

Revolutionary War Research: Tracing Patriot and Loyalist Ancestors

Class 3: Using Revolutionary War Pension Records

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Confirming your Veteran's Identity

- Examine Service records and confirm Family members
- Does this Pension apply to your ancestor?

Pension Timeline

- 1776: Half pay for officers and men disabled in the service
- 1780: Half pay for seven years to widows and orphans of officers
- 1806: Pensions allowed to veterans of State troops and militia
- 1818: Pensions for life based on a period of nine months or the end of the war
- 1820: Certified inventories of a pensioner's estate and income required
- 1832: Pensions granted for service less than 6 months
- 1838: Widows were authorized pensions for five years if married before 1794
- 1848: Widows were authorized pensions for life if married before 1800
- 1853: All widows restrictions were eliminated
- 1878: Widows authorized pensions for life if the veteran only served two weeks
- U.S. Pension Roll of 1835
- 1840 U.S. Census and published pensioner list of 1841

Published Pension Abstracts

Virgil D. White, *Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files* (Waynesboro, Tenn.: National Historical Publishing Co., 1990-1992), 4 vols.

Types of Pensions

- Survivor's Pension - Indicated by an "S" on pension envelope.
- Widow's Pension - Indicated by a "W" on pension envelope.
- Rejected Pension - Indicated by an "R" on pension envelope.

Information Collected for Survivor Pensions:

- Name
- Age
- Date of Birth (sometimes birthplace)
- Residence

- Letters written by survivor and family
- Affidavits from others that served with the veteran

Information Collected for Widow's Pensions:

- Name
- Age
- Date and place of marriage
- Date and place of spouse's death
- Residence
- Letters written by widow and surviving family
- Affidavits from others that served with the veteran

Strategies for Using Pension Files:

- **Marriage Records:** Look for any widow's pensions that were filed. These records required some form of proof indicating that the widow was married to the veteran soldier. Often, you find letters from the town clerk's office indicating if a marriage was filed, letters from the officiant attesting they performed the marriage, and even witnesses saying they observed the wedding.
- **Widows Married Multiple Times:** In some widow pensions, you may see references to additional marriages before or after the pensioner has died. Reviewing the contents of the pension files of each husband can be helpful for confirming her maiden name and noting the order of the marriages.
- **Migration Patterns:** Review any correspondence written by the veteran soldier (or surviving widow). Often, they describe where the soldier was born, where they enlisted, what campaigns they served in. Note the return addresses on any letters that indicate the family moved to a different state.
- **Affidavits:** Review the pensions of others that served with your ancestor. You may find a letter from your ancestor providing an affidavit for someone else to receive their pension file.
- **Identifying New Cousins:** Review the letters towards the end of the pension file. A cousin may have requested a copy of the pension file before the records were digitized and added online.

Final Payment Vouchers

- Last payment made to veteran or widow usually due to death.
- Sometimes someone was suspended from the roll.
- Often find power of attorney documents allowing an attorney to collect final payments on behalf of family.
- Index (1818-1864) available on Fold3.com
 - <https://www.fold3.com/title/654/final-payment-vouchers-index-for-military-pensions-1818-1864>
- Delaware and Georgia final payment vouchers on Fold3.com
 - Delaware - <https://www.fold3.com/title/787/final-payment-vouchers-delaware>
 - Georgia - <https://www.fold3.com/title/787/final-payment-vouchers-delaware>

The Last Pensioners of the Revolutionary War

- Daniel Frederick Bakeman (1759-1869)
- Esther (Sumner) Damon (1816-1906)

Websites Discussed

- **Ancestry.com**
 - U.S., The Pension Roll of 1835: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60514/>
 - 1840 United States Federal Census: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8057/>
 - Muster Rolls of the Revolutionary War, 1767-1833 (Massachusetts): <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/746935?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
- **Archive.org**
 - *A Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services* (1841): <https://archive.org/details/censusofpensione00usce>
- **Fold3.com**

