

Amateur historian uncovers additional 3,000 Civil War dead



Historians in recent years have revised the number of dead connected to the American Civil War significantly upward, from 620,000 to as many as 850,000. That increase is based in part on the [work of J. David Hacker of Binghamton University SUNY](#), who used demographic methods and sophisticated statistical software to study digitized US census records from 1850 to 1880. Coming up with actual names to go with this increase is significantly more difficult. However, one South Carolinian, through years of hard work, has given names to many Confederate soldiers whose deaths during the 1861-65 conflict were never officially documented. Herbert “Bing” Chambers has uncovered the identities of approximately 3,000 South Carolina soldiers who lost their lives during the War Between the States but were never officially recorded. Chambers’ efforts have increased the state’s losses during the war to nearly 22,000. To put that in perspective, that figure is more than 17 percent higher than the 17,682 figure listed in the Official Records of the War of Rebellion and some 16 percent higher than the 18,666 number listed in Randolph W. Kirkland Jr.’s 1995 work, [Broken Fortunes: South Carolina Soldiers, Sailors, and Citizens Who Died in the Service of Their Country and State in the War for Southern Independence, 1861-1865](#). Chambers actually began his efforts shortly after Kirkland’s work was released when he learned that the latter, who created his book by combining several different existing lists of South Carolina Confederate dead, had failed to review the Compiled Service Records when creating *Broken Fortunes*. The [Compiled Service Records for Civil War soldiers](#) were made by the US Record and Pension Office in the War Department, beginning in 1890 for Union soldiers and 1903 for Confederate soldiers. Card abstracts for Southern soldiers were made from original muster rolls, returns, rosters, payrolls, appointment books, hospital registers, Union prison registers and rolls, parole rolls, and inspection reports. Service records may provide rank, unit, date of enlistment, length of service, age, place of birth and date of death. Over the ensuing 18 years, Chambers scoured hundreds of rolls of microfilm, traveled to countless libraries, archives and courthouses across South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina, and meandered through old cemeteries across all three states seeking out old headstones marking the resting place of otherwise unheralded soldiers. “These men fought for and gave their lives for a cause they believed in,” Chambers said. “It’s an honor and a privilege to ensure that their sacrifice is recognized and that they are remembered.”

Chambers compiled his efforts in three volumes, titled *And Were the Glory of Their Times – the Men Who Died for South Carolina in the War for Southern Independence*.

The first work, which focuses on unrecorded deaths in the Palmetto State's artillery service during the war, was released earlier this year by [Broadfoot Publishing Co.](#) of Wilmington, NC. The 840-page book includes the names of more than 560 artillerymen who lost their lives. With Chambers' endeavor, the number of identified South Carolinians who served and died in South Carolina artillery units jumped from around 700 to nearly 1,300.

A second volume highlighting previously unrecognized Palmetto State cavalrymen who lost their lives as a result of the war.

A third featuring South Carolina infantrymen who died in the war.

And Were the Glory of Their Times includes not only the names of previously uncounted Confederate dead from South Carolina, it also provides a biographical/genealogical sketch for the majority of the soldiers, showing residence and occupation in 1860; enlistment place and date; circumstances surrounding death; wife and children if married; brothers, where brothers served and ultimate fate of brothers; along with sisters and their parents. Cases in which families suffered catastrophic losses are also highlighted. The work also includes personal asides related to many of the soldiers, such as a last letter to or from home, a poem, diary entry or obituary. Battles in which the particular military unit took part and the specifics of its movements are also described to give readers a picture of the events taking place around the soldier at the time of their death.

Chambers, a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Columbia, SC, understands that even with his massive undertaking, numerous soldiers who died in the war remain, as yet, beyond his grasp. He is hopeful that those with ancestors who died for South Carolina or whose ancestors were South Carolina residents who died in the service of another Confederate state and are not listed among Southern casualties will contact him and pass along information.