

Tracing Your American Revolutionary War Ancestors

David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist, dalambert@nehgs.org

The rich collections of records for soldiers and patriots of the Revolutionary War have aided scholars for generations. It is the purpose of this lecture to introduce and review these resources in researching the life of the veteran during the war and in their post-war life.

Basic Steps of Military Research

- Why research a veteran?
- How old was your veteran?

Patriotic Service

- An act or series of actions that demonstrate loyalty to the American cause
- Examples: Signing oaths of fidelity to the new government, rendering aid to wounded (nurses and doctors), furnishing supplies, lending money or munitions.
- These acts cannot be self-serving and had to be rendered towards the patriots only.
- The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) accepts the following examples of patriotic service: <https://www.dar.org/national-society/accepted-revolutionary-war-service>
- The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) accepts the following examples of patriotic service: <https://www.sar.org/how-to-apply/>

Examining previous services in the Colonial Wars

- Determine if your ancestor fought.
- What Colonial Wars occurred during his lifetime?
 - King George's War: 1740-1748.
 - French and Indian War: 1754-1763.

American Revolutionary War

- Does his age fit the Muster Roll?
- Family relics in the attic.
- Forgotten images of your veteran.
- Oral family traditions.
- Cemetery clues and pitfalls.



American Revolutionary War Resources

- Muster Rolls.
- Quartermaster Rolls.
- Pension Files and Final Payment Vouchers.
- Journals and diaries.
- 1840 U.S. Census.
- Correspondence from officers.
- Maps.
- Published Genealogies and town histories.

From Published to Primary Sources

- Published accounts to Muster Rolls.
- Overview of published resources for New York State, and the 1911 NY State Capitol fire.
- Loyalist research overview.
- U.S. Federal Pension files.
- Going beyond Pension abstracts and dissecting pension files.
- Final Pension Vouchers.
- 1840 Census of Pensioners.

Consider Adopting the Regiment or Crew

Consider using the steps you have learned and examine the pensions and stories of those men who served with your ancestor. The details in the diaries, letters, and pensions of his fellow veterans may add more detail to the story you know from researching his records.

Overview of the best approaches for adopting a regiment or company

- Determine your limits and set goals.
- Utilize social media to attract assistance and find other descendants.
- What is your final product of your research on this “adoption”?

Applying to various Hereditary Societies for the Revolutionary War

- National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
<https://www.dar.org/>
- National Society Sons of the American Revolution
<https://www.sar.org/>
- National Society Children of the American Revolution



<https://www.nscar.org/>

- General Society of the Sons of the Revolution
<https://sr1776.org/>
- The Society of the Cincinnati
<https://www.societyofthecincinnati.org/>
- The Order of Founders and Patriots
<https://ofpa.org/>
- Daughters of the Cincinnati
<https://daughters1894.org/>

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Flick, Alexander Clarence, *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1901).

Grundset, Eric G., *New York in the American Revolution*, (Washington, D.C.: NSDAR, 2012)

Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1896-1908) 10 vols.

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New York are published in Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, Relating to the War of the Revolution, (Albany: 1868)

White, Virgil D., *Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files*, (Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Publishing Co., 1990-1992) 3 vols.

Websites

- **Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Genealogical Research System (GRS)** -
<https://www.dar.org/grs>
- **Reports of the Subcommittee on Revolutionary Taxes**, National Society SAR Genealogy Committee, 2013 - A state-by-state breakdown on which county and local taxes count for patriotic service <https://www.sar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Revolutionary-War-Tax-Law-Records-Multiple-States.pdf>



- **Revolutionary Taxes as Evidence of Patriotic Service** - <https://www.sar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Revolutionary-Taxes-as-Evidence-of-Patriotic-Service.pdf>
- **Revolutionary War Pensions on Fold3 (\$)** <https://www.fold3.com/publication/467/us-revolutionary-war-pensions-1800-1900>
- **Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) Patriot Research System (PRS)** – <https://www.sar.org/patriot-research-system/>
- **Volunteer to transcribe the pension of your Revolutionary War ancestor and others via the National Archives “Citizen Archivist” online:** <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/missions/revolutionary-war-pension-files>