Index (1818-1864) available on Fold3.com

 - <https://www.fold3.com/title/654/final-payment-vouchers-index-for-military-pensions-1818-1864>
- **Delaware and Georgia final payment vouchers on Fold3.com**
 - Delaware - <https://www.fold3.com/title/787/final-payment-vouchers-delaware>
 - Georgia - <https://www.fold3.com/title/787/final-payment-vouchers-delaware>
- **FamilySearch.org**
 - United States Revolutionary War Pension Payment Ledgers: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/2069831>
- **AmericanAncestors.org**
 - Massachusetts: Revolutionary War Pensioners' Receipts, 1799-1807: <https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/massachusetts-revolutionary-war-pensioners-receipts-1799-1807/transcript?pageName=&rId=0>
 - Massachusetts: Revolutionary War Pensioners' Receipts, 1827-1836: <https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/massachusetts-revolutionary-war-pensioners-receipts-1827-1836/transcript?pageName=&rId=0>
 - Massachusetts: Revolutionary War Naval Pensioners' Receipts, 1829-1832: <https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/united-states-revolutionary-war-naval-pensioners-receipts-1829-1832/transcript?pageName=&rId=0>
 - Index of Revolutionary War Pensioners, 1800-1900: <https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/index-of-revolutionary-war-pensioners-1800-1900/transcript?pageName=&rId=0>

- National Archives (NARA)
 - NARA: Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Online
<https://catalog.archives.gov/search-within/300022>

Record Hierarchy

Record Group 15:
Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1773 - 2007

Series:
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service, ca. 1800 - ca. 1912

Tag

daniel owen

Discharge Certificate for John Whitehead

Roberts

Whitehead

2128

Abraham Forney

adams

Alexander Davidson

Alexander McClanahan R6616

Amberson

Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service, ca. 1800 – ca. 1912

⚠ This Series contains records, some of which may not be available online.
To obtain a copy or view the records, please contact or visit the National Archives and Records Administration location(s) listed in the Contact information below.

Additional Information About this Series

National Archives Identifier: 300022

Creator(s): Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions, 1849-1930 (Most Recent)
War Department, Office of the Secretary, 1789-9/18/1947 (Predecessor)
War Department, Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch, ca. 1810-1815 (Predecessor)

From: Record Group 15: Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1773 - 2007

Details

Level of Description: Series

Type(s) of Archival Materials: Textual Records

The creator compiled or maintained the series between: ca. 1800 - ca. 1912

This series documents the time period: ca. 1775 - ca. 1900

Date Note: This series contains documents submitted in support of pension applications that date from the Revolutionary War period, as well as documentation added by the Bureau of Pensions that is dated up to approximately 1900.

Includes: 83004 file unit(s) described in the catalog
1 item(s) described in the catalog Search within this series

Other Title(s): Revolutionary War Pension Files Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by name of soldier.

- Search for pension file and put full name in quotation marks (ex. “John Stockbridge”)

NATIONAL ARCHIVES CATALOG ≡ MENU

ARCHIVES.GOV LOGIN REGISTER VETERANS' SERVICE RECORDS HELP API CONTACT US About Us Privacy Policy Accessibility FOIA USA.gov

"John Stockbridge" Advanced Search Login Register

1 – 20 of 83,148 results in 0.20 seconds. Highlight Results Sort Share Export

Refine By: Data Source

- Archival Descriptions with Digital Objects (83013)
- Archival Descriptions (135)

Refine By: Level of Description

- Item (144)
- File Unit (83004)

Refine By: Type of Materials

- Textual Records (83028)
- Photographs and Other Graphic Materials (119)
- Artifacts (1)

Refine By: File Format

- Image (JPG) (82914)

Refinements: Ancestor NARA-ID: 300022

Searching "John Stockbridge" Within:

Series

Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service, 1800 - 1912
Record Group: Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs
From RG: 15
 This series consists of applications and other records pertaining to claims for pensions and bounty land warrants. The files contain information pertaining to a soldier's rank, unit, and period of service, his age or date of birth, his resi...
National Archives Identifier: 300022 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A
Creators: War Department, Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch, ca. 1810-1815; War Department, Office of the Secretary, 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions, 1849-1930

All
Available Online
Web Pages
Documents
Images
Videos

File Unit

Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File of Joseph Smead
From RG: 15
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service
 This file documents the military service of Joseph Smead of Massachusetts during the American Revolutionary War and his family history.
National Archives Identifier: 300023 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A, A1 2A
Creators: War Department, Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch, ca. 1810-1815; War Department, Office of the Secretary, 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions, 1849-1930

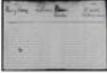
- Review search results and click on the link to access the pension file.

