USING MILITARY RECORDS FOR FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH
WHY RESEARCH MILITARY RECORDS?

• To establish ancestor’s location & migration before, during, after a War period
• To identify spouse(s) & children
• To add to ancestor’s personal history
• To identify other potential records
• To gather service proof for lineage organizations
Possible Candidates for Early American Wars

• Age 16 – 60 during colonial period 1689 to 1763
• Ancestors born prior to 1765 and living in the colonies between 1776 – 1783 for Am. Rev.
• Could have been on either side of conflicts as a rebel, loyalist, pacifist, or supporter
• British imported 32,000 Germans to fight; 7,000 remained after the war
DO YOUR HOMEWORK FIRST ~

• Need to be able to differentiate from others with same name on various rolls & registers

• If Known, start with =
  – Name of Ancestor, full name is better
  – Year, or range, of birth & death
  – Name of spouse(s)
  – Residence, at least the state, before, during, & after War
MAIN COLONIAL WARS

• Between 1636 & 1763:
  - King Philip’s War (1675 – 1676) N.Eng.
  - King William’s War (1689 - 97) NE. / French
  - Queen Anne’s War (1702 – 13) Britain/Spain - French & Indian War (1754 – 63)
    a.k.a “7 Yr. War”; involved all colonies, including frontiers & to Canadian border
COLONIAL WARS (cont.)

- Males between 16 – 60 were expected to serve in the local defense militia, usually for 30 days at a time, & participate in regular drills.
- Records are generally sporadic and may be found in state & local collections.
- Records may include unit rosters, muster rolls, and lists of those who attended regular drills from the same community or county.
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

• Began April 17, 1775, with battles at Lexington & Concord, MA.
• Early part involved New England; later part included the southern colonies.
• Period of service generally brief, few weeks, but could be repeatedly “called up”.
• Ended in 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.
REVOLUTIONARY WAR ~ MAJOR RECORDS

• A. PENSION RELATED RECORDS

• B. COMPILED SERVICE RECORDS

• C. BOUNTY-LAND WARRANTS
A. PENSION RECORDS (1789 – 1861)

• Authorized by new Congress Aug. 1776; not paid until July 1789
• Major applications occurred in 1832 when Congress allowed all veterans to apply
• Pensions were initiated in local courts, counties & towns where veteran lived, not necessarily where he served
• War Dept. fires in 1800 & 1814 destroyed all pension files from period 1776 – 1814; veterans who filed before 1800 will have a card with name, home state, and occasionally military unit.
Pension Records (cont.)

• Some surviving Rev. War pension records are available at NARA [National Archives] & on microfilm at LDS - Family History Library
  – “Rev. War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files”
    [NARA publication M804; contains all the documents found in that particular soldier’s file]
  – “Selected Records from Revolutionary War Pensions and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications”
    [NARA publication M805 – deemed of most genealogical value] Some also available at HeritageQuest.com
B. COMPILED SERVICE RECORDS

- Soldiers serving in volunteer units in wars between 1775 & 1902
- War Dept. began compilation in 1894
- Records consolidated on index cards from muster rolls, pay rolls, unit returns, and other records
- Records are arranged by state, then military unit, then alphabetically by soldier’s name
- During Mexican War, units from the Indian Nation Territory (i.e. Oklahoma), Mormons, & from New Mexico compiled their own records
Compiled Service Records (cont.)

- “General Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Revolutionary Soldiers” =
  - Soldier’s name, beg. / ending rank, & military unit
    [NARA publication M860]

- “Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War” =
  - Service records are arranged by state & unit
  - Continental troops are at the beginning
    [NARA publication M881]
C. BOUNTY-LAND WARRANTS

- Land provided for service in Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, & Indian Wars, between 1776 – 1855.
- First offered as an incentive in 1776 to join, then as a substitute for service wages; 1st. land offered in Ohio
- Land could later be sold or exchanged
- Could be claimed by veterans, or if deceased, by their widow / heirs; needed certificate that proved service
- Estimated 450,000 bounty-land claims at NARA
- Nine states also offered land grants for service: CT., GA., MD., MA., NY., NC., PA., SC., VA.
REVOLUTIONARY WAR RECORDS SOURCES

• **National Archives [NARA], Washington D.C.**
  – Need full name, service branch, state & war served
  – Request “Please copy all of the file” to see all items in the file
  – Microfilm may be available at regional Archives branch
  – Greatest collection of original military records, including:
    Military Service Records
    Pension Claims
    Bounty-Land Warrant Applications

• **LDS – Family History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.**
  – All 80,000 Rev. War & Bounty Land pension files on microfilm
  – Also includes: indexes to service records; service / pension files;
    enlistment registers; prisoner-of-war records; soldiers home records;
    burial / cemetery records; unit histories; & some discharge records for
    some states
  – Largest collection of microfilmed U.S. military records; available to rent
    and view at local Family History Centers
Revolutionary War Record Sources (cont.)

- **MUSTER ROLLS** = Heritage Quest on-line (through local libraries)
- **PENSION FILES** = Heritage Quest & Fold3.com (formally Footnote.com)
- **SERVICE RECORDS** = Fold3.com
- **LOYALIST RECORDS** = www.royalprovincial.com
- **BOUNTY-LAND GRANTS** = Heritage Quest & Ancestry.com
STATE MILITIA RECORDS

• Colonial period military records were created and preserved by the state & local jurisdictions.

