



Records from Richard Leeson's Surrendered Military Bounty Land Warrant File, 50-80-2172.

# Researching volunteer soldiers of the War of 1812

in the National Archives (NARA) and state archives.

Let's work our way through the research process using Richard L. Leeson. Several published books available online provide some clues. Leeson "served in the war of 1812" according to one county history,<sup>1</sup> and "was Lieutenant of a rifle company...in the war of 1812" according to another one.<sup>2</sup> Published records of the Ohio Adjutant General list "Capt. [sic] Richard L. Leeson" on the roll of Captain David E. Hendrick's Company, which served 1 May–18 November 1813 from "county unknown."<sup>3</sup> Now let's look for the five basic federal records.

## Compiled military service record

Locating the CMSR is a two-step process. First, consult the alphabetical index published as NARA microfilm publication M602, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812* (234 rolls) (also available on Ancestry.com without images of the index cards).<sup>4</sup> On roll 124 there is a card for Richard L. Leeson that indicates he served from enlistment to discharge as a Lieutenant in the 1st Regiment (Mills') Ohio Militia. The "Mills" designation is an important distinction since Ohio had fifteen "1st" regiments (commanded by Andrews, Beard, DeLong, Denny, Edwards, Finley, Gano, McArthur, McDonald, Mills, Noel, Riddle, Sutton, Williamson, plus one without the

**T**he Bicentennial of the start of the War of 1812 will be marked on 18 June 2012. It is sometimes called our "Second War for Independence," since it confirmed and secured our independent status; had we lost, our history would have been far different.

The U.S. was woefully unprepared to go to war. The Regular Army had seven thousand men; the Navy had twenty vessels. By war's end, the Regular Army had expanded to thirty-five thousand men, supplemented by more than four hundred and fifty thousand "volunteers," men who typically served short tours of duty in state militia units.

Five easily accessible basic federal records document a volunteer soldier's War of 1812 service:

1. Compiled military service record (CMSR)
2. Pension file
3. Bounty land warrant (BLW) application file
4. Surrendered BLW file
5. Land patent

Not all volunteer soldiers have all five records. Researchers wishing to conduct more in-depth research may find additional specialized records

commander's name attached), as well as the 1st Odd Battalion (Daniels'). Thus, solid research into the history of a soldier's participation in a particular volunteer military unit requires knowing and understanding the command structure.

Second, get a copy of the CMSR. Most CMSRs for the War of 1812 have not been microfilmed,<sup>5</sup> and are not online, so copies must be requested from NARA (see "Obtaining Records from NARA"). Leeson's CMSR contains six card records, plus a personal papers jacket containing one subsistence account. Three card records indicate that he was recorded as "present" on Captain David E. Hendricks' Rifle Company's muster rolls for 19 May to 18 July 1813, 19 July to 18 September 1813, and 19 September to 18 November 1813. Three card records indicate he was paid \$30 per month, thus receiving \$60 on 18 July, 18 September, and 18 November 1813, if he was paid on time.

The subsistence account lists eleven different periods of time ranging from three to eighty-one days, the number of rations per day to which Leeson was entitled, the value of those rations, and the total dollar amount. On fifty-five days, he was entitled to two rations per day, and on the other 126 days he was entitled to one ration, for a total of 236. Each ration was valued at 20 cents. For the period 16 to 27 October 1813, Leeson noted "I drew the ration of Whisky which is charged at 4 cents" per ration. Otherwise, because he didn't draw the rations, he was instead paid

Period	No. of Days	No. of Rations	Value	Total
From the 19th May 1813 to the 18th July 1813	73	146	29.20	29.20
From the 19th July 1813 to the 18th September 1813	61	122	24.40	24.40
From the 19th September 1813 to the 18th November 1813	61	122	24.40	24.40
From the 16th to 27th October 1813	12	12	2.40	2.40
From the 19th May 1813 to the 18th July 1813	55	110	22.00	22.00
From the 19th July 1813 to the 18th September 1813	55	110	22.00	22.00
From the 19th September 1813 to the 18th November 1813	55	110	22.00	22.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>72.40</b>	<b>72.40</b>

