

U.S. – Mexican War Veterans and the Congressional Pension Fight

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In 1848, United States troops returned from their victorious campaigns in Mexico. After sixteen months of combat, these men achieved President James K. Polk's goal of continental expansion by adding over one half a million square miles of land to the nation's map. Widely welcomed home as heroes, the soldiers of the U.S. – Mexican War enjoyed a popularity that masked the true divisiveness of the conflict. Sectional tensions, exacerbated by the territorial gains of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, soon overshadowed the accomplishments of the Mexican War veterans. After a short season of glory, the once-celebrated warriors faded into the shadow of the looming Civil War. The immediacy and scope of this much larger conflict ensured that it would forever eclipse the war with Mexico in the nation's collective memory.¹

The War Between the States also had a dramatic affect on how the nation viewed the Mexican War veterans. The Republican Party, in particular, evoked the U.S. – Mexican War as a means to politically undermine its Democratic rivals. Republicans charged that the conflict was a Democratic ploy to extend slavery into the West. Indeed, slave-holding states provided a disproportionate number of volunteers, and Democrats dominated the ranks of the officer corps. The U.S. – Mexican War service of famous Confederates Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, and Braxton Bragg further bolstered Republican allegations. The postbellum power struggle between the parties did little to diminish such assertions and ultimately cast a pall of disloyalty over the Mexican War veterans.²

This partisan battle and the declining status of the veterans became painfully apparent when the former soldiers campaigned for military service pensions for their aged, impoverished, or infirm comrades. Lingering sectional divisions and the fear that

former Confederates might receive federal annuities, however, turned the issue into a contentious war of words that would rage for years. This forced survivors of the U.S. – Mexican War, more than any other group of United States veterans, to prove their loyalty to the country they had served. To counter this perceived defamation, Mexican War veterans organized to change public opinion of the conflict and lobby Congress. The debates documented in the *Congressional Record* and the veterans' own political publications demonstrate how these men carefully crafted and defended their public image at a time when the United States legislators and the nation at large seemed intent on forgetting their service altogether.³

The driving force behind the organizing of Mexican War veterans was a Virginian named Alexander M. Kenaday. At the outbreak of the U.S. – Mexican War, Kenaday joined a volunteer company in New Orleans and shipped out to Matamoros, Tamaulipas, on the eastern Texas – Mexico border. Like many late arrivals to the Rio Grande, his unit failed to see action before their ninety-day enlistments expired. Disappointed, Kenaday returned to New Orleans and promptly enlisted in the Third United States Dragoons. His new unit offered the young man no shortage of action as it fought from Veracruz to Mexico City. At the assault on the Churubusco Monastery, Sergeant Kenaday distinguished himself by jumping into a burning munitions wagon and tossing out bags of black powder, averting a potentially disastrous explosion.⁴

Following the war, Kenaday set off for the goldfields of California. Finding no success in mining, he began working in the newspaper business. In 1851, he helped organize and lead the Eureka Typographical Union which established minimum pay standards for the state's typesetters. After the Civil War, Kenaday learned that medical

schools were collecting the corpses of indigent veterans in San Francisco for dissection. He shuddered at the thought of his comrades facing such an “ignoble desecration.” Using the skills he learned in union organizing, Kenaday was determined to create an association of fellow Mexican War veterans to care for their elderly brethren and provide them proper burials.⁵

The opportunity presented itself in 1866 when members of the First New York Volunteers living in San Francisco requested that fellow Mexican War veterans join them for the Fourth of July parade. At the reunion that followed, Kenaday stood before the veterans and proposed that they form an organization named the “Society of Veterans of 1846.” His emotional speech inspired some two hundred former soldiers and sailors to join his ranks. In spite of his central role in organizing the group, Kenaday preferred that men of national repute front the organization while he worked behind the scenes recruiting and fundraising.⁶

The Society of Veterans of 1846 immediately set about soliciting money to care for the aged and dying. Need soon outweighed the group’s meager coffers forcing Kenaday to search for new funding sources. He drafted a petition to the United States Congress asking it to allocate monies to build a Soldiers’ Home on the Pacific Coast similar to one that the government had built in Washington D.C. in 1851. The original home had been established using reparations collected in Mexico City, and Kenaday believed that Mexican War veterans living in the West should have access to similar services.⁷

Serious illness prevented Kenaday from undertaking his mission to the nation’s capital until the summer of 1868. The determined veteran then lobbied Congress for the

next six months. Finally in January 1869, the Senate approved the petition and sent it to Secretary of War John Aaron Rawlins. Unfortunately, Rawlins died before acting on the proposal. His successor, William Worth Belknap, had little interest in the measure. He returned the unsigned petition to the War Department where it was buried and forgotten. Undaunted, Kenaday spent the next four years unsuccessfully attempting to raise support for his Soldiers' Home in the West.⁸

With the proposal at an impasse, Kenaday decided to pressure Congress by forming another veterans' organization in Washington D.C. His first step was to seek national exposure for his fledgling group, and Ulysses S. Grant's second inauguration in March of 1873 gave him the opportunity. Kenaday successfully petitioned the planning board to include a group of Mexican War veterans to honor the President's service in the conflict. He then placed advertisements in Washington D.C. newspapers asking for support from local veterans. On Inauguration Day, approximately thirty former soldiers participated in the ceremonies.⁹

Shortly after Grant's inauguration, Pennsylvanian James S. Negley, a member of the House of Representatives and president of a veterans' group named the "Scott Legion," contacted Kenaday about service pension legislation he wished to present to Congress. Negley's bill proposed an annuity similar to that offered to veterans of the War of Independence and the War of 1812. While the Soldiers' Home could only care for men wounded in battle, a pension would assist all veterans in their old age. Negley, a Civil War general, had begun his military career fighting under Winfield Scott in Mexico. Having served in volunteer units in both conflicts, he was particularly interested in the care of irregular troops who, at times, fell outside the jurisdiction of the federal

government. Negley suggested that Kenaday use his network to create a national organization of Mexican War veterans to support his pension legislation.¹⁰

