

“Will I Ever Be Fit for Civil Society Again?”

*The Challenges of Readjustment through the Prism of the New Jersey
Soldier's Home at Newark*

Leonard Bussanich

Abstract: The New Jersey Soldier's Home was founded to assist Civil War veterans who returned home scarred by the conflict's frightful scenes of carnage. The Home's records, indeed, its very existence, show that the transition from military to civilian life was no easier 150 years ago than it is today.

Introduction

Shortly after the Civil War ended, an article in the *New Jersey Mirror and Burlington County Advertiser* commented on the return home of New Jersey's soldiers. While the paper acknowledged that family and friends may “know him not, at once, for the change which has come over him,” it nevertheless believed the veterans could reintegrate into civilian life. The newspaper, however, expected former combatants to simultaneously unlearn their old habits of soldiering so as to “be molded into the ordinary daily occupations of labor and business,” and yet to “soon show us that the life of a soldier, in a noble cause, has not unfitted them for the less glorious but not less useful labors of civil life.”¹

Notwithstanding this seeming contradiction, the expectation of a seamless transition was not shared by federal and state officials who recognized that veterans could not alone readjust because of their severe physical and psychological ailments.² Pecuniary benefits such as military pensions were granted by the federal government to honorably discharged veterans dating back to the Revolution. Such social benefits were

apparently designed to minimize the burden placed upon disabled veterans and their families, but scholars have shown how government officials were not motivated strictly by humanitarian concerns and that federal pensions served a dual purpose by encouraging “the patriotism of the American people.”³ Regardless of the potential relief military pensions provided to New Jersey’s servicemen, Governor Joel Parker recognized that “the pension granted by the General Government is insufficient for the support of those who are entirely broken down in health, or who have lost their limbs.”⁴ Parker had clearly foreseen the need for additional assistance because of the scale and sheer numbers of disabled men reentering society.

Marcus L. Ward, Parker’s political rival, agreed and put forth a proposal in 1863 to inquire into the establishment of an institution geared to the protection and care of returning soldiers. A wealthy and prominent figure of Newark who served as governor and congressman, Ward was labeled the “Soldier’s Friend” for his myriad efforts on behalf of soldiers and their families.⁵ As a result of his labors, the doors of the New Jersey Home for Disabled Veterans (NJHDS), dedicated to the well-being of totally or partially disabled veterans, symbolically opened on July 4, 1866, almost a year to the date that the *New Jersey Mirror* article appeared. At the Home’s formal dedication on September 5, 1866, Ward proudly proclaimed that he “appreciated and understood the importance of fully regarding [soldiers’] interests,” and of the need to throw “around the wounded and suffering all possible care.” He also declared that government must do more than remember the sacrifices made, and so it “remained to the State the duty of caring for those who had returned among us maimed and wasted in its service.” Veterans

would be safe and secure because “This is their Home ... around which we desire to throw all the comforts which can cheer and alleviate.”⁶

This essay will focus on the overwhelming challenges and difficulties associated with reintegration and readjustment to civil society through the prism of the New Jersey Home at Newark. The annual reports of the Home, written and submitted by the Board of Managers to update the Home’s progress to the state legislature, provides invaluable insights as to the level of suffering and despair endured by those who, as Ward himself stated, were “maimed and wasted,” thus illuminating the tremendous human costs of the Civil War. For those with obvious, physical disabilities such as missing limbs, their readjustment already was at a serious disadvantage. But readjustment was also extremely difficult for those suffering from less discernible ailments such as debilitating internal diseases or psychological and emotional distress, loneliness and alienation. This essay ultimately seeks to challenge the notion so confidently proclaimed by the *New Jersey Mirror* that returning soldiers could make a seamless transition to civilian life, and to underscore as well historian Maris A. Vinovskis’s poignant observation more than twenty years ago as to “...why we must pay more attention to the social impact of the Civil War on the lives of nineteenth-century Americans.”⁷ For while the guns stopped firing in 1865, the war’s legacy left a lasting imprint, thus ensuring that the war really never ended.

The Home Opens

The New Jersey Home was formally dedicated on September 5, 1866 with much fanfare. A grand military procession marched from Military Park in Newark to the Home, “and all along the line of march

crowds of people were gathered upon the sidewalks, who cheered lustily as the procession passed; and the windows and balconies of many residences were full of fair

women, whose waving handkerchiefs, when the returned veterans passed, indicated their admiration for those who had worn the loyal blue.⁸

Historian Larry Logue aptly observes that “Union soldiers were ambivalent about going home.”⁹ Some of New Jersey’s own expressed these sentiments quite eloquently. Stationed in North Carolina with the 33rd Regiment, one soldier wrote “Home, sweet home is the burden of thoughts by day, and the subject of his dreams at night.”

