

**RESEARCH IN MILITARY RECORDS  
[OTHER THAN FOR THE CIVIL WAR]**

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Military records are not "the croutons of genealogy" but can be useful as people finders in locating a person in a place and time as well as a valuable source for such personal information as county and state of birth. However, unlike census records, military records are never comprehensive lists of more than a minority of people in any place and time.

Of the types of military records, original rosters, vouchers, etc. usually locate a man in a certain place in a certain year but may give place of birth; bounty land claims after the war (up to 1855) may have been filed by widows and orphans and be a rich source of personal information on a deceased veteran; and pension claims can contain personal data on a veteran or his dependents.

Military records are basically divided into two groups, military records at the National Archives in Washington, DC and the military records in the respective state archives. Many researchers will search one and not find their ancestor because the needed records are at the other. For example, the state archives of Alabama and Georgia have indexed records of their soldiers through World War I not found elsewhere.

Military Records, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408 has a form for requesting copies of **Federal** military service, bounty land (only prior to 1855), and pension records. This form was not intended for requests of the National Archives many other types of military records. You can also order these records from: <http://www.archives.gov/research/order/> The National Archives divides military records into the following categories: American Revolution, 1775-1783; Indian Wars, 1784-1811; War of 1812-1815; Indian Wars, 1816-1855; Mexican War, 1846-1848; Civil War, 1861-1865; Spanish American War, 1898; and Poncho Villa Campaign, 1914. Some of the Federal records have been published in parts or in the whole such as Margie G. Brown, Genealogical Abstracts [of descendants of Virginia] Revolutionary War Veterans Scripts Act 1852 (1990); James C. Neagles, Summer Soldiers: A Survey & Index of Revolutionary War Courts Martial (1986); Craig R. Scott, The "Lost" Pensions (1996); and Dorothy E. Payne, Georgia Pensioners (2 vols., 1985). However, most Federal (and state) military records have neither been published or microfilmed.

For Federal military records in general see Guide to Genealogical Research at the National Archives; Military Service Records: a Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications; James C. Neagles, U. S. Military Records: a Guide to federal and State Sources (1994); Marilyn Deputy, Register of Federal U.S. Military Records (3 vols., 1986); and Charles Reginald Shrader, Reference Guide to United States Military History, 1697-Present (5 vols. 1990-1993); and Lois Horowitz, A Bibliography of Military Name Lists From Pre-1675 to 1900 (1990). The National Archives Southeast Branch in Morrow, Georgia has on microfilm the indexes to all service records, by state, for all wars through 1898, that have been microfilmed.

We can order any National Archives microfilm on interlibrary loan from the Genealogical Society of Utah.

### **COLONIAL WARS 1607-1775**

The people of the United States had a military for more than a century before we had a United States. These pre-1776 military records should be sought at their respective state archives. Such records seldom produce any personal information although they can be useful people finders for locating people before the 1790 Federal census. Several books have been published on colonial Virginia soldiers but among the best is Lloyd Bockstruck, Virginia's Colonial Soldiers (1988). Murtie June Clark, Colonial Soldiers of the South (1986) includes rolls for some Virginia and Maryland units as well as almost all that survives of the colonial military records for the Carolinas and Georgia.

### **AMERICAN REVOLUTION 1775-1783**

Fires in 1800 and 1814 destroyed almost all of the Federal military records of the American Revolution. For thousands of soldiers and sailors, what remains of their records consists of vouchers, accounts, rolls, bounty land records etc. now in their respective state archives. Each state kept different records. Some states have published abstracts of their records such as Bobby Gilmer Moss, South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution (1990) and John H. Gwathmey, Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution (1938) while states like North Carolina and South Carolina have well indexed and reasonably easy to use microfilms of state Revolutionary War service documents. State genealogical quarterlies frequently publish Revolutionary War records.

