# Guide to Selected Records for Revolutionary War Military and Patriotic Service

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This guide focuses on records that document an individual's military or patriotic service during the American Revolution. While primarily focusing on records in the National Archives, it also describes some relevant state and local records.

## **Federal Sources**

## Easy to Access – A Checklist of Items to Search

National Archives Microfilm Publications have a number (such as M246 or T718) and a title, such as *Revolutionary War Rolls*, 1775–1783. Some of these microfilm publications can be found online at Ancestry.com or Fold3.com. Roll lists for all microfilm publications are available FREE online at Order Online at <a href="https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/">https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/</a> >. You do not need to register or buy anything.

# **Military Service** 1. \_\_\_\_ M880, Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel and members of the Departments of the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General of Military Stores Who Served During the Revolutionary War (4 rolls). Fold3.com, Ancestry.com. Name Index: \_\_\_\_. M879. Index to Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel Who Served During the Revolutionary War (1 roll). 2. \_\_\_\_ M881, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the **Revolutionary War** (1,096 rolls). Fold3.com. Arranged by state then by military unit. Name Index: \_\_\_\_\_. M860. General Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Revolutionary War Soldiers (58 rolls). 4. \_\_\_ M246, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783 (138 rolls). Ancestry.com. Find your man in M881, then look at this to see the original records where that information came from. Arranged by state, then by unit. 5. \_\_\_\_ M913, Personnel Returns of the 6th Massachusetts Battalion, 1779–1780, and Returns and Accounts of Military Stores for the 8th and 9th Massachusetts Regiments, 1779–1782 (1 roll).

**Personnel Returns, 6th Mass.** Gives the number and rank of officers and noncommissioned officers and the number of "rank and file" present for duty, needed

to fill vacancies, and changes since the previous return, such as the number of men who had died or deserted or had been discharged, transferred, taken prisoner, reduced in rank, or promoted. Notations give the names of officers and men absent, the reason for their absence, the length of their absence, and their location. Inspection returns show the quantity and condition of arms, accoutrements, clothing, and other equipment. Field returns show the number of officers and men present, absent, sick, taken prisoner, and the places of detail for officers and men. Descriptive returns give the soldier's name, age, stature, complexion, color of hair and eyes, occupation, place of birth, and last place of residence.

Military Stores, 8th & 9th Mass. Quartermaster Joshua Clapp made the returns in this volume for the 9th Massachusetts Regiment until January 1781 when a reorganization placed many of the officers and men of this regiment in the 8th Massachusetts Regiment. Returns dated after January 1781 and accounts of arms, ammunition, and accourtements that begin in May 1781 are for the latter organization. Returns concern guns, muskets, bayonets, scabbards, swords, belts, slings, cartridges, cartridge boxes, drums, and fifes; they show the quantity and condition of military stores that were on hand, lost, or needed. Some returns carry a notation explaining the manner in which stores were lost.

6. \_\_\_ T42, General Orders Kept by Gen. William Heath, May 23, 1777–Oct. 20, 1778 (1 roll).

7. \_\_\_\_ Cards Concerning Revolutionary War Service and Imprisonment, ca. 1776-ca. 1783. RG 45, I-18 Series 523, NAID 1756473. Fold3.com. Card index created by Office of Naval Records and Library (existed 1919-47). Arranged alphabetically by name. This series contains three sets of cards captioned "War of the Revolution Navy and Privateer Records." The first set is for officers, men, and a few passengers of captured American vessels who were taken to Forton Prison in England. The information was taken from the "Journal of Forton Prison." The information in the second set was taken from Senate Executive Document No. 11, 37th Congress, 2nd session, which pertains to money due to those who served under John Paul Jones. The third set of cards is for persons sent to the Old Mill Prison in England. The information was taken from the New England Historical and Genealogical Register, Vol. 19 (1865) and Charles Herbert, A Relic of the Revolution (Boston, 1847). The information given on the cards varies but may include prisoner's name, rank, vessel, and nationality or state of residence. For those who were imprisoned, there is information concerning their capture and imprisonment and sometimes the circumstances of leaving prison. For the second set, there is also information concerning the amount of prize money due.

