

WAR OF 1812 MILITARY SERVICE, BOUNTY LAND, AND PENSION RECORDS

A Step-by-Step Guide to Basic Federal Sources

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The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the repository of the permanently valuable records of the United States Federal Government, with facilities open to the public for research in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD; and at 12 Regional Archives; 2 personnel record centers; and 14 Presidential Libraries.

The National Archives Building, 700 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20408, <https://www.archives.gov/dc>, contains many records relating to the War of 1812. Bring photo identification (such as a driver's license) and take note of the researcher registration process and research room rules at <https://www.archives.gov/research/research-room-rules>.

OVERVIEW

Your search path will be determined by whether your ancestor served in the “volunteer” or “Regular” army. The most efficient search path for each type of service is given below; they are intended to help you conduct your research in a logical order.

VOLUNTEER ARMY

More than 450,000 men served in “volunteer” units. These units have state designations, such as 1st Regiment (Mills') Ohio Militia.

- **Step 1: Check for Bounty Land.** Go to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management's “General Land Office Records” (GLO Records) website at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>. Do this from any computer with internet access.
 - Click on “Search Documents”
 - Change “Location” from “Alabama” to “Any State” (at the bottom of the list).
 - Enter surname in the “Last Name” field. If surname is common, you might want to add a first name. (Search alternate spellings of surname if needed.)
 - Hit “Search Patents”
 - In the list you get, “Accession” numbers that start with “MW” relate to land given for military bounty land warrants; *other designations may also relate to warrants for military service*. Click on the Accession number.
 - The next screen gives you “**Patent Details**” that includes information you need to see the related “Surrendered Bounty Land Warrant file” at the National Archives.
 - The “Patent Image” is a copy of the Patent (deed) the patentee received. It includes the name of the military unit in which the warrantee (receiver of the Bounty Land Warrant) served. You can download and print this for free!
 - The “Related Documents” gives you links to learn who the neighbors were in the same Section.

- **Step 2: Obtain the “Surrendered Bounty Land Warrant File” from the National Archives.** These files *sometimes* give information about the veteran or his family. They *certainly* indicate actions taken by the veteran, his widow or heirs, concerning the warrant. NARA staff need the name of the “Patentee” plus three pieces of information from the “Patent Details” page: (1) “Authority” (Act of Congress); (2) Number of Acres; and (3) “Document Number” (that’s the warrant number). NOT online or on microfilm. Get a copy of this file—
 - (1) In person at the National Archives Building;
 - (2) By mail using the NATF Form 84—find it online at <https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-84.pdf>; or
 - (3) By ordering online at NARA’s “Order Online” system at <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>.
- **Step 3: Obtain the “Bounty Land Warrant Application File” from the National Archives.** These files contain the evidence that the veteran, or his widow submitted to obtain bounty land. About 2,000 files are online here: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/567388>. Get a copy of this file—
 - (1) In person at the National Archives Building;
 - (2) By mail using the NATF Form 85—find it online at <https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-85.pdf>; or
 - (3) By ordering online at NARA’s “Order Online” system at <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>.
- **Step 4: Obtain the Pension File if the veteran lived to 1871 or the widow lived to 1878. Most War of 1812 Pension Files are now online (free to all) at Fold3.com.** Details: In 1871 Congress authorized pensions for veterans who had been cited by Congress for specific service, and who had not supported the Confederate cause during the Civil War (16 Statutes at Large 411). In 1878 Congress authorized pensions for widows of veterans if their marriage occurred before the 1815 peace treaty.
- **Step 5: Check National Archives Microfilm Publication M602, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812* (234 rolls),** online at FamilySearch.org, Fold3.com, Ancestry.com, and in the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=Fold3%202017%20M602>. This step may *seem* unnecessary if you learned the military unit from the Patent in Step 1. *However*, the 1812 CMSR Index was created by a different government agency (Adjutant General) than the BLW Warrant Application Files (Pension Office) and Surrendered BLW Warrant Files (General Land Office). Therefore, it’s a good idea to check the index to make sure you have the correct unit to get the CMSR (Step 6 below). Also, many soldiers served but never applied for bounty land because they (or their widow) died before they were eligible.
- **Step 6: Obtain the Compiled Military Service Record from the National Archives:**
 - (1) In person at the National Archives Building;
 - (2) By mail using the NATF Form 85—find it online at <https://www.archives.gov/files/forms/pdf/natf-85.pdf>;

