Prisoners, and claims from over 360 former POWs awaited resolution. Hitchcock requested Secretary of War Stanton grant him authority to “distribute the money to the applicants upon satisfactory knowledge of their identity, at the rate claimed, on the correctness of the same being clearly shown.”³

Former POWs continued to file claims through the summer and fall of 1866, even though the opportunity and requirements for doing so were not well publicized. A blurb in the *New York Times* on 24 September 1866 indicated that claims “must be filed before October 1” with an affidavit “stating the amount of the claim, the character of the funds taken, and that no part of the amount claimed has ever been returned or its equivalent in rebel currency.” In addition, affidavits were required from one or more

witnesses “who were actually present when the money was taken, and who must testify to the amount.”⁴

The Adjutant General’s Special Orders No. 486, dated 1 October 1866, ordered a board of officers be convened to consider the claims. The board consisted of Brevet Colonel Henry Clay Wood, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Taggard, and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel James Madison Cutts. In October 1866, the Board published a notice in the Washington, DC, *Daily National Intelligencer* that claimants needed to submit their evidence before 15 November 1866.⁵ The substance of this notice was widely copied in northern newspapers in Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, Bangor (Maine), Camden (New Jersey), Rockford (Illinois), Jackson (Michigan), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), and other places.

Ultimately the Board considered 798 claims, but only 275 were approved; the remainder were rejected due to insufficient proof. The claims files are in Record Group 249, Records of the Office of the Commissary General of Prisoners, and are called “Claims Made for Money Taken from Federal Prisoners of War Confined in Confederate Prisons” (NM-68 Entry 81; National Archives Identifier 615449).

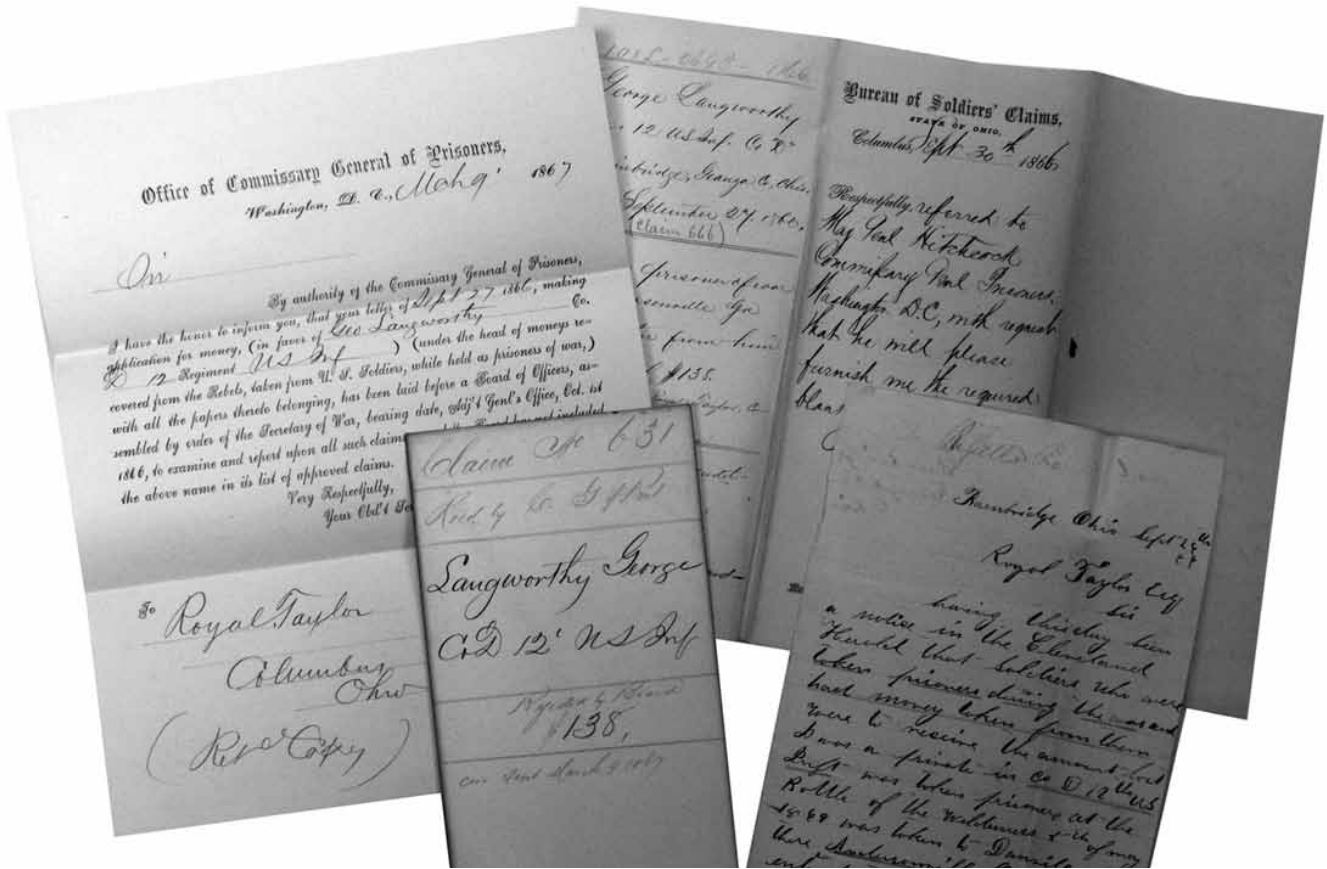
The claims are arranged numerically as follows: 1 to 275, 275½, 276 to 634, 634½, and 635 to 796. Claims files are not extant for 87-88, 90-95, 112, 328, 371, and 417. File number 417 was charged out to General Mulford in April 1868 and not returned.⁶ In addition to being organized by number, they are also arranged in six different groups in rough alphabetical order by surname, as follows:

- Group 1, Claims 1 to 275, were approved by the Board.
- Group 2, Claims, 275½ to 397, were rejected by the Board.

