

The War of 1812 - Records

Remember the Raisin

- Who won the War of 1812?
- What age men fought?
- Do you *Remember the Raisin*?

It's been more than 200 years since the War of 1812 was fought. The conflict lasted from June 1812 to February 1815, and has been called the second war for independence or Mr. Madison's war. American independence had been gained with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Thirty years later, Britain and the United States were at war again.

Understanding the War – Some reasons for the War of 1812 between the United States and the British:

1. *Impressment of American sailors.*
2. *Control of Canada.*
3. *British instigation of Native Americans.*
4. *British trade restrictions.*

Key Factors:

- The British were at war with France. The American war was fought with whatever money, manpower and naval force the British could spare, amounting to about 7% of the total British military effort.
- The United States was unprepared militarily (12 ships v. 800 ships), New England did not support the war, and Americans did not want to serve in the military outside their home states.
- The United States was unprepared financially. Income from import tariffs was poor due to trade restrictions.
- Regional disagreements: New England states were opposed and even considered secession. War hawks in Congress felt war was needed to stop impressment and trade restrictions.
- The war at sea was fought mostly in the Great Lakes, and, to end the British blockade, in Chesapeake Bay.
- The war on land was fought on three fronts: Canada and the Great Lakes, the Washington, Baltimore, Chesapeake Bay area, and in the South along the Gulf Coast.

Key Events:

1 Jun 1812 – US declared war. Military action began in 1812 with three invasions of Canada; none successful.

18 Jan 1813 – Battle of the Raisin. In an early battle by the Raisin River in Michigan, 500 British and 800 Indians overwhelmed 1000 Americans. The next day the Indians killed all the wounded soldiers. Only 33 Americans escaped death or capture. This shocked the nation and "Remember the Raisin" became a rallying cry throughout the war – the precursor to "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember the Maine" in later wars.

30 Aug 1813 – In the Southwest, the Creeks massacred a large number of white settlers who had taken refuge at Ft. Mims, Alabama, heightening anxieties across the frontier amid the perception that the British had armed Indians to kill Americans.

10 Sep 1813 – Commodore Oliver Perry defeated the British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie, a total defeat for the British. After the battle, Perry sent this message to his commander: "***We have met the enemy and they are ours.***" Lake Erie was cleared of British vessels, eliminating the threat to American communications in Canada.

5 Oct 1813 – In Canada, British and Indian forces were defeated by American forces when William Henry Harrison won a decisive victory in the **Battle of the Thames** (a river in Ontario). At the battle, **Tecumseh**, leader of the Indians allied with the British, was killed and Native American power broken.

Aug 1814 – British burned Washington, DC. Dolly Madison saved the picture of George Washington; President Madison rallied the American public.

13 Sep 1814 – Battle of Fort McHenry. Francis Scott Key wrote the lyrics to *The Star Spangled Banner*.

24 Dec 1814 – Treaty of Ghent ended the war. It became effective on 18 Feb 1815.

8 Jan 1815 – Battle of New Orleans. Two weeks after the treaty was signed, Andrew Jackson's forces defeated the British. The British lost 2000, Americans lost 71.

Results:

- The nation resumed vigorous foreign trade and began to build a transportation system.
- Trade interruptions had forced a significant growth of American manufacturing.
- Native American resistance was removed from the Ohio River Valley, opening the Midwest for expansion.
- Britain recognized pre-war boundaries between US and Canada.
- US got fishing rights in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Which of Our Ancestors Fought?

Here are the guidelines for enlisted men in the infantry in the regular army. As the war went on, changes were made, indicated by the brackets.

In the Infantry, Men enlisted...are not to be taken above Twenty-five [Thirty] years of Age, nor less than Five Feet Six [Five] inch high; but growing Lads from Seventeen to Nineteen Years of Age, may be taken as low as Five Feet Five [Four] Inches.... The Lads and Boys are to be enlisted as Privates, without any Promise or Expectation being held out to them that they are to be of the Band, or put on Drummer's Pay.

