

Navigating the Records from The War of 1812

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Knowing the laws and acts helps understand what to look for and puts the records into context.

Bounty Land Acts:

1812 era:

These acts were used to encourage enlistment

They had to meet requirements:

Aged 18-45 (age restriction eliminated in 1816)

Five year enlistment (didn't have to serve the full five years)

Honorably discharged and no deserters

Non commissioned officers and soldiers

Soldiers were entitled to 160 acres at first, in 1814 it was doubled to 320 acres.

Heirs of those who were killed in action were eligible

Act of 1850

Changed from enticement to a reward

ALL officers were now eligible

Land was given in 40 acre increments

Enlisted for twelve months, served nine 160 acres

Enlisted for six months, served four 80 acres

Any enlistment, served one month 40 acres

Widows could still apply, but not the children

A small change a couple years later. Every 20 miles traveled counted as one day's service.

Act of 1855

Anyone serving at least 14 days could get 160 acres

Again, no deserters or dishonorably discharged soldiers

Soldiers who had already gotten land under the previous act could get the remaining amount

Most soldiers ended up with 160 acres due to this act

Pension Acts:

The 1812 era

Covered soldiers who were disabled or killed during the war
Called “Old War” pensions

Pension Act of 1871

Soldiers who served at least 60 days and were honorably discharged
Widows had to have been married before the signing of the peace treaty on 17 February 1815
Anyone who had aided the Confederacy was disqualified

Pension Act of 1878

Soldiers who served at least 14 days
Widows could have been married at any time

Where to find the records

Compiled Military Service Records: Indexed on Fold3, originals are at the National Archives

Bounty land applications:

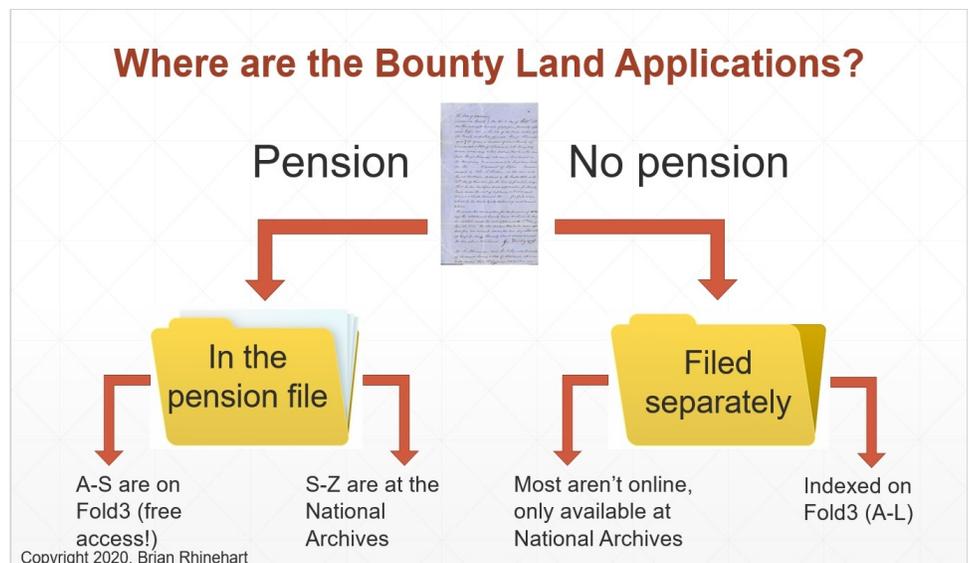
some are in the pension files, some are filed separately. The ones filed separately are indexed on Fold3.

Bounty land warrants:

indexed at the Bureau of Land Management website.
(<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/>) Most are not online, only at the National Archives.

Pensions:

A-S are on Fold3, S-Z are only at the National Archives. The digitization is a work in progress, and they will all be on Fold3 eventually. They are indexed on Fold3. Old War pensions are indexed on FamilySearch.org



Enlistments: Many enlistment *papers* were destroyed in the 1814 fires. Enlistment *registers* are on Fold3 and Ancestry. These exist only for regular army soldiers.

Discharge papers:

There are about 2,250 on file at the National Archives. More information, as well as links to the list of soldiers is at <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/war-of-1812/1812-discharge-certificates/discharge-certificates.html>

Prisoner of War: Many POW records are on Ancestry.