

Did Your Civil War Ancestor Respond to Call Number 13?



General Green Berry Raun was Commissioner of Pensions from October 1889 to April 1893. His tenure was marred by scandals and Congressional investigations. Photo LC-BH832-387 P&P Lot 4192, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

In honor of sesquicentennial of the American Civil War and its aftermath, this is the eighteenth 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.

Call Number 13 sounds rather mysterious and unlucky. Fortunately, the opposite is true! The answer to Call Number 13 may give you your Union Civil War ancestor's life story from discharge from military service to the 1890s.

On 21 October 1889, former Civil War General Green Berry Raun was appointed Commissioner of Pensions. He immediately discovered problems that sound much like those in today's headlines. Union Civil War veterans faced wait times of two or three years for their claims to be examined. Some claims languished even longer because the records management system was ineffective. Five hundred thousand pieces of unfiled evidence had accumulated. Thousands of letters from pension claimants asking about the status of their cases routinely went unanswered. The Pension Office Building desperately needed maintenance and repairs.

Determined to make government work for the people, General Raun took decisive action.

The text of Calls No. 1 through 13 are too lengthy to be fully quoted here. The form numbers below are those that contained the text of the call. Some “calls” were directed to the invalid claimant, while others were sent to other government offices that held information. In brief:

Call No. 1 (Form 3-077) asked the claimant to state under oath the nature and location of the wound or injury, or the name and nature of the disease.

Call No. 2 (Form 3-077) asked the claimant to state under oath when and where the alleged wound or injury was received, or the circumstances under which the disease was contracted.

Call No. 3 (Form 3-077) asked the claimant to state under oath whether he was been in the military or naval service since [date], and the name of the unit to which he belonged while in service.

Call No. 4 (Form 3-077) asked the claimant to provide names and localities of all hospitals in which he was treated, and the dates of that treatment.

Call No. 5 (Form 3-077) asked the claimant to provide his post office address (or house number and street if living in a city).

Call No. 6 (Form 3-060) requested the Record and Pension Office of the War Department to provide dates of enrollment, ranks held, dates present for duty, and records of medical treatment.

Call No. 7 (Form 3-091) directed the claimant to report within three months for medical examination by a designated board of examining surgeons. A related “Circular Call No. 7” (Form 3-100) informed the board of the name and military unit of the person to be examined.

Call No. 8 (Form 3-078) requested that an affidavit be submitted from a commissioned officer, 1st sergeant, or one or more enlisted

—Division. (3-079.) Call No. 13.

CALL FOR HISTORY OF CLAIMANT'S DISABILITY.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF PENSIONS,
Washington, D. C., ———, 189—.

SIR: In the claim for Invalid Pension No. ———, of ———, the claimant is requested to state his place or several places of residence (actual post-office addresses, in cities, the names of streets and numbers), and what his occupation has been during the period of his discharge to the present time, giving approximately the dates of any changes in his residence. He should also give a full and circumstantial history of the origin of his disability, and its continuance from the time when it first appeared, mentioning all medical treatment which he has received, and the names and residences of his physicians, and which, if any of them, are deceased. He should also state whether at any time and for what period or periods, giving dates as nearly as possible, he has been prevented from following his usual occupation by reason of the alleged disability.

Until the foregoing shall have been furnished, further action can not be intelligently taken in this claim, and a prompt reply will facilitate its early settlement.

N. B.—Please have number of claim and name and service of soldier put on back of evidence filed, and also say in reply to Call No. 13.

Very respectfully,

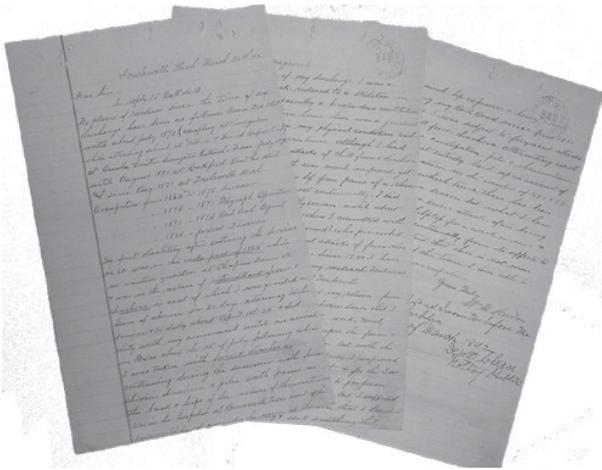
GREEN B. RAUM,
Commissioner.

Text of Call No. 13 from Report of the Select Committee of the House of Representatives, Investigating the Methods and Management and Practices of the Bureau of Pensions, under Resolution of the 10th day of February, 1892, Vol. II, p. 1548. House Report 1868, Part 2, 52nd Congress, 1st Session.