• These records, if available, may be found at: the state archives; state adjutant general’s office; historical society, museums; military forts; or county clerk’s offices.
LESSER KNOWN RECORD SOURCES

• MUSTER ROLLS:
  – Local Military Units
    • Militia was raised by county / town, intended as home defense
    • If soldier served longer than usual 30 days, or outside of county, state paid unit; if he was required to leave the state, Continental Congress paid
  – State Troops
    • Supplied according to the quota imposed on states by Congress
    • Records may exist in State Archives and/or State Libraries
  – Continental Troops
    • Provided by states (numbered regiments, like 7th. Connecticut Regt.)
    • Raised by Congress directly (named regiments, like Lee’s Legion)

Source: “Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783” [NARA publication M246]
Less Known Records (cont.)

• LOYALIST RECORDS
  – Generally those who sided with the British Crown
  – May have been 1/3 of colonial population
  – Records may come from loyalist confiscated land

• FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS
  – 1840 Census included Rev. War pensioners age & military service [searchable at Ancestry.com]
  – 1890 “Special Schedule Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows, etc.”; lists address, rank, company, regt., date enlistment / discharge, disability
    [Widow may have married young to Rev. War veteran]
OTHER REVOLUTIONARY WAR RECORD SOURCES

• DAR – Daughters of the American Revolution (1890)
  – Lists patriot’s name, birth / death date, name of wife, rank & type of service, state of service & residence
    www.dar.org/library/search.cfm

• SAR – Sons of the American Revolution (1889)
  – Online Patriot Search for names in SAR Rev. War Grave Book & CD, and SAR Patriot Index CD
    www.sar.org/SAR-Patriot-Search
State of Kentucky
Laurel County

On this 6th day of March 1833 personally appeared in open court before the Hon. Joseph Eve Judge of the Laurel Circuit Court John Simpson resident of said county aged 71 years who being duly sworn doth upon his oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefits of the provision of the act of Congress made the 7th June 1832.

*... volunteered in the 1780
*... [served under] Chas. King was Capt.; John Hogen Col.; Abraham Allen Major; Andrew Turner ensign Joseph Young Lt.
*... All of Orange County N.C. where he also lived ...
*... he was often called out and served from 3 to 5 months at a time
*... another tour on Haw River after Col. Fanning and the Torries this tour they had seven engagements with Fanning and the Torries said to be 500 in number, we had about 350.
*... Lt. Young was killed. Andrew Turner ensign was mortally wounded & Major Allen was wounded but recovered.
*... Another tour he went out with Col. Bob Maten after some Torries on Haw River, and on our return home the Col. was killed by a man by the name of Henry Hightower.
*... he was held to service about 4 years [1780 - 1784] during which time he was in actual service he can safely say not more than nine months.
... volunteered under Capt. Joseph Casey and joined Col. Kennedy of Green County Tennessee at Jacksonville Tenn. and marched to the Indian Nations and to the Lookout Mountain and there we had an engagement with the Indians and had to retreat

* ... Captains Harden, Gibson, and Buller were killed and seven more of the men were dead we then returned home having served two months.

* ... He believes he was in active service at least seventeen months. He has no documentary evidence of his service and knows of no person living by whom he can prove his service.

In answer to inquiry proposed by the court, he says he was

* ... born in the year 1762 in the County of Fermanagh near the town of Anyskillan in Ireland

* ... and came to America about the time of the Tea fuss began [Dec. 1773, at age 11 yrs.]

* ... he landed at the mouth of Christian Creek near to Newcastle moved from there to Hanover County Penn where he lived until just before this war commenced. [1774-5]

* ... then moved to Orange [County] N.C. where he lived during the War until peace was made [1775-1783]

* ... after that he moved to Green County Tennessee; from there to Barren Co. (KY) then to Clay Co. (now Laurel) Ky., where he now lives.

* ... He has no record of his age. He volunteered every tour except twice he was drafted. He received three written discharges but they are all lost.
Pension application of John Allison
State of Tennessee, White County

On this 12th day of October A.D. 1832 personally appeared before the Justice of Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for said County of White Tennessee said John Allison, a resident of said State and County aged about 70 years ..... 

* ... entered the service for nine months in the year 1778, in the County of Orange in the State of North Carolina
* ... where Declarant [sic] was taken sick and placed in the Hospital. His brother James Allison, then at home learning of the diseased condition .... procured from Genl Lincoln a furlough and took him to his father’s in Orange County
* ... marched to Hillsborough [NC]. .... remained 3 months and was discharged
* ... volunteered for no particular time under Captain John Whitesides.
* ... His Lieutenant’s name was Joseph Allison, the brother of this declarant.
* ... born in 1762, 8 miles north of Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina
* ... living with his father in Orange County when called into service
* ... after war, resided 3 miles from his father in Orange County; then moved to Jackson County, Tennessee for one year; and next to White [County] Tennessee
* ... First tour as substitute for brother James Allison ...
• TIME FOR A SHORT BREAK.....