William Haines, Company F, 12th N.J. Volunteers, remembered that he was “ready and anxious to return to peaceful pursuits, to the charms and endearments of home and family.” While Haines believed “Home is a fine place,” he realized instantly how “things seem so changed; everything is so still and quiet.”¹⁰

Haines spoke directly to the phenomenon many soldiers from New Jersey and elsewhere confronted when they made their way home after the war: How would -- or could -- they readjust to civilian life? Lieutenant Sebastian Duncan of Company E, 13th N.J. Volunteers summed it up best when he conveyed to his sister during the spring campaign in 1863 how he “...was becoming a strange sort of animal out here and wonder whether I’ll ever be fit for civil society again.”¹¹ Duncan captured brilliantly the essence of the soldier’s dilemma: Many longed for home during the war but now with the conflict over, Duncan and his fellow comrades questioned whether they could make the transition from the shock of the battlefield to the humdrum of civilian life¹²

While federal pensions were naturally the first measure to help alleviate the pain and hardships of the Civil War they were not sufficiently adequate.¹³ States like New Jersey quickly took the lead to help fill that void by creating their own institutions. The selective use of the term “Home” had decidedly social and political implications as it was

designed to distinguish it from the stigma normally associated with entitlements directed towards the working poor.¹⁴ Indeed, as the Board of Commissioners of the New Jersey Home made clear in their provisions report, they reminded lawmakers and the public at large that returning soldiers were “not paupers, seeking alms at the hands of the government, but pensioners, entitled to compensation for services rendered. They are not debtors to, but creditors of the public.”¹⁵ And keeping true to the ideals of laissez-faire government in a market-oriented society, the Board furthermore emphasized that “What is needed is not an almshouse to impress [veterans] with the sense of being the objects of charity” which would “crush every feeling and hope of independence”. The Home rather was a “Retreat, provided, as far as practicable, with the comforts and influence of a home, where they may realize that the republic is not ungrateful...”¹⁶

With the intellectual formulation complete, the Board of Commissioners then set about as to its structure and organization. They established a Board of Managers to communicate directly to the state Legislature, updating it regularly as to the Home’s progress. In addition, there was a commandant, superintendent, and chaplain “and such other officers, assistants and attendants as may be necessary and proper”¹⁷ that were responsible for its daily functions.

In its very first annual report, Dr A. M. Mills, physician of the Home, recognized that by the large number of applicants seeking admission “it soon became evident that increased accommodation would be required.” Accordingly, he had “one of the pavilions...comfortably filled up, affording two additional wards, each of the capacity of about twenty-six beds, with a commodious reading room between.”¹⁸ By year’s end

1866, the managers timidly declared that “...one hundred and sixty-three disabled soldiers and sailors have already been received by the Institution as State beneficiaries.”¹⁹

Though Dr. Mills’ improvisation succeeded in making additional space, he believed that still “further accommodations may yet be required before spring [1867].” In fact, he observed that “Already the demands for the benefits of the institution are quite equal to the extent of our accommodations” and “steadily the number of its inmates increases...” Demand was great because in “many instances patients have come to the Home suffering with distressing diseases, friendless and destitute...”²⁰ If admission was not granted due to lack of room, veterans then took advantage of the Home’s out-patient services which provided “medical advice...medicine and weekly or monthly stipends of money; thus relieving them of much suffering resulting from disease or injury...and enabling them while remaining at their home, and with their families, to procure for themselves the necessaries of life.” This service proved to be of tremendous value as “the roll of its Out Patients is added to daily.”²¹

Dr. Mills’s assessment was further corroborated by other officials within the first few years of the Home’s opening. The managers were stunned as the Home’s services were overwhelmed and their consternation only grew as they realized how unprepared they were in providing comfort to the residents. Increasing admissions, overtaxed staff, and constant requests for additional funds characterized the Home’s daily vicissitudes. Statements such as “number of beneficiaries [has] nearly doubled during the year;” “the number of beneficiaries being now greater than at any previous period;” “we [the Board of Managers] are under the necessity of asking an additional annual appropriation of twenty thousand dollars [for the State has only appropriated ten thousand];” “the many

long and lingering cases [of sickness] have been very trying to those whose duty it is to care for [the residents] and look after their comfort” are replete in the annual reports of the Home.²²

Exactly who these veterans were can be gleaned from a random sample of the annual reports, such as 1873 when the residents were still relatively young only eight years after the war. The report listed a total of 964 former soldiers cared for during the year ending October 31 with 344 remaining when discharges, expelled residents, and death were included. The residents comprised a mix of different nationalities and ages, though the young were disproportionately represented. Some also fought in regiments from other northern states. The superintendent noted forty-one percent of the beneficiaries were born in the United States, thirty percent in Ireland, and eighteen percent in Germany. The latter, two, respectively, represented the high concentration of Irish and German immigrants in industrialized Newark. Thirty residents were under eighteen years of age when they enlisted while 275 were between the ages of thirty-five to forty-five, and 140 were over forty-five years of age.