He changed the organizational structure of the Pension Office. He changed procedures to ensure that claims were acted upon in a timely manner. He established “13 calls for evidence” that—when answered—would provide all the information needed to make a veteran’s pension claim file complete and ready for adjudication on the merits.

Call Number 13, the “Call for History of Claimant’s Disability” (also known as Form 3-079) requested the veteran state his places of residence and occupation from discharge from military service until the present time (in the early 1890s). He was to “give a full and circumstantial history of the origin of his disability, and its continuance...” and he was to state the medical treatment he had received, the names of his physicians and their places of residence. He was to state when he had been “prevented from following his usual occupation by reason of the alleged disability.”

Call Number 13 informed the veteran that his claim could not be “intelligently” acted upon without his answers. Significantly, his statement did not need to be made under oath. This meant the veteran could immediately write out his story and mail it to the Pension Office in Washington, D.C.—without having to get the



William M. Horton's answer to Call No. 13 on 25 March 1892. William M. Horton (widow Loana L. Horton), 26th Michigan Infantry and 118th U.S. Colored Troops Infantry; Civil War Pension File WC 796,261; RG 15, NARA, Washington DC.

assistance of a lawyer, a justice of the peace, or some other officer authorized to take testimony under oath. (Some veterans had their statement notarized even though it wasn't required.)

Veterans' answers to Call Number 13 give precious insight into their lives.

William M. Horton

William M. Horton served as a private in Co. E, 26th Michigan Infantry, and then as an officer in the 118th U.S. Colored Troops Infantry. On 25 March 1892, he wrote three pages in neat handwriting. His spelling and punctuation are quite good, reflecting good education.

William reported living at Oceola Center, Livingston County, Michigan, from December 1865 until July 1870, except when he was attending school at Albion or Grand Rapids. He lived at Rockford, Kent County, Michigan, from July 1870 to August 1871, and at Fowlerville, Livingston County, Michigan, from August 1871 until March 1892. He was a farmer from 1865 to 1870 and again from 1884 to 1892, a telegraph operator in 1870-71, and a railroad agent from 1871 to 1884. He first started having intermittent fever and diarrhea in early 1865, which progressed to rheumatism. "I was a physical

men of the claimant's company that indicated the circumstances under which the injury or disease occurred.

Call No. 9 (Form 3-078) requested that an affidavit be submitted from the surgeon or assistant surgeon of the claimant's regiment that described the claimant's treatment for injury or disease while in service.

Call No. 10 (Form 3-061) requested the Adjutant General's Office to state the presence or absence on [date] of [named individual] of [military unit] and the station (location) of the unit at that time.

Call No. 11 (Form 3-474) requested that affidavits be submitted from physicians who had treated the veteran since his discharge from military service that include the history and degree of disability of alleged injury or disease, along with dates and duration of treatment.

Call No. 12 (Form 3-474) requested that affidavits be submitted from fellow workman or neighbors describing the veteran's physical condition from their first acquaintance to the present time, and the extent to which they believed he was incapacitated from subsisting on manual labor due to his alleged injury or disease. This testimony was to be provided if the veteran could not obtain physicians' affidavits in response to Circular Call No. 11.

Call No. 13 (Form 3-079) ("Call for History of Claimant's Disability") requested the claimant state his places of residence and occupations from his discharge from military service to the present, as well as the history of the origin of his disability, medical treatment, names of physicians, and if and when he was prevented from following his usual occupation.

Source: Report of the Select Committee of the House of Representatives, Investigating the Methods and Management and Practices of the Bureau of Pensions, under Resolution of the 10th day of February, 1892, Vol. II, pp. 1543-1548. House Report 1868, Part 2, 52nd Congress, 1st Session.

Answer to Call No 13

I resided in Old Town Maine (Occupation Mechanic) until 1867, I came to San Francisco California I resided in Howard Street between 2nd and 3rd. I have forgotten the number I worked in a sash door Saw Manufactory, it was in this place that I had my left hand caught in the machinery that I was operating, and so badly lamed that it was necessary to amputate three fingers the fourth (the little finger) is still and crooked I was tended by Dr. Stewart I do not know where he is he moved away from San Francisco. I left San Francisco in April 1870. Came here to Santa Cruz and have remained here since. Occupation Rancher I live in the foot hills five miles from Santa Cruz Post Office. I cannot track in where I am located.