## British

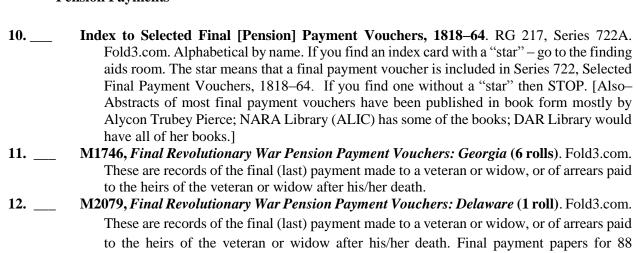
**8.** \_\_\_ **M922,** *Orders Returns, Morning Reports, and Accounts of British Troops, 1776–1781* (1 **roll**). Four volumes of British records were found among "old records long stored away," circa 1903, in the Philadelphia Depot of the Quartermaster's Department at the Schuylkill Arsenal.

- Orderly Book, Oct. 26-Dec. 17, 1777, contains copies of British brigade and regimental orders issued mainly at Philadelphia to troops under the command of Gen. William Howe concerning promotions, courts-martial, details, assignments, troop movements, and other matters. Also contains four loose receipts, July-August 1781, pertaining to supplies and a return, November 7, 1779, of "men that drew rations of the sick" in the 1st Battalion of the Brigade of Guards.
- Returns, Morning Reports, and Lists of Officers and Men of a Detachment of the Brigade of Foot Guards. 2 vols. Consists primarily of monthly and weekly returns and morning reports showing the number of men serving in a detachment of the Brigade of Guards commanded by Col. (later Maj. Gen.) Edward Mathew. The first volume, Mar. 22, 1776–June 24, 1777, includes several returns of arms, accoutrements, and clothing; abstracts of rations drawn; lists of officers; lists of dead, missing, captured, and discharged soldiers; and a list of soldiers who were punished. The second volume, June 24, 1777–December 25, 1779, also includes embarkation and disembarkation returns; returns of arms and accoutrements lost; a list of men invalided and sent to England; lists of men captured, killed, and wounded; and a list of officers. At the end of the volume are lists of men of the 1st, Coldstream, and 3d Regiments who died, deserted, or were discharged, invalided, promoted, listed as missing, "entertained" (received from England), or captured; and so forth.

## Post-War Compensation Pension

9. \_\_\_ M804, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files (2,670 rolls). (Beware of its lighter-weight sister, M805). M804 on Fold3.com, Ancestry.com. M805 on HeritageQuest.com. Veterans still alive in 1818–32, and widows still alive in 1836–55. Veteran's life history, evidence of widow's marriage to veteran, correspondence. See "Revolutionary War Pension Files—An Introduction" for more information.

## **Pension Payments**



Revolutionary War and 2 War of 1812 veterans or widows.

13. \_\_\_ T718, Ledgers of Payments, 1818-1872, to U.S. Pensioners Under Acts of 1818 Through 1858, from Records of the Office of the Third Auditor of the Treasury (23 rolls).

Ancestry.com. Arranged by Act of Congress then by state then by first letter of pensioner's surname. Starting point for more detailed research in original records.

