



Presidential Pardons and Congressional Amnesty to Former Confederate Citizens, 1865–1877

Several proclamations issued during and after the Civil War by Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson offered pardons to certain classes of Confederate citizens until December 25, 1868, when President Johnson granted unconditional amnesty to all remaining participants of the rebellion. Ex-Confederates petitioned the President directly for pardons; the War Department received and processed their applications through the Adjutant General's Office. The Department of State also received, registered, and filed the amnesty oaths required by some of the proclamations as well as copies of Presidential pardons.

In the postwar years Congress also played an important role in extending amnesty. The 14th Amendment, ratified on July 28, 1868, prohibited former civil and military officeholders who supported the Confederacy from again holding any state or Federal office. The amendment, however, also allowed Congress to remove this political disability by a two-thirds vote in both Houses. Between 1868 and 1872, a number of ex-Confederates applied for and received such congressional amnesty. A General Amnesty Act of May 22, 1872 (17 Stat. 142), removed this office-holding restriction for all but a few hundred individuals.

Presidential Pardons

Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Record Group 94)

___M1003, *Case Files of Applications from Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons ("Amnesty Papers")*, 1865–1867. 73 rolls. DP. This publication reproduces applications for pardons submitted to President Andrew Johnson by former Confederates excluded from an amnesty proclamation of May 29, 1865. The files are arranged alphabetically by state or territory, then alphabetically by petitioner, and include such documentation as applications, affidavits, oaths of allegiance, recommendations for executive clemency, and other accompanying papers. **Roll 1** contains a name index to the application files.

General Records of the Department of State (Record Group 59)

Textual records for RG 59 are fully described in Inventory 15, *Inventory of the General Records of the Department of State, 1789–1949*. These records are only available at the National Archives Building in College Park, Maryland; they have not been microfilmed.

___**Amnesty Oaths, 1864–66** (I-15, Entry 1001).

This series includes individual signed oaths of allegiance to the United States, each containing name, date, signature, and number of oath. The oaths are arranged alphabetically by state and then alphabetically by name of oath taker.

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___Multi-Signature Amnesty Oaths, 1864–66 (I-15, Entry 1002).

This series includes oath forms with signatures of men who took the oath of allegiance to the United States. With each signature is an indication of regiment, place of residence, description, and date; remarks regarding the case; and the number assigned to each oath. The oaths are arranged by state and then by number assigned to each roll.

Congressional Amnesty

Both chambers of the 40th–41st Congresses (1867–1871) established temporary select committees to consider petitions for the removal of legal and political disabilities imposed on former Confederates by the 14th Amendment. The Select Committee on Reconstruction handled such business in the House, while the Select Committee on the Removal of Political Disabilities considered amnesty petitions in the Senate.

Records of the United States House of Representatives (Record Group 233)

Textual records in Record Group 233 are described in Preliminary Inventory 113, *Records of the United States House of Representatives, 1789–1946*. These records are in the custody of the Center for Legislative Archives in the National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

___Petitions and Memorials, Resolutions of State Legislatures, and Related Documents Which Were Referred to Committees, 1867–1871 (PI-113, Entries 506 and 520).

These records include petitions and memorials submitted directly to the House of Representatives, arranged by committee, including the Select Committee on Reconstruction. The select committee's records include amnesty applications arranged alphabetically by state and then by petition number. **E506** includes the petitions for the 40th Congress (40A-H21); **E520** covers the 41st Congress (41A-H18.1).

Records of the United States Senate (Record Group 46)

___M1546, *Petitions Submitted to the U.S. Senate Requesting the Removal of Political Disabilities of Former Confederate Officeholders, 1869–1877*. 14 rolls. DP. This publication reproduces the amnesty petitions submitted to the Select Committee on the Removal of Political Disabilities during the 41st Congress, arranged alphabetically by state, then alphabetically by surname of petitioner. Subsequent petitions submitted to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary for the 43rd and 44th Congresses are also included.