

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES
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WAR OF 1812 RECORDS
IN THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE ARCHIVES

Over the past several years, the public demand for information concerning North Carolina and her soldiers in the War of 1812 has increased. Until recently, there were but two sources — one quite inaccurate and the other incomplete — that could be readily searched by the Archives staff: *Muster Rolls of the Soldiers of the War of 1812: Detached from the Militia of North Carolina, in 1812 and 1814*, published under the aegis of the state adjutant general, and the index to the pay vouchers prepared by the Archives in 1962. The recent interest in the War of 1812 has shown these two sources to be insufficient to meet public demand. Consequently, the Archives has taken steps to remedy this situation by preparing indices to three additional sources: the original muster rolls, the account books, and the pay and receipt rolls. It is the purpose of this circular to describe the types of records available to researchers, who should be aware that these records provide little beyond names and proof of service, as neither age nor ancestry of individuals are indicated.

To understand the nature of these records and their interrelationship, one must first examine the North Carolina militia system and the process by which the State paid its citizen soldiers. In 1806, the state legislature established new guidelines for the organization of the militia. Under this act, all white males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were enrolled in the local militia and required to provide their own arms. Each county was to furnish at least one regiment composed of 54-men companies from the militia districts within its bounds. Regiments were to be made up of at least two battalions of five companies each, including one company of grenadiers, riflemen, or light infantry. All of the regiments within each superior court district were then organized into brigades. The 1806 act stipulated that each brigade include a regiment

of cavalry. The largest organizational unit was the division, comprised of two or three brigades and at least one company of artillery.

NORTH CAROLINA IN THE WAR OF 1812

When war was declared by Congress in June 1812, the sixteen North Carolina militia brigades were organized into six divisions totaling more than 50,000 men. From this pool, the State was called upon by President James Madison to supply 7,000 volunteers for federal service. They were to be drawn in proportionate numbers from existing divisions and reorganized as much as practicable along existing lines. Upon enrollment in federal service, they were referred to as the "detached" militia. However, they were not immediately embodied into combat units but sent back to their homes to await the need for their services in the field. When eventually called out to active duty, these detached units became the financial responsibility of the national government.

Only nine companies of this initial levy were embodied during 1812, temporarily garrisoning two coastal forts until regular army detachments could reach North Carolina. Then, in July 1813, as British warships appeared off Ocracoke and an invasion of the coast seemed imminent, detached militia companies from the eastern counties were quickly embodied and dispatched to New Bern and Wilmington. In accordance with War Department pay regulations, muster rolls were compiled for each company. However, the federal stipulation that these musters be certified by an appointed federal inspector or a regular army officer could not be satisfied, as no such official had been appointed for North Carolina. The threat of invasion soon abated, and the militia disbanded without being properly inspected.

State officials, fearing adverse effects upon troop morale and future recruiting efforts, undertook measures to pay the state troops with hopes of eventual reimbursement from Washington. In December 1813, a Board of Auditors, consisting of the treasurer, comptroller, and Secretary of State, was appointed by resolution of the legislature to settle the claims of the embodied militia. The board was also instructed to audit and settle the accounts of persons who had advanced money or war materials to the state, or had provided goods and services to the militia (such as rations, forage, or the use of slaves in erecting fortifications), and who were not eligible for federal compensation. Upon ascertaining the amount due individual claimants, the

auditors were to prepare two copies of the lists (the account books) of the claims allowed, one copy to be deposited with the governor and the other in the comptroller's office. The governor was to then issue a certificate (to serve as a voucher) for the amount of each claim, payable by the state treasurer upon demand. The governor was also instructed by the legislature to forward to the president an account of the total paid by the state, with the request that it be referred to the proper department for reimbursement. The account books, muster rolls, and other documents substantiating claims were forwarded to the War Department in 1815 and 1816.

In 1817, the War Department informed the Board of Auditors that the federal government had finally acknowledged responsibility for the North Carolina claims, but as the press of business prevented immediate action, the muster rolls and other evidential documents were being returned to the board, along with a Treasury Department draft deemed equal to satisfying the proven claims. The auditors, who had previously settled many of the 1813 claims, resumed its task of judging the merits of each claimant and making payment by certificate, which were recorded in the pay and receipt rolls. By 1818, most individual claims had been settled although it was nearly one hundred years before the State was fully reimbursed by the national government.