Kenaday realized that a pension could provide a viable alternative to his Soldiers' Home and jumped on the project with his characteristic zeal. After two months of planning and promotion, he convened the first meeting of the "National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War." During its initial gathering in May of 1873, the group elected General James W. Denver as president. Denver, the man for whom the capital of Colorado was named, proved a shrewd choice. He had diverse political experience including serving as a congressman, a commissioner of Indian Affairs, and the governor of the Kansas Territory. After its modest first meeting, the group planned to reunite in Washington D.C. the following January.¹¹

The 1874 National Convention proved a great success. The three-day affair included more than 250 delegates from nearly all states and territories in the nation. The one threat to the group's unity was that many of the men had been enemies during the Civil War. On the opening day, General Denver addressed the assembled veterans in an attempt to soothe the rivalries between northern and southern factions. Referring to "that war," Denver stated:

I trust that none of these differences will be brought into this Convention, and that no question of politics or other disturbing matter will be alluded to, but that our deliberations may be confined entirely to the events and consequences pertaining to the time when all were actuated by the single motive, as one man, to uphold the honor and glory of our common country and the actors in those great events.

Denver's appeal appeared to work as the delegates put aside their differences to address more immediate issues.¹²

Denver's opening speech furthermore laid out the political agenda of the group. After lauding the war's contribution to the "business pursuits" of the United States, he reminded his comrades that their service had "furnished capital for the most gigantic commercial operations" in the decades since the war. In spite of their incalculable financial contributions to the United States, he mourned the fact that a number of their fellow veterans remained in "indigent circumstances." He concluded his remarks by insisting that, "the country ought to take care of them. Their services entitle them to consideration, and it ought not to be withheld from them." The solution he proposed was the sponsorship of a pension bill.¹³

The National Association unanimously supported the drafting of a pension bill to be submitted immediately to Congress. The proposed legislation, "An Act granting Pensions to certain Soldiers and Sailors of the War of eighteen hundred and forty-six with Mexico, and the Widows of deceased Soldiers and Sailors," was more commonly referred to as the "Mexican Pension Bill." The bill promised a monthly payment of eight dollars to any man who served honorably in Mexico for at least sixty days or to his surviving widow. The group also agreed on several secondary goals including: writing an official history of the war, building a national monument to honor their accomplishments, marking the graves of American casualties in Mexico, and other activities meant to celebrate the "names and fame" of soldiers, both living and dead, who fought in the conflict.¹⁴

Politicking was not the only activity at the reunion. Veterans also heard speeches, poems, and musical tributes celebrating their exploits on Mexican battlefields. Perhaps most gratifying, they basked in their memories and rekindled old friendships. The

highlight for many attendees was Ulysses S. Grant's invitation to meet them at the White House. During Grant's administration, the popular general was inundated with requests to attend veterans' reunions across the country. His hosting of the National Association at the White House spoke to his great affection for his Mexican War comrades.

Reversing the tradition of official visitors filing in front of the President, Grant personally walked the line of his fellow veterans, introducing himself, and shaking each man's hand. He then accompanied the men to the Masonic Temple where they continued with the festivities. In high spirits the veterans adjourned with a clear political strategy, anxious to meet again the following year.¹⁵

Nine days after the convention, two Mexican War veterans presented the pension legislation to both houses of Congress. Congressman James Negley tendered the bill to the House of Representatives, while John A. Logan, a Republican from Illinois, delivered it to his colleagues in the Senate. In spite of initial interest in the Mexican Pension Bill, Congressmen eventually focused on its fiscal feasibility. Critics of the bill initially focused on the fact that Congress had previously awarded bounty land warrants to the returning veterans. One "high standing" senator allegedly told the veterans that they had "received a land grant . . . and that is enough!" When the Bureau of Pensions submitted a report that 39,000 of the original 58,000 veterans were still living, congressional support evaporated.¹⁶

Perhaps expecting the bill to pass without delay, delegates of the National Association failed to develop an effective means of fundraising to sustain their petition. This omission might have doomed the legislation had not Kenaday devoted himself fulltime to the work. In 1875, the group assessed fees to each state delegation to offset

the cost of lobbying. Still, Kenaday had to front much of the money hoping that the group would eventually reimburse him. One year later, only six states and territories had fulfilled their financial obligations. Internal bickering over money prompted the New York delegation to threaten to withdraw from the National Association entirely. Kenaday and Denver were able, however, to ease anger and keep the association together.¹⁷

In spite of fiscal distractions, Kenaday continued to focus most of his energy on the Mexican Pension Bill. Committing himself to work “at the sacrifice of any personal labor or expense,” Kenaday tirelessly hunted down veterans around the country, added them to the rolls of the National Association, and solicited their financial support. Locally, veterans worked with their states to pass resolutions encouraging senators and representatives to approve the pending legislation. As the fight for the service pension continued into the 1880s, more state legislatures submitted petitions to Congress urging the passage of the bill.¹⁸

The protracted Congressional debate allowed both allies and enemies of the Mexican Pension Bill to manipulate the memory of the war to conform to their respective agendas. Throughout the 1870s and 80s, two vastly conflicting images of the veterans evolved in Congress. Opponents of the bill portrayed the veterans as being vigorous, wealthy, southerners who deserted their former flag to secede from the Union. Supporters, on the other hand, portrayed the old soldiers as ailing, impoverished, patriots who hailed from all parts of the nation. Caught in the middle, the veterans proved unwilling to remain passive pawns. Through their comrades and allies in Congress, veterans’ organizations took an active role in crafting a public image to support their quest for a pension.¹⁹

Prior to the Civil War, Mexican War veterans sought to be remembered for their battlefield bravery and exploits. As the pension moved to the forefront of the veterans' agenda, they focused more on the financial windfall that the war brought the nation. Within weeks of introducing the Mexican Pension Bill, congressional supporters submitted a report to their colleagues that asked:

For what consideration would the General Government part with this 937,785 square miles, with its two millions of people and untold resources, and commanding position in the continent, holding in its arms the gateway to the great empires of the East? No money consideration could buy it at all; its value is beyond price; we could not do without it; we can see in it a bright and glorious future of a dense population, containing all the true characteristics of wealth, refinement and a high order of civilization. No war with a foreign country has produced such results in so short a time, and no troops acquitted themselves with more honor and made more sacrifices during that period of their services.