What original records of the American Revolution that are at the National Archives are almost all available on microfilm and include M880 Compiled Service Records of Naval and Quartermaster Personnel (indexed in M879); M881 Compiled Service Records of Men Who Served in the Army (indexed in M860); M853 and M859 War Department Miscellaneous Revolutionary War Records (indexed in M847); and M247 and M332 Papers of the Continental Congress (has a published every name index).

Although the United States government had been giving some pensions as early as 1776, by the 1830s a major effort was under way in Congress to award pensions to all of the veterans and widows of veterans of the Revolution. A typical pension claim can contain the soldier's place and date of birth (sometimes even his Bible records); details of when and where he served and when he lived before and after the Revolution; the name of his wife; when and where he was married; names of friends and relatives; his place and date of death; and much more. So many claims were filed that often even claims by brothers and cousins can be found with useful information. Virgil White's indexed abstracts of these pensions: Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files (1990) serves as the best index to these records in print. Also see Craig R. Scott, The "Lost" Pensions: Settled Accounts of the Act of 6 April 1838 (1996).

Several published lists of Revolutionary War pensioners exist: The Pension Lists of 1792-1795 (1991); The Pension List of 1820 (1991); Rejected or Suspended Applications for Revolutionary War Pensions (1991); and A Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Service, 1840

(1990). The annual lists of Revolutionary War pensioners, a source for determining when a Revolutionary War pensioner died, appear on National Archives Micropublication T718 Ledgers of Payments, 1818-1872. Some information on Federal pensions and bounty lands can be found in Digested Summary and Alphabetical List of Private Claims (1853). Also see "When a Revolutionary War Pensioner's Claim Can't Be Found," National Genealogical Society Quarterly 77 (1989): 128-32.

"BLWT no papers" refers to Revolutionary War bounty lands given by the Continental Congress. (Many individual states also gave bounty lands to their respective soldiers and those records are at the respective state archives. See Lloyd Bockstruck, Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants Awarded by State Governments.) The service of the "BLWT" or bounty land warrant soldiers is given in The American State Papers, indexed in Philip McMullen, Grassroots of America (1965) and can be searched on the Internet at: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>. Also see Robert S. Davis, Jr., A Researcher's Library of Georgia (1987), p. 113, and Margie G. Brown, Genealogical Abstracts Revolutionary War Veterans [of Virginia] Script Act 1852 (1990).

For the Loyalists or Tories, Americans who supported the King's Cause, see Paul J. Bunnell, Research Guide to Loyalist Ancestors: Archives, Manuscripts, and Published Sources (1990); Murtie June Clark, Loyalists in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War (3 vols., 1981); Clifford Dwyer, Index to Series I of American Loyalist Claims (1990); Peter Wilson Coldham, American Loyalist Claims (1980); and Gregory Palmer, Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution (1984).

### **MILITARY SERVICE, 1784-1917**

The National Archives and Records Administration has the records of service, bounty land claims, and pensions for Federal service in these wars. Most of these records have not been microfilmed although requests for searches can be made by mail or over the Internet. Indexes to the compiled service records have been microfilmed, however, and we have in our collection on microfilm the national index to the service records for the Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, and the Boxer Rebellion. The books compiled from the Federal records so far include Murtie June Clark, American Militia in the Frontier Wars, 1790-1796 (1990); Virgil D. White, Index to Volunteer Soldiers 1784-1811 (1987); idem., Index to Volunteer Soldiers in Indian Wars and Disturbances 1815-1858 (1994); idem., Index to Indian Wars Pension Files 1892-1926 (1987); idem., Index to War of 1812 Pension Files (1992); idem., Index to Old Wars Pension Files, 1815-1926 (1987); and idem., Index to Mexican War Pension Files (1989). **Also see our handout for records of the War of 1812 (1812-1815).**