Researchers should be aware that the vast majority of the indexed War of 1812 records in the Archives relate only to the militia who answered the call for defense of the state in the summer of 1813. It should be noted, however, that this was not the only instance of service by North Carolinians in the war. More than a thousand volunteers from the state responded to the recruiting efforts of the regular army, which during the course of the war created forty-one temporary regiments. Most of these North Carolinians were assigned to Col. James Wellborn's Tenth Regiment and served with distinction in the North. In 1814, a regiment formed under the first militia levy was called to serve six months under Gen. Andrew Jackson against the Creek Indians in Alabama. Later that year, President Madison issued a second call for 7,000 North Carolina volunteers. From this levy, which required conscription to fulfill the state's quota, two regiments were embodied and dispatched to Norfolk, another to New Bern, and a fourth to Wilmington. Finally, in January 1815, fifteen militia companies of Col. Andrew Irvin's regiment hastened to a rendezvous in Wadesboro preparatory to marching south to meet a threatened British invasion but disbanded when the news of

Jackson's victory at New Orleans was received. Records of the regular army volunteers, the detached militia engaged against the Creeks, and the "volunteers" of the second levy remained in Washington, there being no dispute concerning their payment, as there had been with the 1813 detachments. There are muster rolls, however, in the Archives concerning the militia who rendezvoused in Wadesboro, as there was some uncertainty as to whether these troops had actually performed any federal service.

RECORDS OF PRIMARY INTEREST TO GENEALOGISTS

MUSTER ROLLS

The company muster rolls were compiled to satisfy federal requirements for the payment of embodied militia. These records provide the name and rank of individuals, dates of commencement and termination of service, length of service, and distance travelled. Of the six volumes that have survived the years, five contain the musters of detached companies called out during July and August 1813. The other volume is the roll of Colonel Irvin's regiment ordered to the Wadesboro rendezvous in 1815. These original volumes were forwarded to the War Department for inspection and later returned to the state adjutant general's office, which had kept copies on file. The Archives will search the muster roll index for corresponding researchers and provide copies of the information found on the rolls.

ACCOUNT BOOKS

The account books contain allowances for pay and rations granted to individual soldiers and supplies raised for the army during the 1813 defense of the North Carolina coast. Each claim is numbered and provides the following information: name and rank of claimant; term of service; rate of pay; daily rations; price of rations; forage rate per day; servant hire per day; servant's daily rations; and total amount due. The accounts are arranged by company and, in most cases, indicate the county of origin. The account books often duplicate names and information in the muster rolls but, in addition to soldiers, include suppliers of food, material, and services. Two copies were made of each volume — one to be deposited in the comptroller's office, and the other, countersigned by the adjutant general, in the governor's office. Eleven account books

have survived, a few from either office. As with the muster rolls, these records can be readily checked for the corresponding researcher.

PAY AND RECEIPT ROLLS

The pay and receipt rolls were the official records of payments made to the detached militia. The rolls indicate the name and rank of each soldier, term of service, rate of pay, rations per day, price of rations, total amounts due and received, the signature or mark of the recipient or his legal representative, and, in some cases, that of his witness. The seventy-seven rolls that have survived are arranged by company, giving the name of the commanding officer and usually the county. The original rolls were first sent to the War Department in order to adjust North Carolina reimbursement claims and later returned, while a copy was filed in the comptroller's office. These records can also be searched by the Archives staff for those doing research by mail.

PAY VOUCHERS

The pay vouchers are the original certificates issued and signed by the governor and redeemed by the state treasurer. Upon redemption, the certificates were cancelled with an instrument that punched a large hole through them, unfortunately often defacing the name of the claimant. The vouchers give the number and date of the claim, rank, company commander, and county of the claimant, and the total amount paid. Surviving vouchers fill fourteen boxes and represent approximately 4,700 militiamen who were embodied during July and August 1813. The Archives will search these records for the corresponding researcher.