The economic gains of the war would become the primary focus of pension supporters throughout their long fight in Congress.²⁰

Speeches extolling the riches of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo also became popular at reunions. In an 1876 oration to the Louisiana Associated Veterans of the Mexican War, former President of the Confederate States of America Jefferson Davis declared that the results of the conflict included,

the acquisition by purchase of that great land of California, a land of promise and of golden fulfillment. Not only has the gold of California been poured into your treasury as a material result of this war, but exploration and development of the whole territory lying between the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific Coast is a consequence of that acquisition. It has thus made us one of the greatest contributors in the world in adding to its specie.

Davis further decried the nation's lack of appreciation for the veterans and claimed "there was a time when to be a soldier in the war with Mexico was a passport throughout the

length and breadth of the land. Why is it then that these veterans are without the poor reward of a pension?"²¹

In March 1878, Denver and Kenaday used this same argument when they submitted a petition to Congress regarding the Mexican Pension Bill. In the document, they rhetorically asked, "What did we gain by the war?" They then cited numerous statistics regarding territory, population, and mineral wealth of the Mexican cession. Finally they placed a numerical value on the territory at \$1,500,000,000. The men argued that the United States could afford modest pensions for the warriors who secured such a fortune for the nation.²²

Supporters of the bill also had to convince Congress that the 1874 Bureau of Pensions' report of 39,000 survivors was a gross overestimation. After three years of collecting its own data, the National Association countered with statistics claiming that there were only 9,000 veterans living. The organization further used language that stressed the advanced age of the survivors. In a petition submitted to Congress, the National Association declared that a Mexican War pension would be a short-lived burden on the nation as it would only be paid to elderly veterans "during the brief remainder of their natural lives." A favorable report from the Committee on Invalid Pensions echoed this sentiment by claiming, "there are eight or ten thousand old soldiers, far advanced beyond the meridian of life, now in penury and want."²³

Llewellyn Powers, a Republican Representative from Maine, expressed the feelings of many congressional opponents of the Mexican Pension Bill. He scoffed at the notion that the veterans were a small handful of dying paupers. He asserted the pension was too expensive to implement so close to the end of the war when survivors were yet in

“the prime of life.” He recommended that a pension would be more appropriately granted in 1905 when the men would truly be old. This prompted John Luttrell, a Democrat from California, to ask if they should “wait until all of these survivors die before we make any provision for them?” The absurdity of the charge elicited laughter from the legislators.²⁴

Pension data collected after 1887 suggests that both sides exaggerated their statistics during the debate. The actual number of veterans alive at this time was most likely midway between the extreme estimates. Between 1887 and 1902 the Bureau of Pensions awarded 20,533 pensions to Mexican War veterans. As far as the ages of the former soldiers, when the legislation was introduced in 1874 the youngest veterans would have been in their early-forties, with a projected average life expectancy in their mid-sixties. More senior soldiers would have been considerably older and, had they reached their sixties by 1875, could expect to live another decade. These facts had little bearing on congressional polemics, however, and both sides stood fast to their disparate statistics.²⁵

The veterans themselves helped foster the image of their advancing age. At the 1883 Convention of the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War, the delegates discussed where to hold their next meeting. Until this time, most of these reunions had taken place in Washington D.C. One delegate worried that by holding the meetings in the nation’s capital that “congressmen only see here the youngest and most vigorous of the veterans, which was calculated to prejudice the object we have in view.” Another seconded the motion exclaiming that “intelligent representatives in Congress would be influenced against the cause of the veterans, by the appearance of the men.”

After giving the idea some consideration, Kenaday nonetheless opted to keep the organization headquartered in Washington D.C.²⁶

This discussion revealed the challenge faced by the National Association. Healthy, middle-aged and elderly men with the leisure and means for travel hardly inspired the sympathy of Congress. The veterans therefore had to control their own image by shifting the public focus to their declining fortunes and old age. One way they did this was by combining their bill with pension legislation for veterans of the Seminole and Black Hawk wars of the 1830s. By associating with soldiers of the previous generation the Mexican War veterans claimed that they too were in decline and in need. Linking themselves to a more distant past also helped the veterans escape the perception that they had widely supported the Confederacy during the later Civil War.²⁷

Sectional and partisan differences, nevertheless, moved to the forefront of the debate. Northern Republicans projected that two-thirds of pension recipients would be southerners, and they found the prospect of former Confederates drawing annuities from the United States government to be particularly galling. As such, opponents of the legislation repeatedly accused the veterans of the Mexican conflict of disloyalty during the Civil War.²⁸

Republican Representative Charles Joyce, a Union veteran from Vermont, proved typical of opponents when he charged, “it is proposed by this bill, to pension all these men who fought to destroy it [the Union] whether invalids or not . . . granting privileges to the Confederate which we deny to and withhold from the Union soldier.” He further exclaimed that pensioning Mexican War veterans “is only the entering wedge to pry open the vaults of the Treasury for the payment of all sorts of southern claims.” He compared

the disloyal veterans to Benedict Arnold and asked if Congress should have given the Revolutionary War traitor a pension as well. The partisanship exasperated Democrat John Goode, a former Confederate Colonel from Virginia, who stood and asked, “will this cruel war never be over?”²⁹

Particularly troubling for Republican critics of the legislation was that Jefferson Davis might be eligible for annuities. While several high profile Union and Confederate officers and officials had fought with distinction in Mexico, there was no greater surviving hero than Davis. During the second day at Buena Vista, Davis and his 1st Mississippi Rifle Regiment repelled a Mexican lancer charge that shifted the momentum of the battle. Davis suffered a serious wound in the fight and returned home one of the nation’s most celebrated warriors.³⁰

