

FILLING IN THE GAPS:
**WAR OF 1812 RESEARCH SOURCES FOR THE SOUTH AND
ELSEWHERE**

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One of the great laments of American research has been that two great gaps exist in finding one's ancestors. Thanks to the 1850 federal census, research back to ca. 1810 usually proves easy enough but how does one prove the next generation without census records that name each member of the household? A similar problem exists for the period of around 1789, when many people have to prove a critical generation for purposes of joining patriotic hereditary organizations.

Sources generated by the War of 1812 can often solve these problems, especially for places like the South and New York state, where large numbers of troops served for that struggle. However, that conflict, what many scholars regard as the real beginnings of the United States and Canada as nations, has been largely forgotten and researchers often do not appreciate its records (or military records in general), as a source of personal information.

The United States officially fought a war with Great Britain from June 18, 1812 to December 24, 1814. This conflict knew many names including "the late war with Great Britain and the Indians" but eventually it became the War of 1812. Except for British raids on the southern coast and the Battle of New Orleans (January 8, 1815), in the South this war involved certain groups of the Creek Indians. For the history of the war in the southern states, a researcher should read such works as Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1981) and Wilburt S. Brown, *The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1969).

Here, we will discuss the sources for that war for the southern states, although some of these examples would also apply to the nation as a whole. Bibliographies and guides to sources for the War of 1812 include Stuart L. Butler, "Genealogical Records of the War of 1812," *Prologue: The Quarterly of the National Archives* 23 (1991): 420-25 and George K. Schweitzer, *War of 1812 Genealogy* (Knoxville, Tn.: The Author, 1986). For bibliographies, the researcher should consult James C. Neagles, *U. S. Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1994) and Lois Horowitz, *A Bibliography of Military Name Lists From Pre-1675 to 1900: A Guide to Genealogical Sources* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990), but especially for Kentucky and Virginia. For information on National Archives records and microfilms, you should consult *Guide to*

Genealogical Research at the National Archives (Washington: National Archives Trust, 1990) and *Military Service Records: A Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications* (Washington: National Archives Trust, 1985). Background on the War of 1812 can be found in David S. and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Encyclopedia of the War of 1812* (Santa Barbara, Ca.: ABC/CLIO, 1997); Charles Reginald Shrader, *Reference Guide to United States Military History 1607-1815* (New York: Facts on File, 1993); and C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999).

Non-naval records of this war exist as three groups: the militia, the United States volunteers, and the regular army. For militia records see the records in the respective state archives of the state where you the ancestor served. An index to the records of the U. S. volunteers is National Archives microfilm M604 *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers in the War of 1812*. The Birmingham Public Library has a copy of that microfilm. Researchers should request searches for and copies made of volunteer service records from Military Records, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001. The same records for the regular army appear in National Archives microfilm M233 *Register of Enlistments in the U. S. Army for 1798-1815*.

Service records have great value to genealogists but especially if you use them creatively. Militia records and records of the U. S. volunteers can serve as census substitutes, indicating in what part of a state an individual lived during the war. Often the "men" serving in these units were boys or old men who were not heads of household and, therefore, do not appear by name in the 1810 or 1820 federal censuses. (In any case, for most of the southern states, the 1810 and most of the 1820 federal censuses do not survive.) Men of the same surname, appearing in the same military company, were often related. Unfortunately, militia and volunteer records almost never provide vital statistics or proof of specific family relationships.

The enlistments in the regular army (microfilm M233, see above) supplies an incredible amount of useful data in an information poor period of American history. Tens of thousands of men and boys enlisted in the army for just the period of the war, 1812-1814. For a typical soldier, these records frequently give his county, as well as state of birth; age; physical description; and other information, as abstracted for men of Virginia birth or service in Stuart Lee Butler, *Virginia Soldiers in the United States Army 1800-1815* (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Press, 1986). Even when no such record survives on a specific soldier, you might find some of this information for a brother, or other close relation, that likely also applies to the person being researched.

Service in any of these commands counted towards receiving a federal military bounty land grant, prior to 1858, and towards getting a federal pension, starting in 1871. If the veteran applied, he had to explain when and where he served, as well as his residence at the time of application. If a widow or heirs of a veteran applied, the

applicant(s) had to give the place and date of death of the veteran. Veterans did not have to die in the war for heirs to apply for benefits. Widows had to give their respective birth surnames and dates of marriage. Researchers should request that searches of and copies made of bounty and pension records obtained from Military Records, National Archives and Records Administration (see above).