As to their condition and health, “the inmates comprise many one-legged and one-armed men, the blind and partially blind, and others with disabilities incident to war and the severities of a long and arduous campaign.”²³ For instance, 387 “suffered from wounds, of which [114] had lost limbs; [119] had rheumatism; [and] eighty-two had pulmonary complaints,” while the rest suffered from various other debilities. Many were also ill as the “average number of sick per day was eighty-three.” The Home also provided medicine and drugs and issued a considerable amount to relieve the suffering. Indeed, “the number of prescriptions issued from the dispensary” was 7,721.²⁴

The following example of Gawien McCoy can help to conceptualize the profound human suffering that these numbers eerily convey. McCoy mustered into Company D, 5th N.J. Volunteers on October 9, 1861 for three years. He was eventually transferred to the Veterans Reserve Corps and then finally discharged on January 8, 1864.²⁵ Upon returning home, his friends noticed how markedly his physical condition deteriorated. Unable to function independently, he was admitted to the Home on October 7, 1871 and died less than six months later on March 10, 1872. The Home listed cause of death as “general debility.”²⁶

As a result of his death, his wife, Mary McCoy, applied for a federal pension as a widow to help support herself and children. The Pension Bureau at Washington, D.C. required all applicants to submit compelling evidence to ascertain whether the cause of a veteran’s disability or death resulted directly from service in the army. Mary sought the assistance of her husband’s friends and former employers, whose testimonies illuminated Gawien’s grave condition, to help validate her claim.

His doctor claimed that Gawien “came into my hands in 1865 I found him suffering with various disorders of the kidney & liver also from injuries of head & back which prevented him from performing any labor or in any way providing for his family.”²⁷ The affidavit of James D. Gleason – the last name is difficult to read -- explained in greater detail the appearance of his late friend before and after he enlisted. James claimed he knew Gawien since 1840 “and during all that time, up to the date of his return from the army, he was a man of more than ordinary vigor of body, and robustness of health.” James saw Gawien “shortly after his return home from the Army, and could see a marked difference between his apparent health and strength then, and before he

enlisted...” James also testified he saw Gawien “occasionally up to a short time preceding his death and could at all times, when I so saw him, perceive that he did not regain the healthy look he formerly had, but seemed to be losing gradually, in vital power and energy.”²⁸

In order to bolster Mary’s pension claim that her husband died from a disease contracted while in the service, one of his former employers claimed Gawien “worked for me a number of years previous to the war of the Rebellion [and I] certify that During the time he worked for me he was in the Best of Health and to the Best of my Knowledge an[d] Belief free from any disease whatever.”²⁹ After his discharge from the service another of his employers stated Gawien was “in our employ from July 1867 to within a short time previous to his Death, and was not considered a well man, during all that time.”³⁰ These testimonies and even a letter written on behalf of Mary by Marcus Ward to the Pension Bureau, which stated that Gawien’s family was “very anxious to be informed as to his case...The widow is in very poor circumstances and the early adjustment of the claim is therefore greatly to be desired,” failed to secure her pension.³¹ The Bureau rejected the claim “on the ground that the disease which caused [Gawien’s] death originated after his discharge from the U.S. service. It appears that he was discharged on account of old age debility and injury ... but died of brights disease of the Kidneys.”³²

As every year witnessed a surge in admissions greater than the year before to accommodate men like Gawien, the managers also noted alarming increases of sickness and death: “The number of sick has...been large, many cases requiring constant care and attention; “sickness and death have prevailed to a greater extent than in any previous

year”; “the past year has been one of trial and suffering, we have had a greater number of severe cases of sickness continually in the Hospital than any previous year, and a great amount of suffering has been experienced,”³³ an environment entirely contrary to the notion of “home” or a “retreat.”

The Home had found it “necessary...to convert our chapel into a hospital” because “the number on sick list has been large [for] all are suffering from wounds or diseases that require medical assistance.”³⁴ It simply was not enough that “those [who] require constant attendance are provided for in the infirmary wards, under the charge of the matron, and are furnished a special diet consisting of such delicacies as are prescribed by the physician.”³⁵

While the managers made every effort to care for the sick and provide comfort to others, its purpose was not to rehabilitate -- if veterans could be rehabilitated at all? This failure had several reasons. First, no precedent existed in regard to rehabilitating veterans in the United States. According to one historian, “Under the American theory of individualism” the federal government took no interest in the “rehabilitation of this horde of warriors suddenly loosed upon the civilian economy.”³⁶ This applied on the state level as well since “home” was construed as a place for veterans to spend their days peacefully in rest and relaxation. It was not intended to provide such sophisticated care as “rehabilitation” but merely comfort. Oddly enough, it was geared towards the laboring poor domiciling in almshouses in order to improve and uplift their moral character. But the moral character of veterans was not questionable, and so they were excluded from this form of rehabilitation.

A second and more compelling reason was economic considerations. At the New Jersey Home, resources were severely limited and the managers were so vigorously attuned to keeping costs down which dictated the level of care. And rehabilitation did not of course consist of cozy beds, cooked meals, and dispensation of medicine. But its absence can perhaps be more readily explained by the more paramount concern for maintaining order and discipline. And the need for order, which the former soldiers frowned upon, was not incompatible with the age-old American precepts of freedom and liberty as so eloquently expressed by the following:

The regulations of the Home are for the maintenance and preservation of order and decorum, the amalgamation of freedom and duty, that liberty and order should so fuse into each other, that the condition prescribed by order, cannot be felt as a restraint on liberty.³⁷

The desire for order and discipline, then, is understandable when the continuation of a military-style atmosphere at the Home was the highest priority, thus ensuring the obedience of its beneficiaries. The residents were treated as though they were still in the army--when many wanted to put their days of soldiering behind them--required to wear military uniforms and answer to the sound of roll-call: "The in patients are fed on the basis of the army-rations, clothed in a neat army uniform, comfortably lodged and suitably cared for in all particulars."³⁸