#### **Land Warrants**

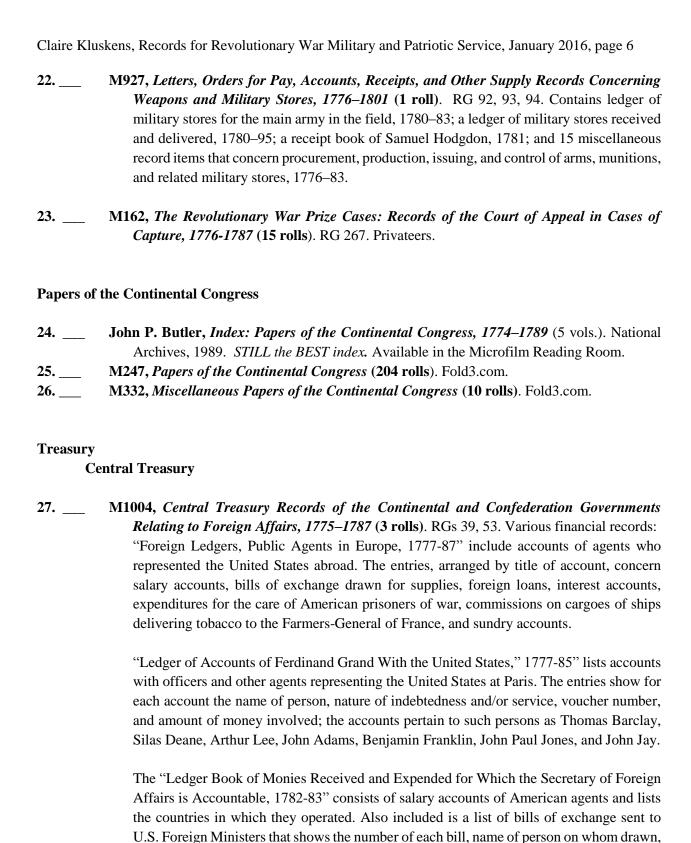
- 14. \_\_\_ M910, Virginia Half Pay and Other Related Revolutionary War Pension Application Files (18 rolls). RG 15. FamilySearch.org. Contains 279 files from the Third Auditor of the Treasury. In May 1779 the General Assembly of Virginia authorized the payment of half pay for life to the State's military and naval officers, including chaplains, physicians, surgeons, and surgeons' mates, who served until the end of the war in State units within the State's borders or in the Continental Army. Later, Virginia wanted the U.S. Government assume the obligation because its March 1, 1784, deed of cession of the territory northwest of the Ohio River provided "that the necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by the State of Virginia in subduing any British posts, or in maintaining forts or garrisons within, and for the defence, or in acquiring any part of the territory so ceded or relinquished, shall be fully reimbursed by the United States." An act of Congress of July 5, 1832, directed the Secretary of the Treasury to reimburse the State of Virginia for halfpay pension payments made to the officers of the Virginia State Navy and certain designated units of the Virginia Line. In 1835, responsibility for handling these claims was shifted to the War Department's Pension Office. Most of the claims in this microfilm publication relate to Virginia half-pay pensions, but some of them relate to claims under other Revolutionary War pension acts, or to veterans of the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars! Some Revolutionary War veterans *also* have pension files in M804.
- 15. \_\_\_ T1008, Register of Army Land Warrants Issued Under the Act of 1788, for Service in the Revolutionary War: Military District of Ohio (1 roll). RG 49.
- M829, U.S. Revolutionary War Bounty Land Warrants Used in the U.S. Military District of 16. \_\_\_ Ohio and Related Papers (Acts of 1788, 1803, and 1806) (16 rolls). RG 49. Ancsetry.com. Arranged by act, then numerically. Start with the indexes and registers on Roll 1. On September 16, 1776, Congress passed a resolution promising free land in the public domain to officers and soldiers who continued to serve during the Revolutionary War or, if they were killed, to their representatives or heirs. The resolution provided that a private or noncommissioned officer would be entitled to 100 acres of bounty land, an ensign to 150 acres, a lieutenant to 200 acres, a captain to 300 acres, a major to 400 acres, a lieutenant colonel to 450 acres, and a colonel to 500 acres. In 1780 the resolution was extended to grant a brigadier general 850 acres and a major general 1,100 acres. The resolution was implemented by an ordinance passed by the Confederation Congress on July 9, 1788, which authorized the Secretary at War to issue land warrants to all eligible veterans upon application. However, there was no effective system for providing land upon which to "locate" the Revolutionary War bounty land warrants until June 1, 1796 (1 Stat. 490), when Congress reserved a 4,000-square-mile tract in the Northwest Territory. This area, which became known as the U.S. Military District of Ohio, was surveyed into townships 5 miles square, each of which was divided into quarter townships of 4,000 acres; the acres in turn