When seventy-year-old Davis heard that his name was invoked to deny his Mexican War comrades their pensions, he sent a petition to his representative in Congress, Otho Robards Singleton. The Mississippi Democrat read Davis’s letter to the House of Representatives: “I am quite unwilling that personal objections to me by members of Congress should defeat the proposed measure to grant pensions to the veterans of the war against Mexico.” Davis then renounced his claim to the pension noting that he was formerly eligible for a disability pension after the war but had refused it because of his comfortable income. While Congress largely dropped Davis from the conversation about the bill, the perception of the disloyal Mexican War veteran remained.³¹

One member of Congress was in a particularly strong position to combat the seditious image of the Mexican War veteran. Missouri Senator James Shields had served

as a general during the U.S. – Mexican War where he was wounded at the battles of Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec. Contrary to the Republican stereotype of Mexican War veterans who joined the Confederacy, Shields remained steadfast to the Union and served as a general during the Civil War. Although a Democrat, Shields maintained an impeccable record as a loyal soldier and civil servant of the United States.³²

On February 20, 1879, General Shields stood before the Senate and discussed the men he had commanded in two wars. He reminded his colleagues that

the soldiers of the last war have been treated by Congress with justice, and, in my opinion, with very commendable liberality. The soldiers of the Mexican War have not been so treated. Those soldiers served their country, and have received nothing in the way of generosity at the hands of the Congress of the United States. I wonder not at seeing the services of young soldiers handsomely rewarded; but the wonder is at seeing the services of old soldiers almost forgotten.

Shields then reproved the report of the Bureau of Pensions stating that its inflated statistics represented “a larger army of Mexican veterans alive today, than ever stood on Mexican soil with arms in their hands.” Playing to the aged image of the veterans, the sixty-eight-year-old recited the names of the senior officers during the war and reminded the Senate that he alone remained alive.³³

Shields praised his old comrades, boasting that “no government ever sent an army into a foreign country better, braver, nobler than the army America sent to Mexico.” In addition to describing the tremendous wealth these warriors brought the nation, he characterized the “simple, honest, brave, manly, generous, and humane” soldiers as having uncommon integrity. In an obvious exaggeration, he declared,

I do not think in all America you will find one of them in the penitentiary. They would die before they would commit a crime. Some of them may die in the poor house, but you may take my word for it no soldier of this

nation who fought in the battles of Mexico will ever die the inmate of an American penitentiary.

He further stated that “no army ever invaded a foreign country that committed so few offenses as the army that operated in Mexico.”³⁴

Shields concluded his remarks with an appeal meant to reinforce the idea that these men were venerable patriarchs nearing death’s door.

The remnant of that army, the army which did so much for this country, speak as it were through me today, hold up their hands in supplication to this body and this Congress and say, ‘Give us a little of that we helped secure for our country; give us a small pittance before we leave the world; give us a pittance to help us on the downward path of life in our old age; give us something to assist us in our last days when we are marching to that field from which no warrior has ever yet returned victorious, and never will.’

The senator skillfully painted a graphic portrait of the honorable veteran suffering in obscurity while the nation enjoyed the fruits of his sacrifice. He appealed to the lawmakers’ sense of justice by portraying the veterans as unfortunate victims of age and circumstance. The message was clear: dishonor would never dim the glory of these deserving men, only the inaction of an ungrateful nation could accomplish that.³⁵

Shield’s speech had its desired effect on Congress, and the bill garnered enough support for a majority vote. Facing defeat, however, Republican leadership rallied and called a caucus. After a fierce inner-party debate, enough Republican supporters withdrew their votes, once again killing the bill for that legislative session.³⁶

Kenaday was furious with the Republicans and vowed to continue the fight. Turning to his training as a newspaper publisher, he founded *The Vedette*, the official voice of the National Associations of Veterans of the Mexican War. The first issue had

an estimated readership of 10,000. It began with a poem that set the tone for the newspaper:

Come then, brave “Veterans” of ‘Forty-six,
Shoulder your arms, and fight your battles o’er,
In the fresh combat now your colors fix,
Above stale politicians’ empty roar,
Ne’er to descend until your nation’s hand,
Shall own and recompense your noble band!

Kenaday’s message was clear: the veterans deserved compensation for their service regardless of how the “stale” Republicans voted.³⁷

Kenaday recognized that sectional rivalries had doomed the Mexican Pension Bill to failure. His first order of business was to heal any lingering divisions within his own ranks. The premiere issue of *The Vedette* contained a poem entitled “The Blue and the Gray,” by F. M. Finch. The poem compared the grave of a Union soldier with that of a Confederate soldier and stressed the equality of both men in death. The last stanza read:

No more shall the war cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red;
They banish our anger forever,
When they laurel the graves of our dead!
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting for the judgment-day,
Love and tears for the Blue,
Tears and love for the Gray!

Clearly “waving of the bloody shirt” following the Civil War had undermined Kenaday and the veterans’ work. While the former soldiers sought to overcome sectionalism to benefit their plans, they additionally argued that granting a pension “would bring about a reconciliation between the two sections of our country more happily than any other act upon the part of the Government.”³⁸

In addressing the Second Annual Reunion of the National Association, Colonel W. L. Tidball focused on the contributions of his comrades in the Civil War.

The survivors of the Mexican War on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line . . . were the first to rush into the conflict and the last to lay down their arms; and it is estimated, by the help of what are supposed to be well authenticated facts, that the loss by death among them, in both contending armies, was very much greater in proportion to the number engaged than of any other class of contestants.