An aura of paternalism permeated the relationship between managers and residents. The former firmly believed they knew what was best for the latter and so rules were implemented and enforced to ensure this delicate balance. And as time went on the rules became more stringent because of the behavior of the residents. Not that the former soldiers were ungrateful for the efforts rendered on their behalf, but it was the need for

alcohol that the managers found most disturbing. No sooner had the Home opened its doors in 1866 that “drunkenness seemed to prevail.”³⁹ Eight years later it was observed “the evils of intoxication are unfortunately everywhere apparent.”⁴⁰ Because alcohol abuse was a recurring problem the managers asserted that “The rule in this respect is rigid; every violation of its edict subjects the offender to immediate expulsion from the Home.”⁴¹ And the managers believed that such “severe repressive measures [were] in force” in order to better guarantee an “improvement in the *morale* of the men.”⁴²

Ironically, the managers had recognized the causes and circumstances of intoxication which deserves to be quoted at length:

Many causes operate to increase the number of applicants for admission...one-eighth of the number cared for [out of a total of one-thousand forty seven in 1875] were either too young or too old when they enlisted, and probably contracted disease...Wounds or disabilities that were slight, have resulted in disease that prevent many from earning a livelihood. Severe winters, and consequent hard times, compel members to seek admission for short periods; death and other causes break up families, and deprives some disabled soldiers of their support; improvidence and intemperance, as much as any other cause, serves to increase the number of destitute disabled veterans.⁴³

But they still insisted, however, on condemning the reliance on the bottle as immoral behavior that needed to be eradicated rather than accept it may have provided a means of escape from their misery and economic security during the Panic of 1873. But even more than this, the above also highlighted the social and gruesome costs of the Civil War, and in order to truly measure the totality of that war’s destructiveness, those veterans who suffered from menacing wounds and diseases or resorted to alcohol to better find solace and comfort from their despair and the wrenching uncertainty of economic security must be included in the final tally. While historians have focused exclusively on the number of dead, approximately 620,000, to measure the war’s human toll, that conservative number would rise significantly if it included those who had to

endure, as Maris Vinovskis stated so aptly, “the heritage of the war for the rest of their lives.”⁴⁴

Considering the lack of any efforts geared towards rehabilitation and the stigma, rather than empathy, associated with alcoholism, it was no surprise then that the Home could not provide for the welfare of men suffering from acute mental and psychological pain. A study of the annual reports indicate that most of the ailments were physical, such as gunshot wounds and lost limbs, as well as debilitating diseases which lingered long after the war. There are only several references to insanity and “mental derangement” resulting in suicide. But the correlation between physical pain and the onset of mental trauma cannot be overlooked. In his comparative analysis of Vietnam and Civil War veterans, Eric T. Dean argues veterans from both wars suffered from delayed reactions to combat fatigue and stress when they returned home. Though post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) has only recently been coined, phrases such as “demoralized,” “played out,” and “broken down,” common verbiage of the time, suggest symptoms of it.⁴⁵ During the war the military and its medical personnel simply dismissed as shirkers those soldiers who claimed they experienced severe mental anguish which prevented them from carrying out their duties. This skepticism carried over to the immediate postwar period when ex-soldiers filing for pension claims based on such conditions were rejected.⁴⁶

By the late 1870s, the Home was obliged to print, in bold letters, at the bottom of its applications that “The insane and men of unsound mind cannot be received, as no proper provisions can be made for the care of such cases.”⁴⁷ Incidentally, however, the Home was most likely referring to more severe cases of insanity since it was already

contending with “men of unsound mind.” Its annual reports invariably listed in its care numerous cases of those suffering from acute internal diseases of the lungs, kidneys, and heart. Such diseases, over time, led to the deterioration of the nervous system which then caused immense stress resulting in mental fatigue or insanity. This knowledge, however, was not fully comprehended in the nineteenth-century. As Eric Dean explains, “...the basic underlying premise of a relationship between physical disease and mental health ties in with current systems theory employed by behavioral medicine or ‘health psychology’, which maintains that there is a link between stress and physical illness.”⁴⁸

Of course, the Home was not entirely at fault for turning away such men. While the Home provided outpatient services, monetary stipends, and medicine to its beneficiaries, such services were only temporary fixes for physically and mentally scarred individuals. And from the perspective of the Home’s staff, there was really not much else they could do but provide temporary relief much less treat severe cases of insanity.

Perhaps that partly explains why the Home was merely conceived as a “Retreat” which provided basic necessities such as care and comfort though the Board of Commissioners and managers may not have anticipated the sheer numbers continually seeking its services or the severity of sickness and disease that plagued its applicants. As each year gradually passed, the managers admitted that any significant reduction in numbers was unlikely. And even as they declared a low death rate, considering “that all beneficiaries are more or less broken down by wounds and diseases incurred during the war,” the managers believed that it was “probably due to an exemption from domestic cares, good food, and a comfortable home.”⁴⁹

But the annual reports also revealed that the Home too often resembled a hospital ward overrun with patients and a military camp imposing order, conditions hardly amenable to the concept of “home.” “Home” invoked a place where its inhabitants were adequately sheltered from the uncertainties of the outside world. But these were no ordinary inhabitants that resided at the New Jersey Home. They were battered and brutalized men who had paid a terrible price for their military service and then had to face most unfavorably the dire challenges of readjustment in a fiercely competitive and unstable market economy.