Initially, War of 1812 bounty lands could only be settled in Arkansas, Illinois, and Missouri; see Malcom J. Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business* (New York: Oxford University press, 1968). At the end of this article, by state, you will find indexes to these grants. Starting in 1830, veterans and their survivors could take government script in lieu of bounty lands. An act of 1842 allowed grants of land for War of 1812 service in any federal land state, including Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. National Archives microfilm M848 *War of 1812 Military Bounty Warrants* indexes these records for Illinois, Louisiana, and Michigan. The Birmingham Public Library has a copy of that microfilm. The widely available indexes to federal land grants by the Bureau of Land Management do not include military bounty lands. For the historical background on the military bounty records, you should see James W. Oberly, *Sixty Million Acres: American Veterans and the Public Lands Before the Civil War* (Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 1990).

To learn if a veteran or a widow applied for a genealogically valuable federal pension see Virgil D. White, *Index to War of 1812 Pension Files* (Waynesboro, Tn.: National Historical Publications, 1992); Mr. White has published indexes to the federal pensions for all wars, 1775-1861. More complete data on each index entry appears in National Archives microfilm M313 *Index to War of 1812 Pensions* (a copy of that microfilm is at the Birmingham Public Library.) A nation-wide geographical listing of War of 1812 pensions is United States Pension Bureau, *List of Pensioners on the Roll January 1, 1883* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883). This list has been published for many individual states. It includes Civil War as well as War of 1812 (designated as "1812" in the index) pensions. Many printed and microfilm publications of "Revolutionary War" pension payment and final pension payment records include War of 1812 and other conflicts but with no indication of when the service was not in the American Revolution but a later war.

Still other sources exist for research from the War of 1812. Not included in any of the pension lists are bounty lands (called "half pay pensions") given to widows and orphans of the War of 1812 almost immediately after the war. These records are in the National Archives and Records Administration, in Entry 587, Records of the General Accounting Office, Record Group 217. They are arranged by state and then alphabetically. A microfilm copy of the index to these records is in the collections of the Family & Regional History Program, Wallace State College, Hanceville, Alabama. Many of these deceased veterans also appear in Clarence Stewart Peterson, *Known Military Dead During the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1995). Dorothy Potter documents migration across the southern states in those years in her *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers, 1770-1823* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1990). For records of British aliens in the United

States during the war, researchers should check see Kenneth Scott, *British Aliens in the United States During the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979). The National Society of United States Daughters of 1812 and the General Society of the War of 1812 have, respectively, published various lineage books that provide genealogies back to War of 1812 veterans.

INDIVIDUAL STATE SOURCES

As with any military records, from colonial times to at least World War I, researchers should consult the sources in the state archives of the state from which the ancestor served, as well as the holdings of the National Archives. Some important sources for individual states appear below. Not included here are the numerous local publications of the 1883 pension lists.

ALABAMA

Until 1817, Alabama was part of the Mississippi Territory; see Mississippi for the records of the Mississippi Territory. A card catalog of War of 1812 service records is the Alabama Department of Archives and History and many other libraries, on microfilm. The various land office books published by Marilyn Barefield/Hahn frequently include references to military warrants that are sometimes for War of 1812 service. The continuing series by Pauline Jones Gandrud, *Alabama Soldiers Revolution, War of 1812, and Indian Wars* (Hot Springs, Ar.: Arkansas Ancestors, 1975-) is a collection of abstracts of pension claims.

ARKANSAS

Bounty land records are included in Katheren Christensen, *Arkansas Military Bounty Grants, War of 1812* (Hot Springs, Ar.: Arkansas Ancestors, 1971).

GEORGIA

The Georgia Department of Archives and History has many War of 1812 rosters, most of which have been copied and indexed in a set of typescripts called the "Georgia Military Affairs" (incomplete records covering 1775-1838), which is widely available on microfilm. Judy Kratovil published the index to Georgians in the U. S. volunteers as *Index to War of 1812 Service Records for Volunteer Soldiers for Georgia* (Atlanta: The Author, 1986). Other War of 1812 records appear in Robert S. Davis, *A Researcher's Library of Georgia* (Greenville, S. C.: Southern Historical Press, 1987), vol. 1, and his *The Georgia Black Book Volume II* (Greenville, S. C.: Southern Historical Press, 1987), as well as in Dorothy Payne's two volume *Georgia Pensioners* (McLean, Va.: Sunbelt Publishing Company, 1985-1986). Among the War of 1812 articles that have appeared in the *Georgia Genealogical Society Quarterly* there is "Some Georgia Widows and Orphans of the War of 1812," vol. 31 (1995): 28-30; and "Some More Georgia Widows and Orphans of the War of 1812," vol. 30 (1994): 120-21. The published lists of winners in the Georgia 1820, 1821,

1827, and 1832 Cherokee land lotteries includes veterans, widows, and orphans of "the late war with Great Britain and the Indians." For the historical background of and biographical information on the leaders of the War of 1812 in Georgia, the researcher should see Gordon B. Smith, *History of the Georgia Militia, 1783-1861* (4 vols., Milledgeville: Boyd Publishing, 2000).