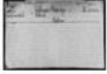
All Available Online Web Pages Documents Images Videos Results per page: 20

All: 4 results

 **Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File W 25075, for John Stockbridge, Massachusetts**
 From RG: 15
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service
 Pensioner: Mary Stockbridge. Veteran's Service: Continental Mass.
National Archives Identifier: 144267233 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A
Creators: War Department. Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch. ca. 1810-1815; War Department. Office of the Secretary. 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior. Bureau of Pensions. 1849-1930

 **Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File S. 28877, for John Shulp, New York**
 From RG: 15
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service
 Veteran's Service: New York.
National Archives Identifier: 196625445 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A
Creators: War Department. Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch. ca. 1810-1815; War Department. Office of the Secretary. 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior. Bureau of Pensions. 1849-1930

 **Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File W 26509, for Peleg Tallman, Connecticut**
 From RG: 15
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service
 Pensioner: Eleanor Tallman. Veteran's Service: Navy (Conn.).
National Archives Identifier: 196734420 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A
Creators: War Department. Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch. ca. 1810-1815; War Department. Office of the Secretary. 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior. Bureau of Pensions. 1849-1930

 **Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File W. 21,606, George Allyn, Conn. Continental.**
 From RG: 15
Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service
 Pensioner: Sabra Allyn
National Archives Identifier: 53812496 **HMS Entry Number(s):** A1 2A
Creators: War Department. Military Bounty Lands and Pension Branch. ca. 1810-1815; War Department. Office of the Secretary. 1789-9/18/1947; Department of the Interior. Bureau of Pensions. 1849-1930

Loyalist Pensions and Claims

Locating Records from the National Archives (UK)

- **Audit Office (AO/276)**
- **AO 12 and 13** – Ancestry.com “UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835”
- **WO 42** – Ancestry.com “UK, Pension Applications for Widows and Family of Military Officers, 1776-1881”
- **WO 97 and 120** – Ancestry.com “UK, Royal Hospital, Chelsea: Regimental Registers of Pensioners, 1713-1882”

Genealogical Details gleaned from Loyalist Claims

- Name of the person or family affected for the claim
- Residence(s) of the individual or family
- Financial estimates of their losses
- Actual documents to support the claim
- Details of the Loyalist’s life in America before, during, and after the Revolutionary War

Websites Discussed

Ancestry.com

- UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835
www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3712/
- UK, Pension Applications For Widows and Family of Military Officers
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3353/>
- UK. Royal Hospital, Chelsea: Regimental Registers of Pensions, 1713-1882
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3255/>

Publications

“Researching and Remembering Revolutionary War Veterans”. *American Ancestors Magazine* (Fall 2024) 25:3.
https://www.americanancestors.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/AAM_v25n3_final_web.pdf - Various articles relating to researching veterans in the Revolutionary War.

Paul J. Bunnell, *Research Guide to Loyalist Ancestors: A Directory to Archives, Manuscripts, and Published Sources* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1990).

Keith E. Fitzgerald, *Loyalist Lists: Over 2000 Loyalist Names and Families from the Haldimand Papers* (Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1984).

James C. Neagles, *U.S. military records: a guide to federal and state sources, Colonial America to the present*. (Salt Lake City, Ancestry, 1994)

Lt. Col. Richard S. Johnson and Debra Johnson Knox, *How to Locate Anyone who is or has been in the Military - Armed forces locator guide*. (Spartanburg, SC: MIE Publishing, 1999)

Brenda Dougall Merriman, *United Empire Loyalists: A Guide to Tracing Loyalist Ancestors in Upper Canada* (Campbellville, Ontario: Global Heritage Press, 2006).

Virgil D. White, *Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files*. (Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Pub. Co., 1990)

Esther Clark Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick* (Wolfville, NS: E.C. Wright, 1955).