- (3) By ordering online at NARA's "Order Online" system at <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>.
- (4) Online for selected units:
 - National Archives Microfilm Publication M678, *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from the Territory of Mississippi* (22 rolls), online in the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=mississippi&f.ancestorNaIds=300392>, and on Fold3.com and Ancestry.com.
 - National Archives Microfilm Publication M1829, *Compiled Military Service Records of Major Uriah Blue's Detachment of Chickasaw Indians* (1 roll), online in the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=%22Uriah%20Blue%22&f.ancestorNaIds=300392>, and on Fold3.com.
 - National Archives Microfilm Publication M1830, *Compiled Military Service Records of Major McIntosh's Company of Creek Indians* (1 roll), online on Fold3.com.

REGULAR ARMY

When war began on 18 June 1812, there were only 7,000 men in the "Regular Army." By war's end, it expanded to 35,000 men. These units have "U.S." designations, such as "39th U.S. Infantry" or simply "39th Infantry."

- **Step 1: Check for Bounty Land.** See details above under Volunteer Army.
- **Step 2: Obtain the "Surrendered Bounty Land Warrant file" from the National Archives.** See details above under Volunteer Army.
- **Step 3: Obtain the "Bounty Land Warrant Application File" from the National Archives.** See details above under Volunteer Army.
- **Step 4: Obtain the Pension File if the veteran lived to 1871 or the widow lived to 1878. Most are now online at Fold3.com.** See details above under Volunteer Army.
- **Step 5: Search for the soldier in the "Registers of Enlistment, 1798-1914" available online on Ancestry.com, Fold3.com, and FamilySearch.org.** The registers contain the basic facts about a soldier and his enlistment, copied directly from his enlistment paper(s). As an added bonus, the earlier registers tend to include all of the information the War Department could find about a soldier from a variety of record sources, so these clues should help the researcher and archival staff locate original records related to those matters.
- **Step 6: Obtain the soldier's Enlistment Papers (NAID 300390), from the National Archives.** Basic information about this series can be found at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/300390>. To get a copy of a specific soldier's Enlistment Papers, email to archives1reference@nara.gov the following information: your name, postal mailing address, phone number, and email address; the soldier's name and military unit; and specify that you want his Enlistment Papers from RG 94, Entry 91.

- **Step 7: Check to see if the soldier's discharge paper is included in National Archives Microfilm Publication M1856, *Discharge Certificates and Miscellaneous Records Relating to the Discharge of Soldiers from the Regular Army, 1792-1815* (6 rolls).** Discharge certificates were issued to soldiers; the U.S. Government did **not** normally keep a copy. However, if the soldier was owed pay upon his discharge, he presented the discharge certificate to the paymaster in order to collect his pay. Thus, some discharge certificates became part of the War Department's records.
 - Information about the records is at <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/war-of-1812/1812-discharge-certificates/discharge-certificates.html>.
 - The "List of Soldiers by Name" is at <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/war-of-1812/1812-discharge-certificates/soldiers-by-name.html>
- **Step 8: Search for a Court Martial Case File, 1800-1894, in the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/301659>.** To search:
 - (1) Hit "Search within this series"
 - (2) Replace the *: in the search bar (upper left of the page) with the soldier's surname, then hit the "magnifying glass icon" (or hit enter on your keyboard)
 - (3) Look through the list for the soldier in which you are interested. Click on his name to see the date of the court martial and the file number.
 - (4) To get a copy, email to archives1reference@nara.gov the following information: your name, postal mailing address, phone number, and email address; the soldier's name; date of court martial; and court martial file number and specify that you want his Court Martial File from RG 153, Entry PC29 15A.
- **Step 9: Learn about the soldier's military unit by studying National Archives Microfilm Publication M617, *Returns from United States Military Posts, 1800-1916* (1,550 rolls),** online on Ancestry.com. These records show which units were stationed at a particular post, with their strength (numbers), officers, and a record of events.

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National Genealogical Society. "War of 1812 Records" Continuing Genealogical Studies Course, available online at <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/cgs/war-of-1812-records/>.