

War of 1812 Service and Pension Records

Presented by Sharon D Monson

GenSearch and more

Email: gensearchandmore@gmail.com Website: www.gensearchandmore.com

On 18 June 1812, the War of 1812 began between Great Britain, British Canada, and the United States. At that time, the United States had a Regular Army with about 11,000 troops which were supported solely by the federal government. New recruits gave much needed support to the army and the ranks swelled to over 35,000 as the conflict raged on. State and Territorial Militias were active combatants in the war's vast expanse from the Great Lakes to the East Coast and on to the South. The number of militia soldiers varies by source, but Virginia alone supplied 40,000 men.

After two and a half years of fighting, the Treaty of Ghent was signed on 24 December 1814. However, a subsequent battle was fought at New Orleans on 8 January 1815. It was a decisive one, with Andrew Jackson's troops on the winning side. The United States' Congress ratified the Treaty of Ghent on 16 February 1815. A proclamation of the war's end was official on 18 Feb 1815.

It is estimated that over 2200 US soldiers were killed in battle and another 4500 were wounded. Almost 15,000 died from all causes. As with any war, the soldiers were entitled to payment for their service. When funds were not available to pay the soldiers, or survivors in the case of a soldier's death, vacant land satisfied the debt. War of 1812 service and the payments for that service have created a wealth of records that can help to identify people who lived in the early to mid-1800's.

Record Types for the War of 1812

- Bounty Land Warrants
- Burial/Grave/Tombstone
- Casualty
- Military Unit History
- Pension Application & Payments
- Prisoners of War
- Service
- Veterans' Organizations/Lineage Societies

Bounty Land Warrants

Early warrants for land in the Missouri, Illinois and Michigan Territories were offered to noncommissioned War of 1812 officers and soldiers who served for 5 years (unless they were discharged before that time ended) or their heirs. A parcel of 160 acres of land was considered a partial payment for their military service. An act by Congress on December 14, 1814 doubled the acreage for those who enlisted after that date for the duration of the war. Bounty land was extended in 1842 to areas outside of these military land districts to anywhere in the Public Domain. A Bounty

Land Warrant usually included the name, rank, company and regiment of the soldier, as well as the date the warrant was issued, the number of acres of land, and the date the warrant was exchanged for a specific parcel. War of 1812 warrants could not be assigned to another person except through inheritance until this stipulation was changed in 1852.

- War of 1812 Military Bounty Land Warrants, 1815-1858. (Micropublication M848, 15 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.

The Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter referred to as FHL, has microfilm copies of National Archives Micropublication M848. "War of 1812, military bounty land warrants, 1815-1858" are located on FHL films numbered 0983163 through 0983177. www.familysearch.org.

The Ancestry.com card catalog shows an entry for "U.S. War Bounty Land Warrants, 1789-1858". This database includes names of soldiers who received warrants issued for Revolutionary War service and War of 1812 service. Ancestry.com is an on-line paid subscription service that offers a short term free trial. The card catalog is available at www.Ancestry.com. (\$)

Burial/Grave/Tombstone

Cemetery records, whether in a military, church or community setting, usually contain the birth date and death date for a soldier. Frequently, there is a regimental marker or data noting military service and/or rank.

Casualty, Military Unit History, and Prisoners of War

Limited information about a particular soldier is found in these types of records. Casualty reports may only have a one line listing of officers and the number of casualties for the unit, no names. Military Unit Histories cover military movements, troop strength, locations of conflicts, and number of casualties, but rarely mention names other than the commanding officers. A Prisoners of War record will list a soldier's name, rank, organization, capture date/place and release date.

Pension Application & Payments

A War of 1812 Pension Application & Payments file contains data that may yield the following information: age, birth date/place, death date/place, maiden name of spouse, marriage date/place, military unit, names or number of children, names of friends, relatives or neighbors, physical description, place of residence, and service history. Most soldiers' files do not contain all of this information. The earliest pensions were granted to soldiers who were disabled while in the service and to the heirs of soldiers who died during the war. Pensions based on military service were not available until acts of Congress were passed in 1871 and 1878. By these dates, most of the veterans were deceased. A majority of the applicants were surviving widows and heirs of the soldier.

- Veterans Administration. United States. Index to War of 1812 Pension Application Files. (Micropublication M313, 102 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.

The "Index to War of 1812 Pension Application Files" is available on microfilm at the FHL. Films are numbered 840431 through 840500 and 847501 through 847532. The "Index to War of 1812 Pension Application Files" browse through images are available on-line. See FamilySearch catalog at www.familysearch.org.

Ancestry.com has a database titled "War of 1812 Pension Application Files Index, 1812-1815". The file description indicates the records contain the name of the veteran, widow's name if there was one, pension claim or file number and service type or organization. (\$)

Due to indexing differences, it is suggested that you search both the FamilySearch Historical Records index and the Ancestry.com index for the War of 1812 pension application files.

Service

A War of 1812 Service file contains data that may yield the following information: age, birth place, bounty land warrant number, death date/place, military unit, occupation, place of residence, physical description, and enlistment/discharge from service. Most soldiers' files do not contain all of this information. US Federal troops came from all 18 states and 5 territories that were in existence when the war started, as well as the District of Columbia. The "regulars" were career soldiers, who served full time in the Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry and Light Infantry, U S Navy and Marine Corp, and Riflemen units. The War Department did not compile service records for the regular enlisted men or officers for the War of 1812. The three groups of records for the regulars noted below are a good source for information on these soldiers.

Records regarding enlisted men in the Federal troops during the War of 1812 are under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Adjutant General. The actual papers are now housed in the National Archives. They have not been microfilmed and are not available through Interlibrary Loan. The Register is searchable by surname and has extracted information from the original papers.

- Adjutant General's Office. Register of Enlistments in the U. S. Army, 1798-1914. (Micropublication M233, 81 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.
- Adjutant General's Office. Discharge Certificates and Miscellaneous Records Relating to the Discharge of Soldiers from the Regular Army, 1792-1815. Record Group (RG) 94, Series 19. (Micropublication M1856, 6 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.
- Department of State. War of 1812 Papers of the Department of State, 1789-1815. (Micropublication M588, 7 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.

The "Registers of enlistments in the United States Army, 1798-1914" are available in two formats at the FHL. The 81 rolls of film are numbered 350307 through 350349, 1319378 through 1319380, and 1465934 through 1465966. The "United States, Register of enlistments in the U S Army" is also on-line and is part of FamilySearch Historical Records. "War of 1812 papers of the Department of State, 1789-1815" FHL films are numbered 929359 through 929365. These papers are from the National Archives Micropublication M588. Correspondence regarding passports, passenger lists of outgoing vessels, agreements for the exchange of Prisoners of War and other letters are indexed for the 1812-1815 time period. The FamilySearch catalog is available on-line at www.familysearch.org .

The Ancestry.com card catalog notes an on-line database titled "U.S. Army, Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914. The description indicates the database will not include men who enlisted as part of a reserve or volunteered during wartime for short periods of time, or anyone who served in a state militia. Ancestry.com also offers the "War of 1812 Papers, 1789-1815" database on-line at www.Ancestry.com . (\$)

Fold3 is another paid subscription on-line service that has the "War of 1812 Discharge Certificates" in a database of military records. The soldiers are listed by name and by regular unit. No militiamen or volunteers are in this collection. Fold3 military records are available at www.Fold3.com . (\$)

By far, the State and Territorial Militias supplied the most soldiers in the War of 1812. The States were Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia. The Territories were Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, and Missouri. War of 1812 Muster Rolls of the State of Virginia show approximately 40,000 men served from that state alone. The Federal Government directly recruited some volunteer units and also federalized state militias for short term service during the war.

Compiled Military Service Records from the original muster and pay rolls are arranged by state or federal volunteer unit and then alphabetically by the name of the soldier. The actual service records have not been filmed and are not available on Interlibrary Loan. All information in the original muster or pay roll was transferred to the compiled service record and includes the soldiers in the reserves, militias, and volunteer units.

- Adjutant General's Office. Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers who Served During the War of 1812. (Micropublication M602, 234 Rolls). Washington: National Archives.

The "Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers who Served During the War of 1812" films are available at the FHL. Films are numbered 882519 through 882752. This index is also available with browse through images. See FamilySearch catalog at www.familysearch.org.

Ancestry.com offers "U.S., War of 1812 Service Records, 1812-1815", "U.S., Returns from Military Posts, 1806-1916" and the "U.S. Army Historical Register, 1789-1902, Vol 1-2" as on-line databases on their website at www.ancestry.com. (\$)

Veterans' Organizations/Lineage Societies

The National Society United States Daughters of 1812 was organized in 1892. An ancestor database is searchable by name and may give birth date/place and death date/place. www.usdaughters1812.org.

The General Society of the War of 1812 was organized in 1814. It is a confederation of state societies with membership open to any male person above the age of 21 years, who participated or who is a lineal descendant of one who served during the War of 1812. <http://societyofthewarof1812.org>.

National Archives Website

www.archives.gov

Choose Information for "Genealogists", then "Military Records". There are instructions for ordering paper copies of Military Pension/Bounty Land Warrant Applications on Form Number NATF 85 and Military Service Records on Form Number NATF 86 for military service prior to 1917. (\$\$) These records are stored at the Textual Archives Services Division in Washington, DC.

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