For the regular army, this would generally mean men born before 1795-1798, with the average age somewhere between 17 and 25. Of course there were older men already serving.

In the state militias, boys as young as 12 served as drummers and medics and there was no real upper age ceiling for men to serve. The average age was between 15 and 45.

The navy included men from age eleven to seventy-seven years old, representing all the states and territories.

What Documents Were Created?

Masses of documents were created to manage the military units. Many of them still exist, and can be used to trace family history: service records, discharge certificates, muster rolls, pension applications and files, enlistment records, military post records, bounty land records, volunteer records, privateer records, court records for prisoners, casualties or courts-martial, petitions to congress, claims with state governments, adjutant general records, seaman papers, and more.

Where Are They Now?

The bicentennial in 2012 triggered the digitization of many documents, many now online; some you'll still need to find in films from Salt Lake or visit a county courthouse or NARA in DC. The documents aren't all in one place, and there isn't one place to search for them. *Use the titles of the databases* to search in Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Fold3.com, and Archive.org. Items with (Mxxx) or (Txxx) are NARA microfilm.

Index to the War of 1812 Pension Application Files (M313). Wounded or disabled veterans, widows or heirs may have applied for pensions. This name index includes *all* groups of participants, officers, men, soldiers, sailors, and privateers. For the index only: search and browse: Ancestry, Family Search; browse only: Internet Archive (fast browsing); The actual files

are on Fold3: 65% complete, free. For the other 35% of the files: order the complete file for \$30 from Archives.gov >Choose Forms >Choose Military Pension/Bounty Land Warrant Applications (NATF Form 85) >Choose Download Form and then order online.

Old War Index, 1815-1926. If you didn't find someone in M313, he might be listed in the Old War Index at FamilySearch (browse or search).

Bounty Land Warrants. Many veterans or their survivors were granted bounty land warrants in exchange for military service. Warrants were often applied toward a land patent or may have been sold or surrendered. If a warrant is listed on the pension application card, search for it at <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. Order complete file on NATF Form 85, \$30, from NARA. Warrants were granted under these acts: Act of 1812, Regular Army; Act of 1850 or 1852, Volunteer Army; Act of 1855, any branch; privateers not entitled to bounty land.

Volunteers; Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR). Index to Compiled Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812, (M602), also identified as **United States, War of 1812 Index to Service Records, 1812-1815.** The majority of soldiers who served during the War of 1812 were volunteers, or members of state militia who were federalized for portions of the war period. The actual service records have not been filmed. Browse the index at Family Search and Internet Archive; Ancestry, database only.

Other NARA Compiled Military Service Records. NARA microfilm: Index only: Louisiana (M229), North Carolina (M250), South Carolina (M652). Actual records (also on Fold3): Mississippi (M678), Chickasaw Indians (M1829), Creek Indians (M1830). The records can be ordered from NARA on Form NATF 86 for \$30.

Regular Army. Your ancestor might have been a career soldier. Service in the regular army is indicated by numbered regiments. Soldiers enlisted for 5 years or the duration of the war. Look for his pension and his widow's on Ancestry: **Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914.** Regular Army soldiers also received bounty lands, but if your ancestor's name was not in register of enlistments, it probably won't be in [glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov). Internet Archive (browse) has the forms entitling the soldier to a bounty.

Officers. The *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its organization, September 19, 1789, to March 2, 1903*, by Francis B. Heitman [Google Books], contains a list of commissioned officers, regular and volunteer. Also see **Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916, NARA (M617)** (Ancestry).

Discharge Certificates. To locate a regular army soldier check **Discharge Certificates and Miscellaneous Records Relating to the Discharge of Soldiers from the Regular Army 1792-1815 (M1856).** Militia and volunteer soldiers are not included.