were subdivided into sections, half sections, and lots. The act specified, however, that land was to be distributed in minimum quantities of quarter townships. For this reason it was necessary for persons possessing warrants totaling less than 4,000 acres to pool their rights. In most cases owners entrusted their warrants to an agent who located the land and received a patent. The land was then redistributed among the original warrant holders and a deed was issued to each one by the agent. An act of May 30, 1830 (4 Stat. 423) allowed "scrip certificates" to be issued in exchange for unused warrants so that the claimant could were purchase land in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and an act of July 27, 1842 (5 Stat. 497), allowed the scrip was honored for any land open in the public domain.

17. \_\_\_ M1786, Record of Invalid Pension Payments to Veterans of the Revolutionary War, and the Regular Army and Navy, March 1801–September 1815 (1 roll). Entries are arranged in two chronological sequences – March 1801–March 1809 and September 1809–September 1815, then by state or territory.

## Miscellaneous

- 18. \_\_\_ M847, Special Index to Numbered Records in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1775–1783 (39 rolls). Arranged alphabetically by name. If it gives you a "book" number, go to M853; if it gives you a "manuscript" number, go to M859.
- 19. \_\_\_ M853, Numbered Record Books Concerning Military Operations and Service, Pay and Settlement of Accounts, and Supplies in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records (41 rolls). Fold3.com. Arranged in numerical order by book number then by page number. Bound volumes of records, including orderly books (orders); oaths of allegiance and fidelity and oaths of office; commissions and resignations; lists of troops and letters; pay and settlement of accounts; receipts; and accounting for supplies.
- 20. \_\_\_ M859, Miscellaneous Numbered Records (The Manuscript File) in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1774–1790s (125 rolls). Fold3.com. Arranged in numerical order. Records related to pay and supplies predominate, but there are also records of oaths of allegiance, correspondence, enlistment papers, resignations, and other matters.
- M926, Letters, Returns, Accounts, and Estimates of the Quartermaster General's Department, 1776–1783, in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records (1 roll). Contains a register of letters received by Alexander Church, Superintendent of the Continental Horse Yard, 1781; a return of public property belonging to the Quartermaster General's Department, 1781–82; a ledger of Quartermaster General accounts, 1780–83; and 55 miscellaneous unbound items including letters, returns, payrolls, abstracts, memorandums, accounts, estimates, and lists that relate to supplying quartermaster stores, equipment, and transportation and to providing artificers, carpenters, and other support personnel for the military forces between 1776 and 1783.



name of agent, date of action, amount in livres, rate of exchange, and title of the person by

whom it was drawn.

The "Account of the Bills Drawn Upon ... Benjamin Franklin for Contingencies of the War..., 1785" is a one-page document that lists bills of exchange drawn by Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, and Pennsylvania and paid by Ferdinand Grand as agent for the United States. The number and denominations of the bills and the total amounts in dollars for each State are shown.

Copies "Silas Deane Papers, 1775–1835," were made from documents that relate to transactions between Deane and Robert Morris, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Pierre Beaumarchais, and others.