As the managers informed lawmakers that the Home’s beneficiaries were contented, they were also unduly concerned with onerous rules and quite willing to impose harsh measures if they were breached. To be sure, the New Jersey Home was not unique in this respect as the same pattern existed at the federal branches. Like its federal counterpart, it strictly adhered to the military maxims of order and discipline, as control was really the primary objective in guiding the New Jersey Home. This emphasis was further heightened when the managers observed and denounced the prevalence of alcohol abuse. Rather than seek to address its cause, however, the managers instead condemned it as immoral behavior and imposed draconian measures to eradicate it. While veterans turned to drinking for myriad reasons, the annual reports concede that the men turned to drinking for relief. Alcohol abuse, then, was another manifestation of their profound despair which challenged their ability to readjust.

In the end, beyond accommodating disabled veterans, institutions such as the New Jersey Home also served a larger strategic and political purpose. Judith Gladys Cetina opines that while it was enough to discern the external factors leading to the development

of state homes, it was more difficult to locate and identify the specific forces driving their development. Marcus Ward led the drive to create the Home at Newark, and while he did not hesitate to proclaim his unyielding desire to serve the interests of the nation's defenders, his drive was also tied to his political calculations and ambitions.

More broadly, however, federal and state policy-makers were invariably aware and fearful of the potential drawbacks of the pernicious image of abandoned veterans wandering aimlessly in the urban and rural corridors of America.⁵⁰ Megan McClintock notes that military pensions spurred enlistment during the Civil War because it helped to alleviate the hardships of war on the veteran and his family. So it was with federal and state homes in the years following the Civil War. The granting of pensions and the creation of soldiers' homes thwarted the image of the recluse veteran who could take advantage of the significant resources at his disposal to help him cope. Policy-makers could exclaim then that military service was still an honorable endeavor, and those who served would know that they would be cared for when they returned home from the battlefield -- if they were so lucky! Military service and its concomitant benefits would also be discernible to future generations as they peered into the past and saw how well Civil War veterans were treated, consummating policy-makers' wishes for the assurances and dedication of future recruits.⁵¹

The Civil War not only abolished slavery and restored the Union, but more importantly it solidified the United States as the world's emerging industrialized and military power. This immense power would project itself around the globe in the years after the Civil War, beginning with America's imperial ambitions across the Pacific at the end of the nineteenth-century. Such an expansionist foreign policy required an

impressionable, patriotic, and dedicated force. Policy-makers of the 1860s were quite precocious in their quest to ensure that Civil War veterans, at least in the public discourse, were sufficiently cared for. If the New Jersey Home did not adequately address and meet the substantive needs of its beneficiaries, it succeeded in the mission that the veteran had, at the least, a “home” to seek.

While policies can be conceived and developed, they are not always consistently implemented. Paradoxically, while men like Marcus Ward revered and venerated New Jersey’s servicemen for their valiant efforts in the country’s great struggle, veterans were still susceptible to the malicious vagaries of a “free-market society” in which the term “home” was invoked as a means to defend against. As Ward and other state officials exhorted their fellow New Jerseyans to never forget and honor indefinitely the sacrifices of Jersey’s troops, the city of Newark appeared to forget as it was rapidly industrializing. As veterans at the New Jersey Home endured their incessant bouts and struggles, the sense that they were left behind was compounded as Newark needed more space for its industry and people. Less than ten years after its doors opened, their isolationism was most acutely revealed when

The rapid growth of the city of Newark has also extended to the Home grounds -- a large portion having been taken for the purpose of forming new streets -- and it would appear probable that in the course of a few years the present site will be clustered over with streets and houses, and all the elements of a busy population.⁵²

¹ “The Returned Soldier,” *New Jersey Mirror and Burlington County Advertiser*, July 6, 1865, Vol. 47:

No. 2439.

² In *To Appomattox And Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), Larry M. Logue writes that "...even a generous pension system could not meet the needs of all disabled veterans. Federal officials had for some time recognized that some veterans were homeless or so disabled that they required institutional care..." (90-91). In *Creating A National Home: Building the Veterans' Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), Patrick J. Kelly 's startle reminder that "The violence and scale of the Civil War-nearly 37 percent of Northern males between the ages of fifteen and forty-four in 1860 served in the Union army, and more than a quarter-million Union soldiers received gunshot wounds-created a large population of war-disabled veterans [which] forced the postwar Congress to establish a comprehensive system of veterans' institutional care." (3)

³ Megan J. McClintock, "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families," *Journal of American History* 83 (September 1996); 466. McClintock astutely asks, "To what extent did pensions motivate men to volunteer, both in the 1860s and later? These are questions," she answers, "that require additional research, but the discourse of late-nineteenth century pension debates suggests that the Civil War altered the way the United States readied for military conflict. In the postwar decades the federal government provided pensions to cultivate the allegiance of future citizen soldiers." (466) Judith Gladys Cetina, "*A History of Veterans' Homes in the United States, 1811-1930*," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Case Western University, 1977), also observes that this practice dated back to the colonial period, 62.