RECORDS OF PRIMARILY HISTORICAL INTEREST

In addition to these four groups of indexed records that will mostly interest genealogists, there are several other sources of information concerning the War of 1812 in North Carolina that will be of concern to the historian. These records are not indexed and cannot be searched by the Archives staff for corresponding researchers. The General Assembly Session Records of the period contain the resolutions creating and extending the Board of Auditors and the annual reports of the board. A diligent search of these papers will

reveal an occasional muster roll or similar document. For example, the General Assembly Session Records, Nov.-Dec. 1813, Box 3, Miscellaneous folder, contains the rosters of two Beaufort County regiments. The printed Session Laws include the 1806 act and subsequent revisions for the enlargement and regulation of the militia. Records from the office of the governor, such as the governor's papers and letter books, contain relevant correspondence with the president, the War Department, the Board of Auditors, and the state adjutant general concerning the calls for militia and the extended debate over the payment of the 1813 detachment. Finally, the Adjutant General's records include militia troop returns and organizational charts, and correspondence with the War Department, the governor, and militia officers.

RECORDS AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

In addition to the records concerning North Carolina soldiers in the War of 1812 in the custody of the State Archives, there are three relevant groups of documents at the National Archives of which the genealogical researcher should be aware. These are compiled service records, pension files, and bounty land warrant application files. The compiled service records of 1812 soldiers at the National Archives include both regular army volunteers and detached militia. A microfilm copy of the index of the North Carolina militia who were embodied into federal service is available at the State Archives. Service records consist of cards containing information about an individual compiled from various sources, such as muster rolls and troop returns. In general, the cards will show the soldier's rank, military organization, term of service, and presence or absence on certain dates. Some service records give age, place of birth, and place of enlistment, but generally are of little genealogical value beyond proof of military service.

The pension and bounty land warrant application files contain only the names of soldiers who served in the regular army, including those who volunteered for service in the temporary regiments created between 1812 and 1815. The typical file includes the application of the claimant, supportive documents, and records of action taken upon the claim. The application files usually show name, rank, military unit, and term of service. Depending upon whether the veteran or his widow made the application, the file may also show the soldier's age, date and place of birth, and place of residence, or the widow's age, maiden name, date and place of marriage, and the place of her husband's death. Many of the pension and bounty land warrant applications for

War of 1812 veterans have been combined into a single file. For a more detailed description of these records, the researcher is referred to the National Archives publication, *Military Service Records in the National Archives of the United States*. Prepared from the National Archives' microfilm, an index of the pension files was compiled by Virgil D. White and entitled *Index to War of 1812 Pension Files*. This volume is available in the State Library of North Carolina.

One other group of 1812 records in the National Archives of at least marginal interest is the United States Marshal's Return of Enemy Aliens and Prisoners of War in the War of 1812 (1789-1815). A microfilm copy of the index to these records (F.12.1-2) is on file in the North Carolina State Archives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE WAR OF 1812

There are a number of general works concerning the War of 1812; perhaps the best and surely the most readable of which is Glenn Tucker's two-volume *Poltoons and Patriots: A Popular Account of the War of 1812* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954). For North Carolina's role in the war, the researcher should consult two books by Sarah McCulloh Lemmon — *North Carolina and the War of 1812* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, 1971), which, incidentally, contains a recording of Gen. Calvin Jones's Grand March; and the expanded version, *Frustrated Patriots: North Carolina and the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973). Ms. Lemmon also wrote "Dissent in North Carolina During the War of 1812," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 49 (2) and *Onslow County During the War of 1812*. Independent: Unknown Publishing, 1982. An old but reliable account of the state's role in the war may be found in the second volume of Samuel A'Court Ashe's *History of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1925). A regional history is *Destitute Patriots: Bertie County in the War of 1812* by Gerald W. Thomas (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2012). Two other works of interest are James C. Macrae's, "The Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry Company," *North Carolina Booklet*, 7 (1908), 248-266 and John K. Mahon's, "The Carolina Brigade Sent against the Creek Indians in 1814," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 28 (1951), 421-425.