Most of the soldiers in Federal service prior to 1918 were volunteers although the United States also had a regular army. During the War of 1812 (1812-1815) and the Mexican War (1846-1848), however, the "regulars" varied little from the volunteers and the militia in number, recruitment, or much else. National Archives Micropublication M233 Registers of Enlistments in the U. S. Army, 1798-1914, provides information on the enlistees in the Regular United States Army that usually includes county and state of birth; age; and physical description. We have these records on microfilm for 1798-1815, 1846-1848, and 1859-1865. All of the men in these records born or enlisting from Virginia to 1815 are published in Stuart Lee Butler, Virginia's

Soldiers in the United States Army 1800-1815 (1986). For officers of the regular army see Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army (1904), which also includes lists of the officers of volunteers in the Mexican, Spanish American, and Philippine conflicts, as well as lists of battles and forts. For Navy and Marine officers see Edward W. Callahan, List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps From 1775 to 1900 (1901).

More than 550,000 veterans, widows, and families of orphans received Federal bounty land certificates for military service prior to 1855. No indexes to these claims has been compiled or lists of the claims where the claim was actually used for obtaining land by the claimant instead of being sold to land speculators. The claim of a veteran, widow or orphans should be requested, like military service and pension records from Military Service Records, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408. Also see James W. Oberly, Sixty Million Acres: American Veterans and the Public Lands Before the Civil War (1990).

### **1918 TO PRESENT**

The Federal government provided most, if not all, states with a copy of the World War I service records for their respective state's soldiers and sailors. Some state archives such as Alabama and Florida have made these records available to the public. The draft registration cards for World War I, arranged by draft board (most counties had only one draft board). We have these records on microfilm for Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. The records are being copied as a free item on the Ancestry.com web site; see John J. Newman, Uncle, We are Ready!: Registering America's Men, 1917-1918 (2001). (We also have microfilm of the World War I service records for Alabama.) Photographs and service records of most of the persons who died in service in WW I are published in W. M. Haulsee, Soldiers of the Great War (3 vols., 1920). Also see Michael G. Knapp and Constance Potter, "Here Rests in Honored Glory: World War I Graves Registration," Prologue: The Quarterly of the National Archives 23 (1991): 190-93. Military records for 1918 or later should generally be sought from the addresses on the attached handout. Also see Richard S. Johnson, How to Locate Anyone Who Is Or Has Been In The Military (1993).

Only certain records have been opened and made available to the public for modern conflicts, due to concerns over privacy. Military discharges from Federal service are found in county court houses for local soldiers, starting with the Civil War. These discharges are open, public records, although recorded on a voluntary basis by local veterans as they were discharged. We have a vertical file on World War II draft registrations (men born between 1877 and 1898, does not survive for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) and other World War II records. The National Archives has a free and completely open data base of information on most World War II service records (be sure to put last name in first): [http://aad.archives.gov/aad/topic\\_search\\_results.jsp?filter=PEOPLE](http://aad.archives.gov/aad/topic_search_results.jsp?filter=PEOPLE). (The site also contains millions of records regarding Korean Conflict and Vietnam service.) The World War II Memorial can be searched and accepts names at the Internet site: [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com). The Alabama Department of Archives and History has many military records of Alabamians in recent wars but access is restricted to individual veterans due to privacy concerns. See our handouts on World War II research.

The National Personnel Record Center has records of Naval service from the late 1800s to the present and for the Army and Air Force records (1918- ). Records of the Army and Air Force destroyed in a fire at this facility in 1973 are being reconstructed. For more information contact: <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/> Also see our handouts on the NPRC.

Other sources exist to at least provide information on military units. Many veterans groups, including for individual units from the Civil War to the present, have web sites on the Internet. The United States Army Military History Institute, 950 Soldiers Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013-5021 or [usamhi@carlisle.army.mil](mailto:usamhi@carlisle.army.mil) makes copies of unit histories, memorial books etc. in its extensive collection. For the navy, consult the Navy Historical Center, 805 Kidder Breese SE, Washington navy Yard, Washington, DC 20374-5060 or <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/>. **We have a special handout on where to contact about obtaining unit histories and histories of ships.**