⁴ New Jersey Legislative Documents, *Second Annual Message of Joel Parker, Governor of New Jersey to the State and General Assembly* (Trenton: John H. Lyon and Jacob R. Freese Printers, 1865), 18.

⁵ Surprisingly, no biography exists for Marcus L. Ward and the only recent examination of him during the war can be found in William Gillette's *Jersey Blue: Civil War Politics in New Jersey, 1854-1865* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), especially 186-87 for Ward's various efforts regarding soldiers, veterans, and their families.

⁶ New Jersey Legislative Documents, *Report of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers, To The State and General Assembly For The Year 1866* (Trenton, New Jersey: Printed at the offices of the State Gazette, 1867), 19.

⁷ Maris A. Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations," *Journal of American History*, 76 (June 1989). Vinovskis claims that by comparing the numbers of Civil War dead to other American wars one can therefore "gauge the magnitude of the Civil War." (35) And having established that a large number of soldiers fought and died, he "considers how the peculiarities of that conflict may have affected the participants' wartime experiences." (36) His preliminary results are derived from an in-depth study of Newburyport, Massachusetts in order "to sketch the social and economic background of those who fought and died in that conflict." (36) Finally, to measure the war's influence on the postwar lives of the combatants and the civilian population, Vinovskis "offer[s] a preliminary demographic analysis of the federal pension program using aggregate statistics as one indication of the type of studies that might be done." (36)

⁸ "Dedication of the Soldiers' Home," *Newark Evening Courier*, September 5, 1866, Vol. 1, No. 68.

⁹ Larry Logue, *To Appomattox And Beyond*, 82.

¹⁰ William P. Haines, *History of the Men of Co. F, 12th N.J. Vols.*, (Mickleton, NJ, 1897, Reprinted by The Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ, 1983), 265. Sergeant Albert C. Harrison of Company G, 14th N.J. Volunteers experienced a similar sensation when he declared his disbelief "that the fighting is done." And it was only until he returned home and got "inside of a suit of citizen's rig" that he could "fully realize it and two or three years from now, I can better recall to memory what I have endured and the many changing scenes I have witnessed than I can at the present time." Harrison's quotes are in Bernard A. Olsen's, *Upon The Tented Field: An Historical Account of the Civil War As Told By The Men Who Fought And Gave Their Lives* (Red Bank, New Jersey: Historic Projects Inc., 1993), 315.

¹¹ Duncan to his sister Hattie, May 17, 1863, Sebastian Duncan Papers, New Jersey Historical Society (hereafter NJHS).

¹² Conversely, how would society respond to the challenge of the soldiers' return? A hint of this response was revealed at a community gathering William Haines attended shortly after the war. Haines recalled listening "to a so-called Quaker preacher...tell of seeing a drunken soldier on the streets of Philadelphia..." He was soon agitated when the preacher allegedly warned of the "terrible danger to our country in the return of this great army" because of "all their vices and wickedness, their pilfering, drunkenness and

debauchery...” Haines could not control his emotions as he “walked outdoors and wished and prayed for just two minutes on the skirmish line with my old musket, and that preacher in front.” (pg. 266)

Haines’s contempt was understandable because he believed soldiers deserved more praise than criticism as they saved the Union. Though it is difficult to quantify how representative were the preacher’s remarks, they did speak directly to the potential threat a seasoned army could pose to society. While former soldiers surely exhibited pathological behavior throughout post-Civil War society, it is important to note too that in the “return of this vast army” a great many were too debilitated to represent a threat. The leading concern regarding Civil War veterans was how to care and provide for those lacking in self-support. As to pathological behavior, see Larry Logue in *To Appomattox And Beyond*. He states that “civilians were as ambivalent about veterans as the soldiers had been about coming home. Civilians were glad that the war was over, but they feared the worst from men who had been living by the dictates of war rather than the rules of civilization.” While he agrees that “Returning soldiers provided some evidence for these fears,” in committing arson, looting and brawling which landed them in prison, he maintains however that “A more complete look at the evidence undermines this explanation” because their real malevolence was detected in their addiction to drugs and alcohol. (85-86). On the correlation between the difficulties of readjustment and an increase in the crime wave with New York as a case study, see Edith Abbott’s *The Civil War and the Crime Wave* in Larry Logue and Michael Barton, eds., *The Civil War Veteran*, (65-79).

¹³ The Pension Act of 1862 was signed by President Abraham Lincoln just as the numbers of wounded and dead soldiers escalated. Recently, scholars have maintained that such benefits had a significant and positive effect on the plight of veterans. Maris A. Vinovskis rightly contends that “the heritage of the war remained with many [veterans]-from both sides-for the rest of their lives” long after 1865, and therefore pensions “had a profound and long-lasting impact...” (57, 50-51)

Other historians, such as Theda Skocpol, have examined that beyond serving the interests of veterans, military pensions were entangled in the web of patronage politics. As the Democratic Party regained strength in the postwar years, it collided head on with Republicans for political influence and veterans’ votes on Election Day. See Skocpol’s, *Protecting Soldiers And Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992).

