

Confederate Soldiers' Home ^[1]

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by Randall B. Rosenberg, 2006



"Old Soldiers Home, Raleigh, NC, c.1910." Call #: N_53-15_7905. Photo courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.

In [Raleigh](#) ^[2] was first conceived in October 1881, when a number of veterans meeting at the [State Fairgrounds](#) ^[3] in Raleigh formed the Society of Ex-Confederate Soldiers and Sailors of North Carolina (soon renamed the Confederate Survivors' Association of North Carolina). The movement to build a home in North Carolina officially began on 20 May 1884, when a number of prominent Confederate veterans, headed by Senator [Zebulon B. Vance](#) ^[4], convened at the courthouse in [Charlotte](#) ^[5] and organized the North Carolina Confederate Home Association to solicit and accept donations for "the accommodation" of "maimed, disabled and indigent heroes" and "unfortunate victims of the Lost Cause."

It was not until 1889 that the Confederate Veterans Association of North Carolina was formed and incorporated by the state legislature; the new organization presented as one of its goals the founding and the maintenance of a "home or homes for indigent, infirm and invalid [Confederate](#) ^[6] soldiers and sailors, or their widows and orphans." By September 1890 the Confederate Veterans Association of North Carolina, aided by the [Wake County Ladies Memorial Association](#) ^[7] and the [Daughters of the Confederacy](#) ^[8], succeeded in raising enough funds to begin leasing an eight-room house located on Polk and Bloodworth Streets, near downtown Raleigh. Within a month, as many as a half-dozen veterans were enrolled in the home, which served, technically, as the first Confederate soldiers' home in North Carolina, though only for a brief time.

A permanent home, complete with medical facilities, was finally established in an act ratified on 14 Feb. 1891, when the state deeded property near Raleigh known as Camp Russell to the newly constituted Soldiers' Home Association—an administrative body consisting of three members of the Confederate Veterans Association of North Carolina, four appointees by the governor, and an advisory board of nine "lady managers." The North Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home formally opened its doors in May 1891, becoming the fifth state-supported Confederate home in the nation (preceded only by those in Louisiana, Virginia, Maryland, and Texas). Eligible for admission to the home were veterans of either the Confederate army or navy who had served honorably in North Carolina commands until the end of the war and who had "borne a good character since" the war. As many as 1,459 individual Confederate veterans are known to have resided at the Confederate Soldiers' Home from its opening in 1891 to 1926, when the last reliable enrollment figures were kept. Approximately 90 percent of all admissions occurred before 1920, when the average Confederate veteran was well in his eighties. Roughly one-third of these men had been wounded in the war or had suffered from a service-related disability or ailment following the war, and an overwhelming majority had worked as farmers or as nonprofessionals.

During its 47-plus years of existence, the North Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home accommodated an average of no more than 90 veterans at any one time; enrollment figures exceeded 200 in 1917, although the number who were actually present then at the home was considerably lower. Once admitted to the home, the veteran remained on the roll until he died or was officially discharged or expelled for disciplinary reasons. The average tenure (time in residence) of a North Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home guest was less than four years.

After the last veteran, Walter Barfield, age 94, left the home in August 1938, the North Carolina Confederate Soldiers' Home officially closed its doors. Soon the property was reoccupied and repaired by the [National Youth Association](#) ^[9], and the hospital was renovated and reopened as the Raleigh Recreation Center. By 1948 the building was abandoned; today, the intersection of Tarboro Road and New Bern Avenue, where the home formerly stood, is occupied by the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles.

References:

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"Old Soldiers Home, Raleigh, NC, c.1910." Call #: N_53-15_7905. Photo courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives. Available from <#> (accessed May 25, 2012).

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