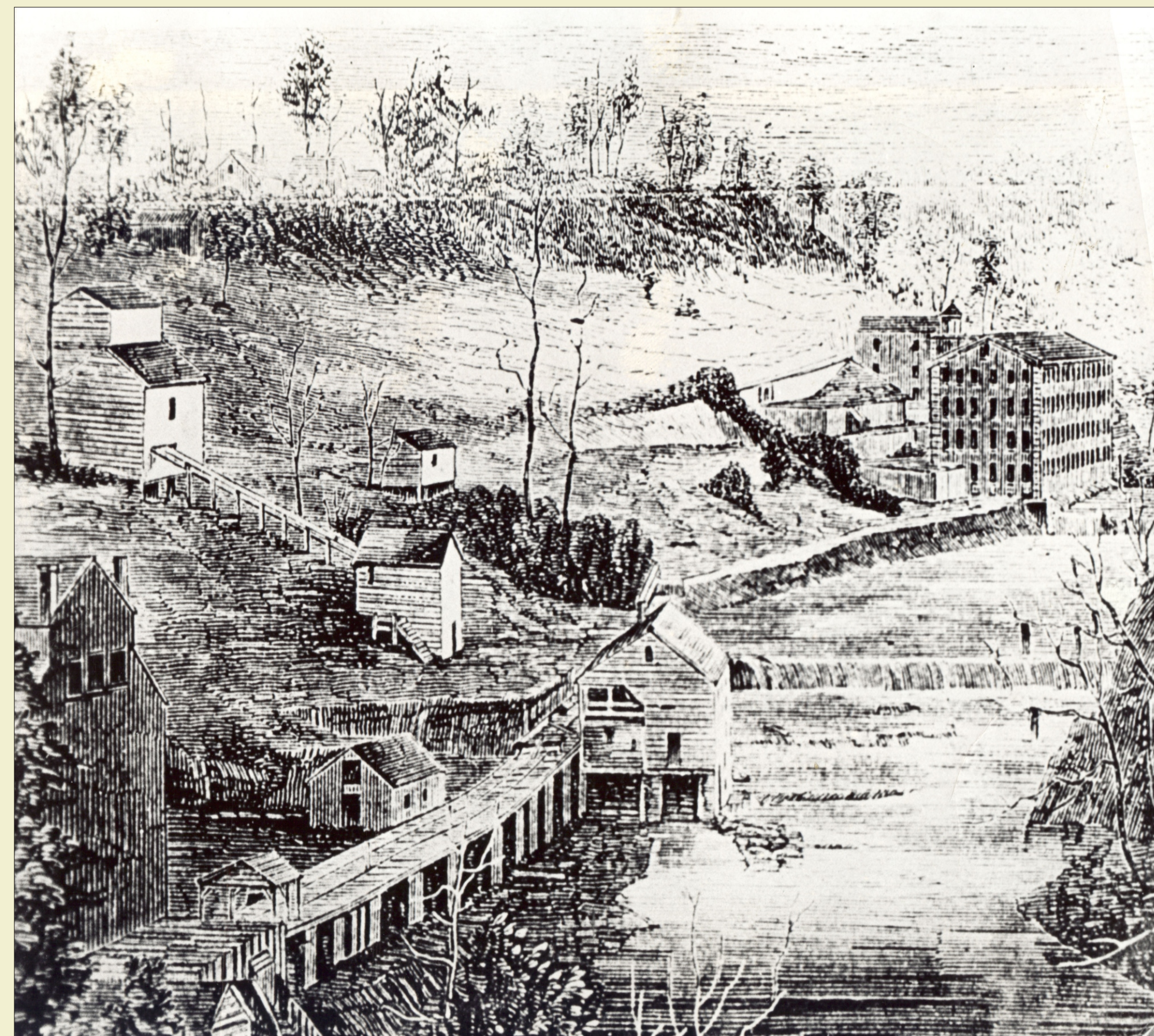


THE LOST MILL WORKERS OF ROSWELL

July, 1864

The Roswell Mills

Roswell King, businessman and banker from Darien, GA, came to North Georgia in 1832. He saw an abundance of wood and potential water power on the banks of Vickery Creek, and knew it was the perfect place for cotton mills. Founding "The Colony" with family and friends from the coast, he built the first cotton mill with a dam, millrace, sawmill, and brick kiln. The Roswell Manufacturing Company began production in 1839. His son, Barrington King, built a second mill upstream in 1854. The Ivy Woolen Mill was established on the Chattahoochee River, at the mouth of Vickery Creek, by Barrington's sons Thomas Edward King and James Roswell King.



ROSWELL MILLS WOOD ETCHING
Image Courtesy of Roswell Historical Society

The Mill Workers

There was a readily available labor pool among families who had been lured by the gold rush of the 1820's and scratched out a meager living on small farmsteads. Most of those hired were poor white women and children who were trained to operate the looms and paid lower wages than men. They endured noisy and dangerous factory floors, filled with moving machinery, in poor lighting and ventilation. Working sunup to sundown, their wages were paid in scrip to be exchanged for goods in the company store. Some of their small frame houses and apartments ("The Old Bricks") stand today along Sloan Street.