While his assertion was meant to infer that Congress had incorrect statistics on the number of surviving pension candidates, it additionally addressed the veterans' desire to be recognized as legitimate war heroes in the North as well as the South.³⁹

The National Association's appeal to sectional unity was in keeping with a grassroots trend toward reconciliation among Civil War veterans. Beginning in the 1880s, Civil War reunions often included the former soldiers of both armies. According to historian David W. Blight, these "Blue – Gray" reunions "buttressed the nonideological memory of the war." For white Americans this reconciliation came at the expense of African Americans who suffered under the growing burden of Jim Crow in the 1880s. Regardless of how they felt about evolving race relations, veterans of the U.S. – Mexican War mainly promoted the nonideological memory of the Civil War in the 1870s and 80s to achieve congressional support of the Pension Bill.⁴⁰

In spite of his rhetoric of reconciliation, Kenaday turned *The Vedette* into a weapon to attack the Republican Party. During the 1880 election, the newspaper supported Democrat Winfield Scott Hancock's losing campaign against Republican James Garfield. In 1884, Kenaday alleged that Republican candidate James G. Blaine "evinced considerable antipathy to the Mexican veterans" and attacked his candidacy. In addition to political campaigning, the old journalist was known for printing cruel and

personal invectives against anyone he perceived as hostile to his cause. Not all former soldiers agreed with Kenaday's politics, and he made enemies among some northern veterans. Still, he enjoyed the continued support of the National Association.⁴¹

Throughout the early 1880s, the Senate debate over the Mexican Pension Bill remained highly partisan with Republican-led majorities continuing to reject the legislation whenever it came up for a vote. During the 1880s, the Mexican Pension Bill had no greater foe in Congress than Republican Senator George Frisbee Hoar of Massachusetts. Hoar was a strong-willed legislator who served in Congress for thirty-five years. Like many of his Republican colleagues, he suspected the legislation to be a Confederate plot and rejected outright the idea that the majority of veterans were elderly paupers needing help from Congress.⁴²

When Democratic Senator Daniel Voorhees of Indiana made the oft-repeated appeal to his colleagues that these veterans with "grey locks on their honored heads" desired a mere "pittance" to sustain them in their poverty, Hoar went on the offensive. He countered that his neighbor in Massachusetts was a forty-eight-year-old veteran of the Mexican War. He described the unnamed soldier as

a giant in strength, of vigorous health, with I have no doubt a stronger constitution and greater prospect of life and health in the future than any member of this body. He was a man in affluent circumstances . . . He joined with me in emphatic disapprobation of the careless and reckless legislation which would put a man like him on the pension roll of the government.

Hoar then described a Civil War veteran whose frame had diminished to four feet tall because of the deprivations of his service and suggested that pensions were better suited for Union soldiers. Weeks later he accused the Democrats of trying to put "millionaire veterans" on the pension rolls.⁴³

Hoar's allegations infuriated the Democrats. John Stuart Williams of Kentucky was particularly indignant. Williams had served as a colonel in the U.S. – Mexican War where his heroism fighting along the National Road earned him the nickname "Cerro Gordo Williams." His former glory held little sway with the Republicans who recalled more clearly his service as a Confederate general. Nonetheless, Williams took the lead in attacking the senator from Massachusetts.⁴⁴

Williams began his comments sadly noting the fact that Mexican War veterans had been eclipsed by Civil War veterans. He then declared that the average age of survivors was sixty-five years and claimed that "after sixty-five years, there cannot be much marrow left in an old soldier's bones." He further alleged that Hoar had exaggerated the youthfulness of his neighbor who had fought in the war. He declared, "I do not know how it is in warlike Massachusetts, but down in Kentucky we keep our small boys at home to wait on their mothers and send grown men only to the wars." He scoffed at the notion of millionaire survivors stating that "a few of the veterans are independent of the nation's bounty, but the great majority of them are extremely poor men."⁴⁵

Echoing Senator Shield's speech, Williams reminded his fellow lawmakers that Taylor and Scott "contested every inch of ground with a race inured to hardships and familiar with war, commanded by Santa Anna, the most famous captain of the age, who was sustained by subaltern educated in the highest schools of modern military science."

In a bit of embellishment, now common to the debate, he declared:

This war was not more marked by for the splendor of its achievement than for the humanity of its conduct. War and not barbarianism bore our victorious banner through Mexico. We made war upon the organized forces of the enemy and not upon the people and property of the country. Private property and church property were everywhere respected by our victorious soldiers. Our camps were safe and attractive markets to the

people for all they had to sell. Nothing was taken without a full equivalent being paid for it. I doubt if any friendly army ever marched through its own country with so little damage to the people as ours did through Mexico.

According to Williams, only 8,000 veterans remained alive. The passage of the Mexican Pension Bill was merely a “long-delayed justice” to keep these extraordinary men from the poorhouse “now that they are old and infirm.”⁴⁶

How “old and infirm” the veterans actually were remained a much-debated and difficult to answer question. As much as Williams berated Senator Hoar and the people of Massachusetts for sending “boys” to war, he often stressed his own youth at the time of his enlistment. After a particularly heated debate in 1882, Williams stood and declared that “all those soldiers are sixty years of age and older. I am over that myself, and I was one of the youngest boys who went to war.” In reality, Williams was nearly twenty-eight at the outbreak of hostilities, and men much younger than him filled the ranks of American forces during the conflict and its surviving veterans. Still, to prove his point that all veterans were in their sixties, Williams was fond of discussing his “boyhood” in Mexico.⁴⁷

Once young and brave in their nation’s service, the veterans now claimed they were in poor health and circumstances. Veterans’ advocates inferred cause and effect – the war in Mexico had taken its toll on these men and made the circumstances of a nation’s ingratitude and unfortunate circumstances of their old age more difficult to bear. Democratic Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama declared that, “they had hard service in every particular, hard marches, and a hard climate. They were young and unseasoned, and it is no wonder that so few of them came back or that those who did come back have become prematurely old.” As victims, the veterans were worthy of public support. The

pension was not charity, but a means to compensate the old men fairly for their sacrifices.⁴⁸

During the early 1880s, Republicans opposed the Mexican Pension Bill because they believed that Civil War veterans were more worthy of service pensions. Senator George Frisbee Hoar perhaps expressed the Republican position best when he stated, “if you open this door to the soldier of the Mexican War you cannot shut it in the face of the soldiers of the war for the Union.” Adding an estimated one million Civil War veterans to the pension rolls was clearly an impossibility, however, and Democrats realized this was a tactic to undermine all pension legislation. Nonetheless, this touched off a partisan debate about which group of soldiers had contributed most to the United States.⁴⁹

