Rebel Salvation: The Story of Confederate Pardons

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Comments
On May 29, 1865, President Andrew Johnson issued a Proclamation of Pardon and Amnesty and outlined the manner in which the provisional government of North Carolina would be organized. While the President’s proclamation of amnesty absolved the majority of Confederates for their activities against the United States, fourteen classes, such as minor Confederate office holders, high-ranking Confederate civil and military officials, men indicted for treason and those owning more than $20,000 worth of property in 1860, had to compose a pardon petition, swear an oath of allegiance, and forward the documents to their respective state governors who sent the documents to Washington.

This study is the first to mine and analyze the 850 pardon petitions filed by men in Tennessee and Western North Carolina in order to understand the factors which motivated men of varying social, educational, and economic backgrounds to link their futures with the Confederacy. Furthermore, these pardon petitions offer an immediate commentary on the mood of defeated Southerners and their anxieties as they waited for the terms of peace from the North.

An analysis of the pardon documents explores the process of Reconstruction on a state and local level and emphasizes the role of state governors played in executing the President’s policy. In addition, the dissertation offers a corrective to those historians who have concentrated on the wealthy and elite southerners who applied for pardon, while ignoring a substantial number of number of men who aided the Confederacy by holding office, donating goods to the Rebel army, or who required a pardon to escape a trial for treason.

President Johnson pardoned the overwhelming majority of ex-Confederates who applied, much to the chagrin of Congress. As Southerners exercised their right to vote and hold office, many elected ex-Rebels to local, state, and national offices. Alarmed at the defiance and recalcitrance, Congress decided that the President’s plan was a failure and that a different program has to be instituted.

Recommended Citation
President Johnson pardoned Confederate rebels. Shutterstock. The end of the Civil War raised many questions. The pardon affected hundreds of thousands of people but was very controversial, especially with veterans' groups. President Clinton pardoned his own half-brother. Getty Images. Throw the names Richard Nixon and Jimmy Hoffa together and you have controversy, no matter what the story is. In 1971, Hoffa was the former head of the Teamsters Union and was serving 13 years in prison for fraud and jury tampering (via CNN). But he still held a lot of power over that important voting bloc, and Nixon was almost up for reelection. Nixon being Nixon, he didn't care much about the ethics of what he needed to do in order to get more votes. A pardon would require an oath of allegiance, but it would not restore ownership to former slaves, or restore confiscated property that involved a third party. As Lincoln further envisioned his actions, his pardons would have excluded officeholders of the Confederate government or persons who had mistreated prisoners. 2020 elections. Population boom could remake 2020 map. In Rebel Salvation, Kathleen Zebley Liulevicius examines pardon petitions from former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers in Tennessee to craft a unique and comprehensive analysis of the process of Reconstruction in the Volunteer State after the Civil War. These underutilized petitions contain a wealth of information about Tennesseans from an array of social and economic backgrounds, and include details about many residents who would otherwise not appear in the historical record. They reveal the dynamics at work between multiple factions in the state: former Rebels, Unionists, Governor Willi