Militia. A militia is a military force raised from the civilian population of a country or region. In the early days of the country, most local communities maintained militia. If this was your ancestor's only service, the only federal records for him would be pension and bounty land application files. Also look in individual state archives for War of 1812 militia muster rolls, pay rolls, and receipts, and indexes to militia records. Cyndi's List has many links for state militia: <http://www.cyndislist.com/1812/locality/>. You can also search WorldCat for War of 1812 and the state name. Look for dedicated Find-A-Grave sites for war veterans.

Miscellaneous Canadian Records. There were about 7000 British and Canadian soldiers stationed in Canada and as many as 3500 Native Americans serving with Canadian forces. Many free Blacks also joined the Upper Canada Militia. (Ancestry: **Miscellaneous Canadian Records**).

Sailors on American ships were issued certificates to prove citizenship to protect them from impressment into the British Navy. Approximately fifty thousand mariners filed for a certificate. This included African-American seamen who were fifteen to twenty percent of the US Navy. Original certificates are held in the US Custom Service, RG 36, and show seamen's age, birth place, residence and a physical description. **U.S. Seamen's Protection Certificates, 1792-1868**. Ancestry: searchable database.

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) NARA RG 94. Order form, NATF 86, \$30. The records for Lake Erie are at Fold3. Also see **Miscellaneous Lists of Papers Regarding Impressed Seamen, 1796-1814 (M1839)**. Further information about seamen can be found in pension applications, bounty land records, local histories, obituaries or cemetery records, and published lists of casualties and prisoners of war.

Marines. Marines were not regular navy sailors and not regular army soldiers. They served as ship-board soldiers who provided policing, kept order, suppressed mutinies, guarded prisoners, and protected coastal fortifications. They boarded enemy ships and defended their own ships from boarders, manned the ship's guns, and carried out amphibious operations. There were frequent shortages of marines throughout the war as privates were paid less than their navy counterparts and were offered a smaller bounty than their army counterparts. Records can be found on **Muster Rolls of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1798-1892, (T1118)**, (Ancestry).

Naval officers. Edward W. Callahan's *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps from 1775 to 1900*, (1901) [Google Books]; Names of ships at **Naval Register**, Genealogy Bank; Once the ship or duty station is identified, you can look at muster rolls and lists found in **Miscellaneous Records of the Office of Naval Records and Library, (T829)**.

Privateers. A privateer is a privately owned ship in the service of the government operating under a letter of marque, a government license authorizing a privateer to attack and capture enemy vessels and bring them before admiralty courts for condemnation and sale. *Emmon's List, War of 1812* at <http://www.1812privateers.org>; **War of 1812 Prize Case Files, 1812-1815, RG 21**: Microfilm for admiralty case files in New York (M928) (Fold3) and Pennsylvania (M966).

Prisoners, defendants, casualties. Petition to Congress for relief: *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation, Nation*, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>. Name indexes and proceedings: **Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799-1867 (M273)**; Microfilmed Prisoner of War Records, (M2019), **Index of the Records Relating to War of 1812, Prisoners of War (M1747)** (Ancestry). **Letters Received by the Adjutant General, 1805-1821 (RG94)** (Fold3) correspondence regarding appointments, recruitments, discharge, pay, promotion and more. Don't forget that a claim may have been filed with a state government.

Selected Additional Sources

- Genealogical Records of the War of 1812 by Stuart L. Butler
<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1991/winter/war-of-1812.html>
- Researching War of 1812 Veterans by Kathleen Brandt
<http://www.archives.com/experts/brandt-kathleen/researching-war-of-1812-veterans.html>
- Volunteer Military Service during the War of 1812 (1812–1815)
<http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/know-your-records/genealogy-fair/2012/handouts/war-of-1812-volunteer.pdf>
- Johnston, Susan Goss, *Soldiers, Sailors, Privateers: Records from the War of 1812*, Presentation at SMCGS, 2012.