After hearing once again of the singular exploits of the Mexican veterans, Senator Charles Van Wyck, a Republican from Nebraska and former Union General, became defensive. Praising his own soldiers, he argued, “they added not one more stripe nor one more star to the flag, but they rescued the whole flag from destruction by which it was imperiled. The soldier of the Mexican War added a part; the Union soldier gathered in and saved the whole.” Such rhetoric did little more than fuel lingering sectionalism and stall the legislation in endless debate.⁵⁰

Ironically, it was the Civil War veterans who eventually turned the political tide in the favor of Mexican Pension Bill. In 1883, individual posts of the Grand Army of the Republic – the Union veterans’ organization – began to support the cause of their Mexican War comrades. While several state legislatures had sent petitions to their congressmen asking for their support of the bill, it took the endorsement of the Civil War veterans to break down resistance. From the perspective of GAR members, the passage

of a service pension for the Mexican War veterans would firmly establish a precedent that would benefit them in their eventual quest for a pension. The Forty-Seventh and Forty-Eighth Congresses witnessed an outpouring of Civil War veteran support, prompting one representative to declare “there have been more petitions for the passage of this bill” than any other legislation he had seen.⁵¹

By the mid-1880s, the passage of the Mexican Pension Bill was a foregone conclusion. All that was left was for lawmakers to reach consensus on the final form of the legislation – a process that would continue through additional congressional sessions. Not all Republicans accepted their inevitable loss with graciousness. Indiana Congressman Thomas Browne, a former Union General, lashed out angrily at the Democrats: “It is because you cannot get your rebel soldiery on any other pension roll. That is the reason of it, and you know it and I know it.” Kansas Senator John Ingalls complained in words that would be echoed in Ulysses S. Grant’s *Personal Memoirs*,

I think that a more indefensible war of spoliation and robbery and conquest was never waged by a great people against a defenseless and powerless neighbor. It was a party war waged by one of the political organizations of this country in defense of and for the purpose of extending the limits and aggrandizing the system of human slavery.⁵²

By the end, however, such outbursts were rare. Instead, the Mexican Pension Bill seemed to be a step toward healing the nation’s Civil War wounds. In one of the last debates over the legislation, Democratic Congressman Frank Lane Wolford, a Mexican War veteran and Union Colonel, asked his comrades to lay down their sectional animosities forever:

These old men, for most of them are now old, served their country in a foreign land. They endured hardships and privations. They endured them as one people, coming from the North and South, from the East and the West, with one object in their hearts – to obey their country’s call, to

vindicate their country's honor, and protect the rights of their fellow citizens. . . . I wish to ask my Union friends, why should you, after a cooling down time of more than twenty years, still show your hatred toward your southern brother?

Wolford's request addressed a growing trend toward national reconciliation. The partisan fight over the memory of Mexican War veterans had finally ceased.⁵³

With victory in their grasp, many veterans nonetheless felt betrayed by Congress. A large reunion of Mexican War soldiers at Monterey, California, during the summer of 1886 gave some indication as to their temperament. While Californians celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the United States occupation of their state, Edwin A. Sherman, the President of the Associated Veterans of the Mexican War publicly attacked congressional treatment of the old warriors. He lamented that "their services are forgotten, and ingrate demagogues in power regret that we still live." He then singled out the "degenerate son of Massachusetts" Senator George Frisbee Hoar for particular scorn. After recounting the recent death of one of his comrades in a San Francisco alms-house, he declared that Hoar intended "to strike down every tottering war-torn veteran of the Mexican War in his old age, and consign him to a pauper's refuge in a pauper's grave." He concluded by stating that "when a nation commences to forget its heroes its decay has already begun."⁵⁴

In spite of lingering resentments, the bill moved through Congress. In 1887, after twenty-one years of fighting for his fellow veterans, Kenaday witnessed the passage of the service pension. Democratic President Grover Cleveland, whose candidacy *The Vedette* supported, signed the "Mexican War Survivors Act" into law. For Kenaday, the triumph proved bittersweet. The new law excluded younger men from benefits, but allowed former soldiers over the age of sixty-two, surviving widows, and disabled

veterans of any age to receive a monthly allotment of eight dollars. Kenaday immediately began filing applications for potential pensioners. Within months of the law's passage, he had filed some 2,500 applications at a fee of ten dollars each. At the height of disbursements in 1890, the federal government paid over 17,000 monthly pension payments to Mexican War veterans.⁵⁵

Following the passage of the Mexican Pension Bill, the National Association continued as a social organization. The ranks of the group thinned as old soldiers died. By the early twentieth century, the group began to hold joint reunions with the Grand Army of the Republic, the veterans' organization of Union soldiers that ultimately helped them receive their pensions. After years of activism, the elderly veterans were happy to set politicking aside and spend their final years visiting with old comrades and rehashing exciting tales of their youths.⁵⁶

In April 1893, a frail Alexander M. Kenaday decided that it was time to close the doors of *The Vedette*. The old soldier printed his final editorial stating that he had, "labored like a Trojan to place the veterans of Mexico on an equality with the soldiers of the late war at least from a *financial* point of view." In spite of the nation overlooking the contributions of the Mexican War veterans, the old soldiers at least earned an equitable pension. Emboldened by his legislative victory, Kenaday had continued to fight for additional benefits. In January 1893, Congress passed a law increasing the Mexican War pension to twelve dollars a month for disabled or impoverished veterans. Shortly thereafter, Kenaday contracted pneumonia and nearly died. Following decades of political activism on behalf of his fellow veterans, Kenaday finally lay down for some much needed rest.⁵⁷

The fight for the Mexican Pension Bill highlighted how Americans manipulated the remembrance of the U.S. – Mexican War for political and economic gains. In Congress, memory became a means to fight sectional partisan battles. By equating Mexican War veterans with the Confederate States of America, congressmen perpetuated antebellum sectional rivalries and power struggles between the Republicans and Democrats. In the midst of legislative bickering, it was imperative that veterans themselves control how their service was remembered. Not wanting to be stereotyped as a “southern” army fighting a war of slavery for the Democrats, they used the press, public speeches, and congressional petitions to create and promote their own public image. Although the Mexican War veterans prevailed in their pension fight, they ultimately failed to recapture their former prominence. As Civil War veterans continued to dominate the national consciousness, the old warriors of 1846 – 1848 quietly accepted their pensions and faded from public view.⁵⁸

¹ This study frequently uses the outmoded “Mexican War” in lieu of “U.S. – Mexican War” when referencing the veterans. This is the label the soldiers themselves adopted and is therefore preserved in the text. This article is synthesized from Michael Scott Van Wagenen, “Remembering the Forgotten War: Memory and the United States – Mexican War, 1848 – 2008” (doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, 2009).

² Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico*, vol. II (NY: The MacMillan Company, 1919) 319. Historians have criticized Smith’s overt racism and imperialism, but his statistical data on United States forces remains an important contribution to the field. Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk’s Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997) 75-80.

³ Works addressing Mexican War veterans include Wallace E. Davies, “The Mexican War Veterans as an Organized Group,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, September 1948 and Steven R. Butler, “Alexander M. Kenaday and the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War,” *Mexican War Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3, Spring 2001.

⁴ Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico was the flashpoint of the war. Its defense led to the Siege of Fort Texas and the Battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War, *Origin and Progress of the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War* (Washington DC, 1887) 3-5.

⁵ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6.

⁶ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6.

⁷ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6; United States Department of Defense, “U.S. Soldiers’ and Airmens’ Home (USSAH) Washington DC,” <http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/heroes/history1.html> (accessed May 2, 2008); Alexander M. Kenaday, *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Veterans of the Mexican War, Held in the City of Washington, February 22d and 23d, 1875* (Washington DC: John H. Cunningham, 1875) 12.

⁸ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6. The House of Representatives eventually impeached Belknap, see Asher C. Hinds, *Hind’s Precedents*, 5 vols., Washington DC: United States Congress, 1907, Volume III, Chapter LXXVII, 902-47.

⁹ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6; Alexander M. Kenaday, *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Veterans of the Mexican War, Held in the City of Washington, January 15, 16 and 17, 1874* (Washington DC: John H. Cunningham, 1874) 4.

¹⁰ Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 4; NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 2, 6; United States Congress, “Biographical Directory of the United States Congress – Negley, James Scott,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=N000024> (accessed May 4, 2008); Negley would spend half of his congressional career serving on the board of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, a federal institution which cared for invalid volunteers of the Civil War. United States Department of Veterans Affairs, “National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers,” <http://www.va.gov/facmgt/historic/NHDVS.asp> (accessed May 8, 2008).

¹¹ The group name is shortened to “National Association” in much of the remaining text. NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 3-6; the most recent biography of Denver is Edward Magruder Cook, ed., *Justified by Honor: Highlights in the Life of General James William Denver* (Falls Church, Va.: Higher Education Publications, 1988).

¹² NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6-7; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 6-8.

¹³ Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 6-7, 13-15.

¹⁴ These goals evolved over the organization’s first year, but are easily synthesized from their early literature. See Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 21-22, 30; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 29-30, 36.

¹⁵ Kenaday was in contact with President Grant as early as 1868 regarding his proposed Soldiers’ Home. See Grant, Ulysses S. *Ulysses S. Grant Papers*, Microform ,32 reels, Washington DC: Library of Congress, vol. 19, 324; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 4-29; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 17. For examples of invitations extended to Grant by Civil War veterans see: Grant Papers, vol. 23, 95-96, 173, 246, 288-89.

¹⁶ Logan had been a Democrat prior to the Civil War but switched parties in 1862. The bill was submitted as H. R. No. 577; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 21-22, 30; NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6-7; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 10-13, 15, 18; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 43d Congress, 1st session, 1874, vol. III, 922; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1878* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1878) 83-84. There remains some controversy as to whether or not the Committee on Invalid Pensions exaggerated these numbers. In 1884, it still claimed that 36,550 veterans remained alive. U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 4506. Exact numbers of survivors are hard to assess. Justin Smith found that some 90,000 men (31,000 regulars and 59,000 volunteers) served in the United States forces, but that approximately 32,000 died, deserted, or were discharged early. See Smith, *War With Mexico*, vol. II, 318-19. Winders similarly counted 88,000 regular and volunteer troops combined. See Winders, *Mr.*

Polk's Army, 11. Federal records show the largest number of veterans on pension rolls were 17,158 in 1890. See William H. Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918) 119.

¹⁷ Records show that the defiant New Yorkers remained in arrears with the organization; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1874*, 21-22, 30; NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6-7; Alexander M. Kenaday, "Centennial Reunion" of the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War, *Third Annual Session, Philadelphia July 4, 1876* (Washington DC: Cunningham & Brashears, 1876) 3, 24-26, 28-29.

¹⁸ For examples of these state petitions see: Legislature of the State of Texas, *Pensions of the War with Mexico, Joint Resolution of the Legislature of Texas* (Austin?, 1875); Legislature of the State of Kentucky, *Resolution of the Legislature of Kentucky in Relation to Pensions to Soldiers of the Mexican War* (n.p. 1876); *Mr. Cockrell presented the following memorial and resolutions of the Mexican Veteran Volunteer Association of the state of Missouri* (Washington DC?, 1898); U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 47th Congress, 2d session, 1883, vol. XIV, 2137.

¹⁹ For examples see U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1043; and compare to U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1039; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3d session, 1879, vol. VIII, 1627-28.

²⁰ Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 15-16, 27. For examples of the these appeals see, U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 1st session, 1877, vol. VI, 429; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1038-39; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 2384; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 3960-61; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 50.

²¹ Jefferson Davis, *The Address on the Mexican War and its Results, as Delivered by the Hon. Jefferson Davis, Before the Louisiana Associated Veterans of the Mexican War, at Exposition Hall, New Orleans, Tuesday, March 7th, 1876* (New Orleans: L. McGrane, 1876) 4, 15.