And Megan McClintock has argued that the expansion of Civil War pensions cannot solely be attributed to the rise of patronage politics. She asserts rather that they were not only a “military benefits program” that contributed to the rebuilding of Union families devastated by war, but that pensions were “also a social welfare system that contained assumptions about familial relationships.” Thus, pensions should be viewed as “family policy” which first “encourage[d] enlistment by offering support for dependents”, and second, “address[ed] the problems of old age and widowhood in the postwar decades.” See McClintock’s “Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families,” 466, 458.

¹⁴ As Patrick Kelly posits in *Creating A National Home*, (6-7), the use of the word home “was no accident. By assisting citizen-veterans within a system defined as a national *home* (his italics), state agents self-consciously labored to differentiate the [National Home for Disabled Soldiers, originally called the National Asylum for Disable Volunteer Soldiers] from the asylums and poorhouses created to assist nonveterans. The promise that the state was creating a ‘homelike’ institution for the care of Union veterans helped legitimize this entitlement, thus allowing the National Home and its occupants to escape the stigma so often attached to dependent nonveterans and the institutions built for their care.” As a result, “a distinctive category of citizenship” called “martial citizenship” was created, according to Kelly. (2)

On the history of poorhouses, and the stigma associated with them throughout American history, see Michael B. Katz, *In The Shadow Of The Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986), ch. 1.

¹⁵ New Jersey Legislative Documents, *Report Of The Board Of Commissioners On Provision For Disabled New Jersey Soldiers, Presented in the House of Assembly February 1, 1865* (Trenton: Printed by J.R. Freese, State Gazette Office, 1865), 5. It should also be noted the state provided assistance only to those who were “honorably discharged”, thereby excluding automatically those enduring the stigma of “dishonorable service” and in all probability living with the same debilities as their “honorable” brethren but without any entitlements or state assistance. The state apparently still took the notion of honor seriously when many soldiers discarded it by the end of the war. On the topic of honor and disillusionment see Gerald L Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat In The American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

¹⁶ *Report Of The Board of Commissioners On Provision For Disabled New Jersey Soldiers*, 5.

As noted, Marcus Ward consummated his predecessor Parker's wishes, Joel Parker, through his vigorous efforts in establishing the New Jersey Home. (While Ward was ostensibly motivated by his humanitarian concern for the soldier/veteran, his humanitarianism seems to have been closely tied to his political ambitions as he secured the governorship in 1866 after losing the contest to Parker four years earlier.) During his dedicatory address of the Home, located in the same building Ward had purchased during the war and turned it into a military hospital, he made clear to his audience the institution was established because "the soldiers who have returned from the great war of the Republic...deserve the remembrance of the people and the care of the government."¹⁶ And no other institution could better serve as an atmosphere of peace and security than a soldiers' home. *New Jersey Legislative Documents, Report of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers, To The State And General Assembly For The Year 1866* (Trenton: Printed at the office of the State Gazette, 1867), 19.

¹⁷ *New Jersey Legislative Documents*, photo static copy of *Assembly, No. 346, State of New Jersey*, the act which provided for the organization of the Home. Copy provided by the NJHS.

¹⁸ *Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 25.

¹⁹ Quotation from the President of the Home, Rynior H. Veghte in *Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 3. A local newspaper also reported that "the building fitted up for the reception of disabled soldiers, having become filled to its utmost capacity, the Commissioners have decided to move and fit up another building immediately, with capacity sufficient for the reception of about fifty more. The furniture, bedding, & c., for the new addition has been already purchased." *Newark Evening Courier*, October 2, 1866, Vol. 1 No. 91.

²⁰ *Report Of The New Jersey for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 25; *Annual Report Of The Officers Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers, Situated at Newark, For The Year 1867* (Trenton: Printed at the True American Office, 1868), 13.

²¹ *Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 25.

²² *Annual Report Of The Officers Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1867*, 5;

Annual Report On The New Jersey Home For The Year 1869 (Trenton: Printed at the True American Office, 1870), 5; *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year 1872* (Trenton: The State Gazette-Murphy & Bechtel, Book And Job Printers, 1872), 6; *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year Ending October 31st, 1878* (Trenton: Naar, Day & Naar Printers, 1879), 22. In 1874, the Superintendent was compelled to dispel any illusions regarding demand for the Home's services: "An impression seems to be prevalent, that during the past eight years, death has materially lessened the number entitled to the benefits of this 'Home,' and that consequently there should be a decrease in the number cared for. The fact appears to be otherwise; the increased number of admissions and applications received during the year indicate that there will be no diminution of the number to be cared for in the ensuing year. About sixty per cent. of the average number cared for are permanently and totally disabled, and will have to be taken care of until death ends their sufferings. The partially disabled are permitted to remain only so long as their condition requires medical treatment, or until they are sufficiently recovered to earn their own living. It is necessary to pursue this course where practicable, to prevent too great an increase of numbers, and keep the expenses of the 'Home' within the limits of the appropriations." *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year Ending October 31st, 1874* (Trenton: WM.S. Sharp, Steam Power Book And Job Printer, 1874), 13-14.

²³ James Barber, *THE NATION'S DEFENDERS: The New Jersey and the National Homes For Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. How They Are Cared For.* (Newark: Martin R. Dennis Publishers, 1874, Second Edition), 21, NJHS.