ILLINOIS

For federal bounty lands given in this state, the researcher should consult James D. Walker, *War of 1812 Bounty Lands in Illinois* (Thomson, Il.: Heritage House, 1977).

KENTUCKY

Kentucky source books on the War of 1812 include Minnie S. Wilder, *Kentucky Soldiers of the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969) and G. Glen Clift, *Remember the Raisin!. . . Notes on Kentucky Veterans of the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company 1961). For other sources, you should consult Roseann Reinmuth Hogan, *Kentucky Ancestry* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1992).

LOUISIANA

Rosters for this state's troops are included in Marion John Bennett Pierson, *Louisiana Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society, 1999).

MARYLAND

For most of the soldiers of this state, a researcher should check F. Edward Wright, *Maryland Militia, War of 1812* (5 vols., Silver Spring, Md.: Family Line, 1979).

MISSISSIPPI

Books on the soldiers of this war include Jean Strickland and Patricia N. Edwards, *Mississippi Territory The Military Book Three* (Moss Point, Ms.: Ben Strickland Publications, 1995) and Mrs. Dunbar Rowland, *Mississippi Territory in the War of 1812* (Baltimore, Md.: Clearfield, 1996). (Our library and the Birmingham Public Library has the compiled service records on microfilm upon which at least part of the Strickland and Edwards books are based.) For other sources, the researcher should consult Anne S. Lipscomb and Kathleen S. Hutchison, *Tracing Your Mississippi Ancestors* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 45-46. For a history of the Mississippi units, you should see Dunbar Rowland, *Military History of Mississippi 1803-1898* (Greenville, S. C.: The Reprint Company, 1987).

MISSOURI

For federal bounty lands given in this state, the researcher should consult Maxine Dunaway, *Missouri Military Land Warrants, War of 1812* (Springfield, Il.: The Author, 1985) and Walter Lowrie, *Early Settlers of Missouri* (Greenville, S. C.: Southern Historical Press, 2001).

NORTH CAROLINA

Works of value in research for this state include *Muster Rolls of the Soldiers of the War of 1812 Detached From the Militia of North Carolina* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1995) and Sarah M. Lemmon, *North Carolina and the War of 1812* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1971). For other sources, you should consult George Stevenson's article in Maurice R. Stirewalt, ed., *North Carolina Research* (Raleigh: North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1980), 394-97.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Articles on the war in back issues of *The South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research* include "Some South Carolina Widows and Orphans of the War of 1812," vol. 21 (1993): 129-31; "Some Federal Military Bounty Lands Issued to South Carolinians," vol. 22 (1994): 12-8; and "Some More South Carolina Widows and Orphans of the War of 1812," vol. 22 (1994): 98. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History has a card catalog of service records from the War of 1812.

TENNESSEE

Books for this state include Byron and Samuel Sistler, *Tennesseans in the War of 1812* (Nashville: Byron Sistler and Associates, 1992); Penelope Johnson Allen, *Tennessee Soldiers in the War of 1812: regiments of Col. Allcorn and Col. Allison* (Chattanooga, Tn.: Tennessee Society, United States Daughters, War of 1812, 1947); and James L. Douthat, *The 1814 Court Martial of Tennessee Militiamen* (Signal Mountain: Mountain Press, 1993). The Tennessee State Library and Archives has microfilm of Tennessee War of 1812 rosters.

TEXAS

Many of the southern veterans of the War of 1812 spent their last years in Texas. Information on at least some of them can be found in Mary Smith Fay, *War of 1812 Veterans in Texas* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1979).

VIRGINIA

Of special value for this state are *Virginia Militia in the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001); Patrick G. Wardell, *War of 1812, Virginia Bounty and Pension Applications* (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1987); and Stuart Lee Butler, *Virginia Soldiers in the United States Army 1800-1815* (Athens, Ga.:

Iberian Press, 1986) and his *A Guide to Virginia Militia Units in the War of 1812* (Athens, Ga.: Iberian Press, 1988).