- Group 3, Claims, 398 to 532, were on “General Mulford’s List” and rejected by the Board. These mostly consist of letters of inquiry received in 1865 concerning money, watches, rings, and other personal property.
- Group 4, Claims, 533 to 719, were received at the Office of the Commissary General of Prisoners and rejected by the Board, and consist of inquiries, affidavits, and other materials received in 1866.



Brevet Brigadier General John E. Mulford, U.S. Agent for Exchange, and his wife. National Archives NAID 525960.



- Group 5, Claims 720 to 776, were received by the Commissary General of Prisoners and rejected by the Board, and consists of inquiries and other materials received in 1866.
- Group 6, Claims 777 to 796, were received by the Commissary General of Prisoners “too late to be acted upon by the Board” or “after adjournment of the Board.”

These claims provide varying details about the soldiers’ capture, confinement, and property that might not be recorded elsewhere. Let us examine a few files.

Claim No. 58, William R. Davidson

William R. Davidson of Ravenna, Portage County, Ohio, served as a private in Company D, 6th Ohio Cavalry. In his affidavit, dated 27 October 1866, Davidson testified that he “was captured by the Rebels at Barbers Cross Roads Virginia, and from that point removed to Libby Prison, Richmond Virginia, and that while in the lower hall of said Prison he was searched

by a rebel Sergeant who took from his person One Silver watch and Three Hundred and Three dollars (\$303⁰⁰) in money consisting of Six (6) Fifty (50) dollar U.S. Bills and Three (3) One dollar U.S. Bills....” No Confederate records provided evidence of his loss, but he provided corroboration with an affidavit by David H. Sears, who also served in the 6th Ohio Cavalry and was present when Davidson’s money was taken. Davidson’s claim was accepted by the Board. The money was sent to P. B. Conant in Ravenna at Davidson’s request, and Davidson signed his receipt for the money on 21 January 1867.

Claim No. 245, David Williams

David Williams of Taylorsville, Montgomery County, Ohio, was a private in Company B, 154th Ohio Infantry. In a letter dated 13 August 1866, he said that he had been captured “on the 4th of August 1864 at the Knobby mountain fight” and \$71.35 was taken from him at Libby

Prison, Richmond, Virginia, on or about 12 August 1864. Confederate records provided evidence that \$1.00 had been taken from him, so the Board approved paying Williams \$1.00. In his letter dated 24 February 1867, Williams expressed appreciation for the dollar: "I truly glad to get what you claim. send the check by mail to Taylorsville. I have been sick and did not reply as Early as I should."

Claim No. 289, William H. Bogart

William H. Bogart of Tremont, Westchester County, New York, was a private in Company A, 6th New York Cavalry. In an affidavit dated 20 October 1866, Bogart testified that he was taken prisoner near Berryville, Virginia on 4 September 1864, and had \$42.00 in U.S. banknotes taken from him. Confederate records provided no evidence of Bogart's loss. Bogart torpedoed his chances by submitting a poorly drafted corroborating affidavit by Jonas Evans that merely said that Jonas knew that Bogart's affidavit was true. The Board rejected Bogart's claim.

Claim No. 351, Mathias Nero

Mathias Nero of Vergennes, Vermont, was a private in Company F, 5th Vermont Infantry. In an October 1866 affidavit, Nero said that he was taken prisoner at the battle of Cedar Creek on 19 October 1864. The rebels took \$24.50 from him, consisting of one \$20 greenback, two \$2 greenbacks, and 50 cents in fractional currency. He said that only one other person, John Stott, who was also in Company F, was taken prisoner with him. Nero said he was unable to get a corroborating affidavit from Stott, because Stott was then in England. The Board rejected Nero's claim. On 26 February 1867, the Board sent its rejection notice to Nero through his agent, George H. Scott of Vergennes.

Does Your Ancestor Have a Claims File?

Names of claimants can be found in two places. You can search for names in the National Archives Catalog at [https://catalog.archives](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/615449)

[.gov/id/615449](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/615449). Or, you can search the list of claimants posted at <http://twelvekey.com/miscellaneous/federalpowclaims/>.

To Obtain Copies

To obtain copies of specific files, write to Archives I Reference, National Archives Building, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 20408, or e-mail archives1reference@nara.gov. Be sure to specify "Claims Made for Money Taken from Federal Prisoners of War Confined in Confederate Prisons (National Archives Identifier 615449)," the claim number, the claimant's name, and your name, postal mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number. 🌲

Notes

1. *Sketches of War History, 1861-1865, Papers Read Before the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1886-1888*, Vol. II, p. 214-216 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1888); William Marvel, *Andersonville: The Last Depot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
2. "Facts – The Civil War" at <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm> downloaded 15 February 2015.
3. *War of the Rebellion: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series II, Vol. VIII (Serial 121), pp. 721-723, 872-873, 886, 895, 906, 912, 967.
4. "Union Prisoners' Claims for Captured Money," *New York Times*, Vol. XVI, No. 4679 (24 Sept. 1866): 1.
5. Notice, *Daily National Intelligencer*, Vol. LXVI, No. 16903 (24 Oct. 1866): 3.
6. These file numbers may have been assigned after completion of the Board's work, since records in some files are marked with a "claim number" different than its final number.

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