- M1014, Central Treasury Records of the Continental and Confederation Governments, 1774–1789 (23 rolls). RGs 39, 53, 217. The accounting methods used by the Continental and Confederation Governments resulted in the creation of the following principal bookkeeping records: the waste book, a chronologically arranged record in which all fiscal transactions were first posted; the blotter, another chronologically arranged record that was begun January 16, 1782, and eventually replaced the waste book as the initial posting record on January 2, 1787; the journal, the final, chronologically arranged account book in which all fiscal transactions were entered by date from the waste book and blotter; and the ledger, the final accounting record in which all fiscal transactions were entered alphabetically by title of the account or by name of accountable officer. Various miscellaneous subsidiary accounting books, some of which record receipts and expenditures of the central government or pertain to a particular function or specific person's accounts, were also created.
- M1015, Central Treasury Records of the Continental and Confederation Governments Relating to the Military Affairs, 1775–1789 (7 rolls). RG 39, 53, 217. The records consist of journals of expenditures relating to the armies from June 25, 1776, through May 24, 1786; a journal and a ledger of sundry accounts kept by the commissioners of accounts resident at Albany, N.Y., from December 2, 1776, through May 16, 1780; a journal, a ledger, and a cashbook, each relating to purchases of military supplies and stores, July 1, 1779-October 27, 1783; several volumes relating to officers' accounts, including George Washington's account books of 1775-83, and accounting books kept by the Paymaster General and by regimental and company paymasters; certificates of indebtedness issued to soldiers by Paymaster General John Pierce, July 11, 1783-March 2, 1786; and ledgers of pension payments made to Revolutionary War invalids, widows, and orphans of Pennsylvania, 1785-1804.
- 30. \_\_\_ T909, Fiscal Records of the United States, 1776-1789. Journal of the Treasury Office and the General Auditor's Office, April 16, 1776–Sept 20, 1781 (1 roll). RG 217.

## **Continental Loan Offices**

If your ancestors were rich enough to loan money to the government, you might find their names.

Claire Kluskens, Records for Revolutionary War Military and Patriotic Service, January 2016, page 8

31	M1005, Records of the Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island Continental Loan
	Offices, 1777–1791 (2 rolls).
32	M1006, Records of the New Jersey and New York Continental Loan Offices, 1777-1790 (2
	rolls).
33	M1007, Records of the Pennsylvania Continental Loan Office, 1776–1788 (3 rolls).
34	M1008, Records of the Delaware and Maryland Continental Loan Offices, 1777-1790 (1
	roll).

## **Published State Rosters (selected states)**

#### Connecticut.

Connecticut Adjutant-General's Office. Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War. Hartford: [Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co.], 1889.

#### Delaware.

Whiteley, William Gustavus. *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Delaware*. Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1896. F161.D35 no.14

#### Georgia.

Georgia Dept. of Archives and History. Georgia's Roster of the Revolution, Containing a List of the State's Defenders; Officers and Men; Soldiers and Sailors; Partisans and Regulars; Whether Enlisted from Georgia or Settled in Georgia After the Close of Hostilities. Atlanta, Ga., Index Printing Co., 1920. E263.G3 G3

#### Maryland.

Maryland Historical Society. *Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1972. Reprint of Vol. 18, *Archives of Maryland*. NSDAR Library.

Massachusetts. Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of State. *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War. A Compilation from the Archives*. Boston, Wright and Potter Printing Co., State Printers 1896-1908. 17 vols. E263.M4 M4

#### New Hampshire.

Hammond, Isaac Weare. *Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War*. Concord, N.H. P. B. Cogswell, state printer, 1885-89.E263.N42

#### New Jersey.

New Jersey Adjutant-General's Office. *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*. Trenton, N.J., W.T. Nicholson & co., printers, 1872. E263.N5 N5

#### New York

Secretary of State. Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y. Albany, Weed, Parsons & Company, printers, 1868. E263.N6 A3

New York (State) Comptroller's Office. *New York in the Revolution as Colony and State*. Albany, N.Y.: J.B. Lyon Co., 1901-04. E263.N6 N51.

#### Vermont.

Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1783. Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Co., 1904. E263.V5 V5

#### Virginia.

Gwathmey, John Hastings. *Historical Register of Virginians in the Revolution: Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, 1775-1783*. Richmond, Va.: Dietz Press, 1938. E263.V8 G9

## **Examples of Books Describing State Archives Collections:**

Bielinski, Stefan. A Guide to the Revolutionary War Manuscripts in the New York State Library. Albany: New York State American Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Georgia Dept. of Archives and History. A Preliminary Guide to Eighteenth-Century Records Held by the Georgia Department of Archives and History. Atlanta: The Dept., 1976.