My first attack of the Rheumatism I had was in March 1862 we marched from Camp near Chain Bridge Va to Alexandria Va it was a very rainy and cold day we camped on ground that was nearly covered with water I did not go to any hospital I lived with my company, each exposure would incur the attack of the Rheumatism of late in the winter I have ben obliged to use a crutch in orde to get around Dr P. B. Fagan attend to me when I need my medical assistance he resides in Santa Cruz his address is Santa Cruz California for the last eight years I have ben failing at present I am incapable of doing any work that is very laborious I am 68 years old I have answered the question to both #13 as I understand them hoping they will be satisfactory

Respectfully
John A. Bachelder
Santa Cruz
California

Answer by John A. Bachelder to Call No. 13. John A. Bachelder, 7th Maine Infantry; Civil War Pension File SC 738,901; RG 15; NARA, Washington, DC.

wreck, reduced to a skeleton in flesh....” After discharge from military service, he lived with his parents, and gradually improved, but was still “subject to frequent attacks of chill fever, diarrhoea, alternating with extreme constipation, piles & rheumatism.” He decided to seek work “that required less exposure and heavy work.” Still, after returning to farming, William was unable to do the work more than half the time. He mentioned being treated by Dr. J. A. Brown (deceased) and Dr. A. W. Cooper of Fowlerville.¹

1. Loana L. Horton widow’s pension, certificate no. W.C. 796,261; service of William M. Horton (Pvt., Co. E, 26th Mich. Inf., 118th U.S. Colored Inf., Civil War); Case Files of Approved Pension Applications..., 1861–1934; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

John A. Bachelder

John A. Bachelder served in the 7th Maine Infantry. In 1891, at age 68, he wrote a single page in his own handwriting, with words creatively spelled. He resided in Old Town, Maine, from discharge until 1867, when he went to San Francisco, California. He worked in a “sash doors Blin manufactory” and suffered three amputated fingers when his left hand got caught in machinery. From April 1870 to 1891, he lived and worked as a rancher in Santa Cruz, California. His first attack of rheumatism was in March 1862, when his unit marched to Chain Bridge [Fairfax County], Virginia, to Alexandria, Virginia. It was a “rainey and cold day” and they “camped on ground that was nearly covered with watter.” Bachelder said “for the last eight years I hav ben failing” and “I am incapable of doing eney work that is eney laborious.” He used a “crutch in orde[r] to get around,” and consulted Dr. P. B. Fagan of Santa Cruz when needed.²

Thoughts on Call Number 13

Veterans’ answers to Call Number 13 (Form 3-079) can only be found in files meeting certain criteria. First, General Raum was Commissioner of Pensions from October 1889 to April 1893, and it is likely that Call Number 13 was only used during those years. Second, the Bureau of Pensions would *only have sent it to veterans whose claims had not yet been approved*. Third, it would *not* have been sent to veterans whose claims had already been approved unless—perhaps?—the veteran was claiming an additional disability. Fourth, it would not have been sent to widows or other dependents. Thus, an answer to “Call Number 13” will only be found in certain Union Civil War pension files.

However, it is possible that a different version of Form 3-079 was in use before and after

2. John A Bachelder, (1st Lt., Co. C., 7th Regt., Maine Inf., Civil War) pension, certificate no. S.C. 738,901; RG 15, NA-Washington. The full text of Bachelder’s response to Call No. 13 is online at <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/576/>.

General Raum's tenure. For example, Charles M. Easton, a resident of Oak Grove, Livingston County, Michigan, who had served in the 111th New York Infantry, wrote a two-page letter to Raum's predecessor, James Tanner, on 12 October 1889, which was a response to Commissioner Tanner's request for information dated 7 October 1889. Easton's letter has the same contents as an answer to Call Number 13, even though he doesn't use that term. Easton describes his injury, where he's lived, who his physicians have been, what kind of work he's done, and the extent to which he was disabled.³

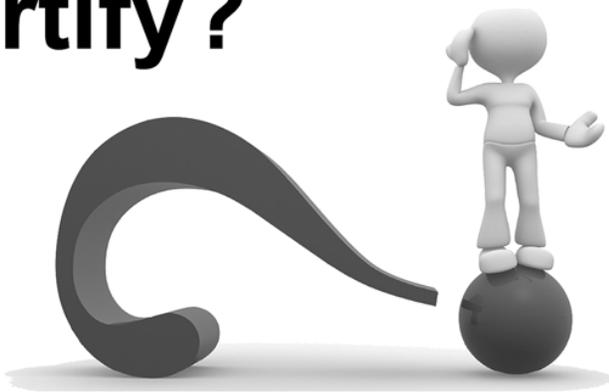
3. Emily A. Easton widow's pension, certificate no. XC 2,666,536; service of Charles M. Easton (Co. A, 111th NY Inf., Civil War); RG 15, NA-Washington. The full text of Easton's letter is online at <https://twelvekey.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/livingstoncountyv21n4.pdf>.

Conclusion

The content of every Civil War pension file is different, depending upon the individual circumstances of the veteran or his widow or dependents. The more difficulty an ancestor had in proving his or her need or qualifications for a pension, the more records the file contains. An answer to "Call Number 13" is just one of many possible records that may be found in a file. 🌳

Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, a senior reference and projects archivist at NARA, served as NGS registrar (1998-98) and director (1998-2000). She can be reached at cklusken@verizon.net and blogs at twelvekey.com. She would be glad to learn of other responses to Call No. 13.

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