²² *The Vedette*, October 1879.

²³ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 1st session, 1877, vol. VI, 222-23; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1039.

²⁴ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1043.

²⁵ Bureau of Pensions to the National Association of Mexican War Veterans, 22 September 1902, Mrs. Moore Murdock Papers, TSLA. In 1890 there were still over 17,000 veterans still on pension rolls; Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions*, 119. The youngest veteran uncovered in this research was William J. Wilkinson who claimed to have been discharged following the Battle of Buena Vista at the age of fifteen, Web Jarvis to David R. Francis, 13 September 1904, Mrs. Moore Murdock Papers, TSLA. The life expectancies were collected by the University of Oregon, "Mapping History – Life Expectancy Graphs," <http://www.uoregon.edu/~maphist/english/US/US39-01.html> (accessed August 23, 2010).

²⁶ *The Vedette*, 21 December 1883.

²⁷ In 1877, the Mexican War pension was part of H. R. No. 2283 "granting pensions to certain soldiers and sailors of the Mexican, Florida, Black Hawk wars." The legislation remained linked to these wars intermittently throughout the next decade. U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 44th Congress, 2d session, 1877, vol. V, 428.

²⁸ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6-7; *The Vedette*, October 1879; Mary R. Dearing, *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the G.A.R.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952) 337; Kenaday, *Centennial Reunion*, 30-32.

²⁹ Examples of sectionalism are common throughout the debate. For examples see U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1044-46, 1315-20, 1386; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 4481-83.

³⁰ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1046, 1316, 1425. For antebellum praise of Davis see Carleton, *Battle of Buena Vista*, 74-79.

³¹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 2d session, 1878, vol. VII, 1423.

³² United States Congress, "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress – Shields, James," <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000362> (accessed September 4, 2008). Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) 444-45.

³³ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3d session, 1879, vol. VIII, 1627.

³⁴ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3d session, 1879, vol. VIII, 1627-28.

³⁵ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 45th Congress, 3d session, 1879, vol. VIII, 1628.

³⁶ Instead of supporting the Mexican War veterans, the senators voted to increase the pension for disabled Union veterans of the Civil War. There was one small victory that session when Congress approved an act that paid service bonuses promised to some soldiers and sailors in 1848. NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 2, 6-7; *The Vedette*, October 1879.

³⁷ "Vedette" means a sentinel or sentry. NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 7; *The Vedette*, October 1879. The most complete collections of *The Vedette* are in the Special Collections of California State University Long Beach and in the Mrs. Moore Murdock Papers at the Texas State Library and Archives.

³⁸ *The Vedette*, October 1879; Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 10, 16.

³⁹ Kenaday, *Proceedings 1875*, 22.

⁴⁰ Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 103, 127.

⁴¹ Wallace E. Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans as an Organized Group." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 35, no. 2 (September 1948) 229-31; NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 7; Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*, 211-12; NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 7; Steven R. Butler, "Alexander M. Kenaday and the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War," *Mexican War Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3 (spring 2001) 13; Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*, 336-37; *The Vedette*, February 1888. In the National Association's early years, a small group of men attended the meetings specifically to harass Kenaday and challenge his war record. The claims worried James Denver enough that he surreptitiously wrote a letter to Kenaday's commanding officer asking for details of his service record. While the contents of the reply remain unknown, Denver was satisfied enough to put his full faith behind his comrade; James W. Denver to Colonel William G. Mosely, 15 April 1878, Mrs. Moore Murdock Papers, TSLA.

⁴² Democrats were likewise guilty of playing politics with war pensions. In a bit of congressional *quid pro quo*, many southern Democrats opposed Republican legislation granting pensions to Civil War veterans since these annuities would be awarded exclusively to Union soldiers. NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 6-7; Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*, 336-37; *Dallas Morning News*, 3 October 1894; United States Congress, "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress – Hoar, George Frisbee,"

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000654> (accessed September 9, 2008); U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 1570-71.

⁴³ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 2384-5, 4432, 4474-76.

⁴⁴ Benjamin F. Van Meter, *Genealogies and Sketches of Some Old Families who Have Taken Prominent Part in the Development of Virginia and Kentucky . . .* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton, 1901).

⁴⁵ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 3960-61.

⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 3960-61; Williams delivered a similar speech in 1884, U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 4510-12.

⁴⁷ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 47th Congress, 1st session, 1882, vol. XIII, 1336; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 5519-20.

⁴⁸ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 4613.

⁴⁹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d session, 1879-80, vol. X, 4432, 4474-78.

⁵⁰ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 4516-17. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 524-25.

⁵¹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 47th Congress, 2d session, 1883, vol. XIV, 2137; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 5519-20; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 2d session, 1884-85, vol. XVI, 101, 428, 456, 1035, 1045, 1278, 2326.

⁵² U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 1st session, 1884, vol. XV, 1570-71, 4511.

⁵³ *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, John E. Kleber, ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992) 963; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 49th Congress, 1st session, 1885-86, vol. XVII, 1878.

⁵⁴ Associated Veterans of the Mexican War, *History of the Joint Anniversary Celebration at Monterey, Cal.* (San Francisco: Fraternal Publishing Company, 1886) 20.

⁵⁵ NAVMW, *Origin and Progress*, 2, 7-8; Butler, "Alexander M. Kenaday," 13; *Dallas Morning News*, 15 August 1897; Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions*, 119.

⁵⁶ Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans," 224-25.

⁵⁷ Kenaday died in 1897. It remains unclear how many veterans belonged to the organization during its existence. Estimates vary from 5,000 to 17,000. *The Vedette*, April 1893; Alexander M. Kenaday to Representative Benton McMillin, 6 February 1897, Mrs. Moore Murdock Papers, TSLA; Butler, "Alexander M. Kenaday," 14; Davies, "The Mexican War Veterans," 223-24.

⁵⁸ The declining years of the Mexican War veterans are explored further in Van Wagenen, "Remembering the Forgotten War," Chapter 6: Empire and Exclusion in the United States, 1896-1929.