

Veterans from Tea Party to Civil War

by Dee Gibson-Roles

The Veterans Day observance brings to mind our ancestors who have served in the military since the time of our country's birth.

It is safe to say that almost all researchers who have ancestry in the U.S. have at least one ancestor who served, and most have several.

We are often asked about how to go about identifying and finding these forefathers. With the advent of the digital age, the search is now much easier. The wise researcher will combine both digital and paper records in the search for military ancestors.

Almost everyone is familiar with the Boston Tea Party. Most researchers would love to identify an ancestor who participated in this uprising.

A complete list of those participating has not been and never will be compiled, as many carried the secret to the grave or kept a low profile about their involvement, discussing it only with close family members if at all.

When the party was organized, the participants were sworn to secrecy, and many honored that pledge. And it is probable that many feared repercussions ranging from lawsuits brought by the British East India Co. to possible social stigma from having participated in a civil uprising.

The Boston Tea Party Historical Society maintains an excellent website (boston-tea-party.org) containing a treasure trove of information on the Tea Party itself and a list of known participants and their occupations.

Revolution

Identifying a Revolutionary War ancestor is somewhat easier. The Daughters of the American Revolution have published a multivolume Patriot Index, listing all patriots who served in some manner during the revolution and whose service has been proven and who have at least one descendant who is a member of the DAR.

These volumes are available for research in many libraries. The DAR website (dar.org) features the DAR Genealogical Research System, which is available to the public.

Once a patriot ancestor has been identified, the record can be ordered directly on the website for a fee, and the record delivered immediately via a PDF document, which contains the lineage from the patriot forward.

Another valuable resource is the Revolutionary War bounty land and pension applications. The pensions are available on Heritage Quest, which most area libraries offer and which can be accessed from home using a valid library card.

The pensions are also available on Fold3 (fold3.com, formerly footnote.com), a subscription website, but one can request a seven-day free trial.

Family Search (familysearch.org) lists the Revolutionary War compiled service records and the pension applications but directs the researcher to Fold3 to view the actual image of the documents.

The War of 1812

The War of 1812 is often overlooked as a resource for military ancestors, but many researchers will discover a forefather who served during this conflict.

The service records and pension applications are housed in the National Archives and can be obtained from them.

The Federation of Genealogical Societies has partnered with the National Archives and Fold3 to digitize the pension applications.

The FGS is actively seeking donations so that the task can be completed, at which time the applications will be placed online at Fold3 and will be available to everyone free of charge.

The Civil War

The Civil War was a conflict with which almost all researchers are well-acquainted. The National Park Service offers an online database known as the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm

This database can be searched by surname and given name, rank, side on which the ancestor served and/or state from which he served. The results will name the unit/regiment(s) in which he served.

The researcher can locate the unit and soldier in the Fold3 database of service records. The soldiers are listed alphabetically within the unit, making it easy to quickly get to his service record.

Pensions for Confederate veterans were granted by the state the veteran (or his widow) lived at the time of application, not necessarily the state from which he served.

In North Carolina, the pension applications have been housed in the State Archives in Raleigh and are available for in-house research in the search room.

Family Search has now digitized all of the applications and has placed them online at <https://familysearch.org/searchapi/search/collection/1911763>. They are not indexed and so must be "browsed," but they are broken down into alphabetical surname increments.

Another resource for locating a Confederate ancestor: the North Carolina Troops series. This set consists of almost 20 volumes, organized numerically by regiment then by company.

Officers and a brief history of the regiment are listed first, then all other members of the regiment alphabetically by surname.

Each volume is indexed individually, so the researcher must know the regiment in which his ancestor served or check the index in each volume until he locates his ancestor.

One interesting note: the Thomas Legion from WNC is the only unit with a volume dedicated solely to that regiment and its history. This volume contains an extensive history of the regiment, and all members are listed. Since this regiment consisted in a large part of Cherokees, it is an invaluable resource for those who have Cherokee ancestry.

We will discuss other conflicts and their records in a future article. We are particularly interested in those who may have served in the Mexican War and ask any person who may have any information regarding veterans of this conflict to contact us at info@obcgs.com or at P.O. Box 2122, Asheville, NC 28802.