#### **Excellent reads:**

Resch, John Phillips. Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, c1999. E259 .R47

Young, Alfred Fabian. *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, c1999. E215.7 .Y68

#### **More Information about Records in the National Archives:**

- Lee D. Bacon, Early Navy Personnel Records at the National Archives, 1776-1860," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring 1995). Online at <a href="http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1995/spring/early-navy-records.html">http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1995/spring/early-navy-records.html</a>
- Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, "Dig Deeper into Less Well Known Revolutionary War Records," *NGS Magazine*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr.-June 2009): 43-46. Online at <a href="http://mysite.verizon.net/ckluskens/NGSNews2009Apr.pdf">http://mysite.verizon.net/ckluskens/NGSNews2009Apr.pdf</a>>
- Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, "Follow the Money: Tracking Revolutionary War Army Pension Payments," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Winter 2008): 46-57. Online at <a href="http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2008/winter/follow-money.html">http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2008/winter/follow-money.html</a>.
- Claire Prechtel-Kluskens, "Revolutionary War Pension Files--An Introduction." *NGS NewsMagazine*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr.-June 2006): 34-37. Online at <a href="http://mysite.verizon.net/ckluskens/NGSNews06Apr.pdf">http://mysite.verizon.net/ckluskens/NGSNews06Apr.pdf</a>

Claire Kluskens, Records for Revolutionary War Military and Patriotic Service, January 2016, page 10

Military Resources: American Revolution (Online content). Online at

<a href="http://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution/index.html">http://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution/index.html</a>

Pictures of the Revolutionary War (Online content). Online at

<a href="http://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution/pictures/index.html">http://www.archives.gov/research/military/american-revolution/pictures/index.html</a>

**National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution,** 1776 D Street, Washington, DC. Library is open to the public. Free.

The National Society accepts service, with some exceptions, for the period between 19 April 1775 (Battle of Lexington) and 26 November 1783 (withdrawal of British Troops from New York) as follows:

#### **Signers of the Declaration of Independence**

Military Service, such as participation in:

Army and Navy of the Continental Establishment

State Navv

State and Local Militia

Privateers

Military or Naval Service performed by French nationals in the American theater of war

**Civil Service,** under authority of Provisional or new State Governments:

State Officials

County and Town Officials (Town Clerk, Selectman, Juror, Town Treasurer, Judge, Sheriff, Constable, Jailer, Surveyor of Highways, Justice of the Peace, etc.)

## Patriotic Service, which includes:

Members of the Continental Congress, State Conventions, and Assemblies

Membership in committees made necessary by the War, including service on committees which furthered the cause of the Colonies from April 1774, such as Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety, committees to care for soldier's families, etc. Signer of Oath of Fidelity and Support, Oath of Allegiance, etc.

Members of the Boston Tea Party

Defenders of Forts and Frontiers, and Signers of petitions addressed to and recognizing the authority of the Provisional and new State Governments

Doctors, nurses, and others rendering aid to the wounded (other than their immediate families)

Ministers who gave patriotic sermons and encouraged patriotic activity

Furnishing a substitute for military service

Prisoners of war or refugees from occupying forces

Prisoners on the British ship Old Jersey or other prison ships

Service in the Spanish Troops under Galvez or the Louisiana Militia after 24 December 1776

Service performed by French nationals within the colonies or in Europe in support of the American cause

Claire Kluskens, Records for Revolutionary War Military and Patriotic Service, January 2016, page 11

- Those who rendered material aid, in Spanish America, by supplying cattle for Galvez's forces after 24 December 1776
- Those who applied in Virginia for Certificates of Rights to land for settlement and those who were entitled to and were granted preemption rights
- Those who took the Oath of Fidelity to the Commonwealth of Virginia from October 1779 to 26 November 1783
- Those who rendered material aid such as furnishing supplies with or without remuneration, lending money to the Colonies, munitions makers, gunsmiths, etc.