War and Invasion

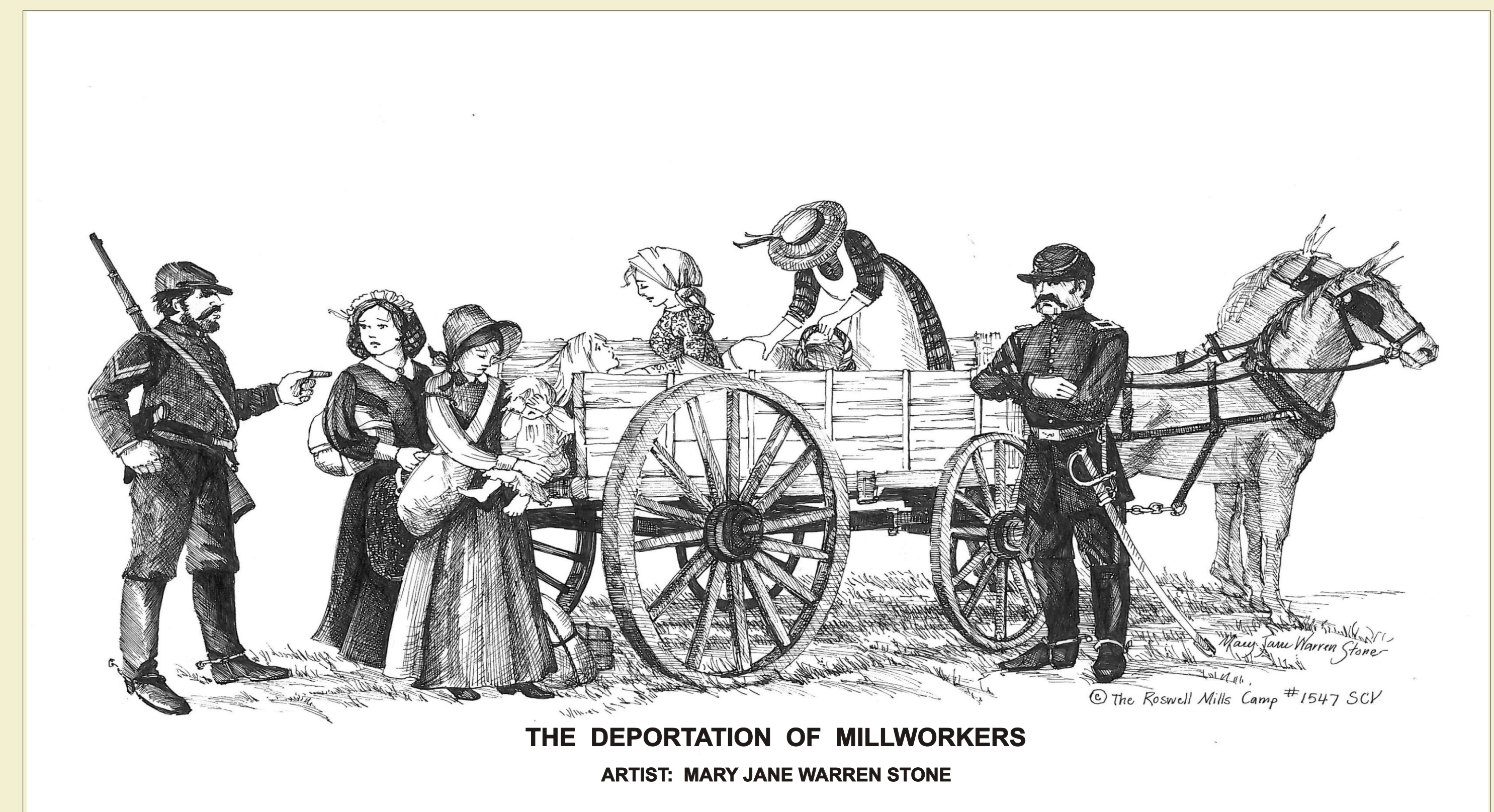
When war came in 1861, most of Roswell's men volunteered for state or Confederate service. The Roswell Mfg. Co. became a supplier to the Confederate Government of cotton cloth, rope, and yarn, and the Ivy Mill provided wool material for uniforms known as "Roswell Grey". The mills were kept running by the women and children, with some older men and discharged veterans. Federal General William T. Sherman began his Atlanta Campaign in May, 1864, and reached the Chattahoochee in early July. Seeking a crossing to flank Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's river line,

Sherman sent General Kenner Garrard's cavalry division upriver to secure the covered bridge at Roswell on July 5th.

Destruction and Deportation

Union cavalry encountered Confederate troopers west of town and fought a brief

Marietta. There they were joined by workers from the similarly destroyed New Manchester Mills. Put into railroad cars, they were carried north, via Nashville, to Louisville, KY, from whence they were dispersed into Indiana and surrounding areas, without jobs or means of support.



skirmish. Before they could capture the bridge, retreating Confederates burned it. The Federals found the Ivy Woolen Mill flying the flag of France, its superintendent, a Frenchman, claiming neutrality. The ruse was short lived. On July 6th Ivy Mill and the two cotton mills were burnt to the ground. Upon learning that they were producing war materials, Sherman ordered all mill workers arrested and charged with treason. About 400 women, men, and children were herded at gunpoint into the town square. On July 9th wagons began transporting them to

Fate

Most of those exiled from Roswell never returned. Although some came back to Georgia, many remained in Kentucky and Indiana. Lack of records has made tracing them difficult, and only through family stories do we know the fate of a few. The rest have become "the lost mill workers of Roswell".

FUNDING FOR THIS SIGN PROVIDED
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SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS