

Military Records at the National Archives

David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist, david.lambert@americanancestors.org

Revolutionary War

Muster and Payrolls

- Often a published series with verbatim transcriptions or abstracted detail.
- Originals can be located online from Fold3.com and Family Search.org
- Most muster rolls are in the possession of the State Archives for the individual units. The National Archives only has microfilm copies available.

Pension and Bounty Land

- Early Bounty Land records were destroyed in two fires at the War Department in 1800 and 1814. Many Pensions will reference a BLW Number and state "No papers".
- Fold3 has digitized all Revolutionary War Pension records from the microfilm.
- Revolutionary War Pensions **cannot** be examined at NARA.

Final Payment Vouchers

- Fold3 has the index to Final Payment vouchers, and the images Georgia and Delaware.
- Revolutionary War Vouchers are being digitized at NARA and currently **cannot** be examined.

War of 1812

Original Records at NARA

- War of 1812 Compiled Military Service Record (NARA M602) *a part of Record Group (RG 94) Records of the Adjutant's General's Office.*
- War of 1812 Pension Record (NARA M313) they are 86% digitized on Fold3.com. Currently surnames "A" to most of the letter "S" are online.

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) – M602

- Compiled primarily from Federal and State Muster Rolls.
- Pay orders and pay vouchers.

- Misc. Federal & State military documents.
- Contains the name, rank and unit for the veteran.
- Tip: Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina are not included
- U.S. Army Register of Enlistment, 1798-1914:
<https://www.Ancestry.com/search/collections/1198/>

Papers of the U.S. State Department 1789-1815 – RG 59, M588

- Letters Received Concerning Letters of Marque, 1812-1814
- Letters Received Regarding Enemy Aliens, 1812-1814
- U.S. Marshal's Returns of Enemy Aliens and Prisoners of War, 1812-1815
- Requests for Permission to Sail from the United States, 1812-1814
- Passenger Lists of Outgoing Vessels
- Compiled primarily from Federal and State Muster Rolls.
- Correspondence Regarding Passports, 1812-1814
- Agreements for the Exchange of Prisoners of War, 1812-1813
- Misc. Letters Received Concerning the Release of Prisoners, 1812-1815
- Reports of William Lambert, Secret Agent, 1813
- Misc. Intercepted Correspondence, 1789-1814
- M588 (17 rolls of microfilm)

Prisoner of War Records – M1747

- Lists of prisoners
- Accounts of clothing provided U.S. agents to prisoners held in Canada
- Lists of soldiers captured at a certain place or in a certain battle
- Lists of prisoners held at a certain place
- Lists of prisoners who died in captivity
- Lists of men exchanged
- Correspondence

Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1775-1910 – RG45

- Muster Rolls and Payrolls of Vessels 1779-1885.
- Muster Rolls and Payrolls of Shore Establishments of the U.S. Navy, 1800-1842.

U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1892 – T1118

- Name
- Rank
- Enlistment date and muster date

- Vessel or installation where the Marine was located.
- Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1089/>

War of 1812 Pension Files – M313

- Application of veteran or widow
- Proof of service
- Affidavits relating to claim
- Correspondence from veteran
- Receipts
- Genealogical information, e.g. death certificate
- Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/761/us-war-of-1812-pension-files-1812-1815> Note: As of March 2025 (A to S, and partially into the surname T is complete. (88% overall completed).

War of 1812 – War Bounty Land Warrants

- Many War of 1812 veterans or their widows did not live long enough to collect a pension in 1871.
- Original Bounty Land records can be searched first on the Bureau of Land Management website.
- Application of veteran or widow
- First series Bounty Land for War of 1812 service were issued under acts of December 24, 1811, January 11, 1812, and May 6, 1812
- Congress stated that noncommissioned officers and soldiers serving for five years (or discharged earlier), or their heirs, would eventually be entitled to 160 acres of land from the public domain in partial compensation for their military service
- Six million acres of land in the Territories of Michigan, Illinois, and Louisiana were set aside for this purpose
- Second series per act of Congress on December 10, 1814
- Act increased by doubling the acreage offered to soldiers enlisting after that date
- These warrants per this act were called “Double Bounty Warrants”
- Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1165/>
- Bureau of Land Management Database <https://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search>

Mexican War

- Orders Of General Zachary Taylor to The Army Of Occupation In The Mexican War, 1845-1847 (M-29)
- Index To Mexican War Pension Files, 1887-1926 (T-317)

- Index To Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During The Mexican War (M-616)
- Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During The Mexican War In Organizations From The State Of Mississippi (M-863)
- FamilySearch: Pension Index <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1979390>

Civil War

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) Union and Confederate

- **Confederacy:** Online on Fold3
- **Union:** Some states and USCT (U.S. Colored Troops) are on Fold3.com: **D.C., GA MA, TX, and UT**
- You can make requests for the originals at NARA for other states

Union Veteran Pension Files

- T288 Index – Alphabetical by veteran
- T289 Index – Arranged by Regiment
- Pensions for the U.S. Navy & Marines online on Fold3 and are not in this series.
- U.S Navy and Marines: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/120/us-navy-survivors-certificates-1861-1910>
- Widows of U.S. Navy and Marines: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/121/us-navy-widows-certificates-1861-1910>

Typical Pension File Papers

- Declaration for pension and pension application
- Certificate of disability
- Surgeon's certificate with disability description (form and sketch)
- Questionnaires (Form 3-447 used before 1902; Form 3-389; widow questionnaire)
- Affidavits (for and against the pensioner)
- Correspondence
- Bills and receipts
- Surgeon's certificate and disabilities described.

Confederate Pensions Files

- **Not located at the National Archives.**
- State repositories maintain the original records.

- Family Search: Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee.
- Guide to Confederate Pensions from NARA: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/confederate-pension-records>

RG 94 – Adjutant General’s Office

- Carded Medical Records for the Regular Army, 1821-1884 (through 1912)

Proceedings of U.S. Army courts-martial and military commissions of Union soldiers executed by U.S. military authorities, 1861-1866 (M-1523)

- Carded Medical Records for the Regular Army, 1821-1884 (through 1912)
- Arranged in alphabetical order.
- Includes 267 Union soldiers who were executed, mostly for desertion or murder.
- Executions were carried out by firing squad or hanging.

Spanish American War

- Index To Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During The War With Spain In Organizations From The State Of North Carolina (M-413)
- General Index To Compiled Service Records Of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During The War With Spain (M-871)
- Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served In The Florida Infantry During The War With Spain (M-1087)
- Florida records: Online from Fold3
- Texas records: TX State Archives https://txarchives.org/tslac/finding_aids/30076.xml
- Index on Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/879/us-spanish-american-war-service-record-index-1898>
- Pension Records are in the same index as the Civil War covering 1861-1934.

Philippine Insurrection

- Index To Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During The Philippine Insurrection (M-872)

Impacts of the 1973 Fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)

- Records destroyed include Army and Air Force:
 - Army: Enlisted men (1912-1960) and Officers (1917-1960) compiled service folders (80% destroyed)

- Did not impact records for retirees and reservists who were alive on 12 July 1973.
 - Air Force: 1947-1964 compiled service folders (75% destroyed)
 - Surnames starting with “Hubbard” and through the end of the alphabet
- Navy and Marine service records survived
 - They can be requested at <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel/ompf-archival-requests>
- Surviving Records:
 - Morning Reports
 - Daily details about the status of a military unit.
 - Few details found for WWI records, mainly a last name and some details
 - WWII - List of soldiers in a company with the date, location, and notable information about their service (battles, hospitalizations, POW’s, etc.)
 - Originally on microfilm at NPRC – WWI digitized on Fold3.com (WWII to be digitized later)- <https://www.fold3.com/publication/1141/us-morning-reports-1912-1939>
 - Unit Rosters (1912-1959)
 - List of soldiers enrolled in a military unit.
 - Listed with service number.
 - Final Pay Vouchers
 - Often the only surviving record of a veteran soldier’s Official Military Personnel File (OMPF).
 - These were kept separately and recorded the last payment issued.
 - Contain the name, rank, organization, date and place of enlistment, pay information, character, and date of discharge.

Archives I – Record Groups for World War I

RG 26 – U.S. Coast Guard

- Muster Rolls, 1833-1932
- Honorable Discharges, 1917-1919
- Personnel and Pay cards, 1917-1921
- Officer personnel files, 1915-1929
- Vessel logbooks, 1915-1947
- Casualty and wreck reports, 1913-1936

RG 41 – Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation

- Merchant seaman lost in WWI, 1914-19

- Recruit enrollment & application 1918-1921
- Applications to serve on Merchants Ships 1918-19
- Seamen's Protection Certificates, 1918-1919
- Merchant Marine Logbooks (RG 26 – Coast Guard)
- Casualty and wreck reports, 1913-1936

RG 153 – Office of the Judge Advocate General (Jag Files)

- Ledgers of all AEF Court Martial Convictions, 1917-1919

RG 391 – U.S. Army Mobile Units

- Infantry divisions and brigades
- Corps of Engineers Battalion and company records, muster rolls.
- 1st through 15th U.S. Cavalry Regiments
- Infantry divisions and brigades
- Field artillery regiments
- Coastal Artillery Units and Mine planters

RG 395 – U.S. Army Overseas Operations

- U.S. Army troops stationed in China 1912-1938
- A.E.F. troops in Siberia 1918-1920
- Troops stationed in Puerto Rico 1918-1919.

U.S. Navy Logbooks

- U.S. Navy logbooks are located at Archives I (Washington, D.C.) for United States naval vessels before 1941. For later logbooks, they need to be consulted at Archives II (College Park, MD).
- Logbooks at Archives 1 vessel name and hull number through 1940 that are online:
<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/logbooks/navy-online-thru-1940>
- Logbooks at Archives 1 that are available to view in person through 1940:
- <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/logbooks/special-list-44-named>

Websites

- American Ancestors – www.americanancestors.org
- American Battlefield Monuments Commission (ABMC) – www.abmc.gov
- Ancestry - www.ancestry.com – Census and various WWI and WWII databases

- Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS) - <http://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs.html>
- FamilySearch – www.familysearch.org – WWI and WWII Draft and military databases
- FamilySearch Wiki – World War I - [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/World War I United States Military Records, 1917 to 1918](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/World_War_I_United_States_Military_Records,_1917_to_1918)
- FamilySearch Wiki – World War II - [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/World War II United States Military Records, 1941 to 1945](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/World_War_II_United_States_Military_Records,_1941_to_1945)
- Field of Honor (Belgium and Holland WWII) <http://www.fieldsofhonor-database.com>
- Find a Grave, Free gravestone registry – www.findagrave.com
- National Archives Guide to Federal Records (Search by RG number) – <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records>
- National Archives Military Microfilm Finding Aids- <https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/finding-aids/microfilm/military.html>
- SF-180 Form <https://vetrecs.archives.gov/VeteranRequest/home.html>
- US Army War College - [https://chicago.polarislibrary.com/polaris/search/browse.aspx?ctx=34.1033.0.0.1&type=Browse&term=Army%20War%20College%20\(U.S.\)%20Press&by=SE&sort=RELEVANCE&limit=TOM=&query=&page=0&searchid=0](https://chicago.polarislibrary.com/polaris/search/browse.aspx?ctx=34.1033.0.0.1&type=Browse&term=Army%20War%20College%20(U.S.)%20Press&by=SE&sort=RELEVANCE&limit=TOM=&query=&page=0&searchid=0)
- WWII Casualties - www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/navy-casualties
- WWII Memorial Registry - <https://wwiiregistry.abmc.gov/>