²⁴ *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year Ending October 31st, 1873* (Trenton: The State Gazette-Murphy & Bechtel, Book And Job Printers, 1873), 11, 13-14.

²⁵ See *The Record of Officers and Men of New Jersey In The Civil War 1861-1865, Vol. One* (Trenton: John L. Murphy, Steam Book and Job Printer, 1874-Compiled in the Office of the Adjutant General, William S. Stryker), 244. This source spelled his name as Gyon.

²⁶ See *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year 1872* (Trenton: The State Gazette-Murphy & Bechtel, Book and Job Printers, 1872), 8.

²⁷ Marcus L. Ward Papers/Veterans Affairs, Box 4, February 18, 1874, Rutgers University Special Collections (hereafter RUSC).

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- ²⁸ See James's affidavit, dated February 17, 1874, in Ward Papers/Veteran Affairs, Box 4, RUSC.
- ²⁹ See employer affidavit, dated February 13, 1874, in Ward, Box 4, RUSC.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ See Ward's letter to Commissioner of Pensions, June 15, 1875 in Ward, Box 4, RUSC.
- ³² Letter, June 21, 875 in Ward, Box 4 RUSC.
- ³³ *Annual Report For The Year 1868*, 14; *For The Year 1872*, 15; *For The Year 1873*, 19.
- ³⁴ *Annual Report For The Year 1872*, 15.
- ³⁵ *Annual Report On The New Jersey Home For The Year 1869* (Trenton: Printed at the True American Office, 1870), 9.
- ³⁶ Mary R. Dearing, *Veterans in Politics* in Logue and Barton, eds., *The Civil War Veteran*, 278.
- ³⁷ James Barber, *THE NATION'S DEFENDERS*, 16-17.
- ³⁸ *Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 17.
- ³⁹ *Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year 1866*, 11.
- ⁴⁰ Barber, *The NATION'S DEFENDERS*, 17.
- ⁴¹ Barber, 17.
- ⁴² *Annual Report For The Year 1873*, 11.
- ⁴³ *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers For The Year Ending October 31st, 1875* (Trenton: WM. S. Sharp, Steam-Power Book And Job Printer, 1875), 13-14.
- ⁴⁴ Historian Mark E. Neely, Jr. has recently argued in his *The Civil War And The Limits Of Destruction* (Cambridge, Massusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007) whether the profession has too greatly exaggerated the destructiveness of the Civil War. Neely's comparison with other American wars leads him to conclude, unlike Maris Vinovskis, that the defining and lasting characteristic of the Civil War was its remarkable restraint on inflicting extensive carnage on both combatants and the civilian population. While intriguing, his thesis is nevertheless unconvincing as it attempts to sanitize the horrors and carnage of the Civil War.
- ⁴⁵ See Dean's pioneering *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, And The Civil War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997). His work concentrates on a group of Indiana

veterans who were in and out of insane asylums for the remainder of their days. Dean states (111) that “in many cases...the connection between military service and later mental problems is quite clear and undeniable, especially in three classes: cases with their origin in mental breakdown in the service itself, cases involving gunshot or shell wounds, and cases of disease incurred in the service that subsequently had psychological repercussions.” Dean’s work inspired historian Dennis W. Brandt to examine the tragic experiences of an individual Pennsylvania soldier named Angelo Crapsey in *Pathway to Hell: A Tragedy of the American Civil War* (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: Lehigh University Press, 2008). Brandt (11) intones that “...histories of the American Civil War abound with tales of physical horrors...Few, however, have dealt with the psychological horrors of the Civil War.”

Not all historians of course are convinced. A study of Confederate veterans in state homes by R. B. Rosenburg, “*Empty Sleeves and Wooden Pegs*’: *Disabled Confederate Veterans in Image and Reality* in David A. Gerber, ed., *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: the University of Michigan Press, 2000), declares “while it is possible that Confederate veterans may have suffered from acute delayed stress after the Civil War, as Eric T. Dean has argued...the evidence is at best sketchy and anecdotal. Without extant case files that could be examined, one may never know why inmates behaved the way they supposedly did.” (227).

⁴⁶ Dean, 159; Brandt, 172.

⁴⁷ The residents’ applications can be found at the State Archives in Trenton.

⁴⁸ Dean, 147.

⁴⁹ *Annual Report Of The New Jersey Home For The Year Ending October 31st, 1878*, (Trenton: Naar, Day & Naar, Printers, 1879), 15.

⁵⁰ Larry Logue, “Union Veterans and Their Government: The Effects of Public Policies on Private Lives,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. XXII, Number 1 (Summer 1991), 415, notes however that no matter how concerned were policy-makers regarding the plight of veterans, they “were also confronted with a population whose character they did not fully trust, so they had to keep a careful eye on the same men for whom they expressed such solicitude.”

⁵¹ Patrick Kelly, *Creating A National Home*, (200), cogently states that by the end of the nineteenth-century “the United States would again be called upon to redeem its promises to veterans. Marking the

growth of the social benefits offered to citizen-veterans, the National Home prepared the way for the later expansion of both the U.S. welfare and the U.S. warfare states.”

⁵² James Barber, *The NATION'S DEFENDERS*, 13.