RECEIVED January 18 1814  
Paymaster to the 1st Regt. of Ohio Militia  
Richard L. Leeson

Subsistence Account, Richard L. Leeson Compiled Military Service Record, 1st Regiment (Mills') Ohio Militia, War of 1812; RG 94; NARA.

their value, \$46.56, by James Smith, regimental paymaster, on 18 January 1814. This record also helpfully clarifies the command structure by noting that his regiment was part of the 3rd Detachment of Ohio Militia.

"Caption cards" for each company are in separate "jackets" (envelopes) in the first box of each regiment's CMSRs. These records provide administrative information from the muster and pay rolls that is not in individual soldiers' CMSRs. For example, the muster roll cards indicate that Captain David E. Hendricks, Lieutenant Richard L. Leeson, and Ensign Mathew Harbison signed each muster roll, certifying that it "exhibits a True Statement of Capt. David E. Hendrick's Com. of the first Regt. 3rd Detachment of Ohio Militia..." (Researchers must specifically request "caption cards" if they wish to examine them.)

### Bounty land warrant application files

Bounty land warrants (BLWs) were originally authorized by the Continental Congress in 1776 as an inducement to enter and remain in military service, but later acts of Congress authorized them as a reward for past service. See the sidebar, "Selected bounty land warrant laws," for details. BLWs provide the right to free land in the public domain. Typically the veteran or his heirs sold the warrant instead of using it to resettle on the frontier.

BLW application files relating to service from the 1790s to 1855 are arranged alphabetically by veteran's name. They contain applications for the warrant by the veteran, his widow, and any other heirs; evidence of military service, marriage, or parentage, if needed; correspondence; and records showing actions taken by the pension office in evaluating the BLW claim. Frequently, the veteran's or widow's memory was imperfect, with many details of service forgotten in the intervening decades. These records have not been microfilmed, and they are not online, so it is necessary to request copies from the National Archives (see "Obtaining Records from NARA"). The Pension Office combined some BLW applica-

tion files with War of 1812 pension files, but most remain separate.

Richard L. Leeson has a BLW application file. He applied under the act of 1850. On 29 October 1850, he was “aged Sixty four years, a resident of Harrison Township,” Wayne County, Indiana. He remembered volunteering for thirty days in November 1813 in Preble County, Ohio, in response to the call for volunteers by Ohio Governor Return J. Meigs. During that time he was “nursing and taking care of one Colonel Samuel Hawkins of the Ohio Militia (who was wounded between Fort Wayne and St. Marys) under the order and direction of Gen. Winchester then commandant at Fort Wayne.” He further stated that “he did not become enrolled in any company whatever,” a statement that shows his faulty memory thirty-seven years later, since—as we learn from his CMSR—he *was* enrolled in a company, and—as we learn from the “caption cards”—he himself signed the company muster rolls. The BLW application file shows that the Pension Office obtained verification of Leeson’s six months of military service from the Treasury Department, which had the pay rolls on file.

Leeson’s widow, Jane, applied under the act of 1855. On 26 March 1855, she was “aged Sixty one years, a resident of Harrison Township.” She stated her husband, who “died in Harrison Township...on the 28 day of July 1854,” served in the Ohio militia commanded by Colonel Trotten from May to November 1813, and that she, maiden name Jane Dooley, was married to Leeson on 21 April 1814 in Preble County, Ohio, “by one John Hardy, a minister.” Her application was returned to her so that she could acknowledge it in the presence of two witnesses, Thomas D. Wheelan and Andrew Eliason, in addition to the notary public. A certified copy of their marriage record is also in the file.

Were their applications successful? Yes. The outside of every BLW application jacket either indicates “rejected” or has a notation similar to the one on Leeson’s: “Act of 55-80-Wt. 9862.” This is a reference to Jane Leeson’s warrant number 9862 for eighty acres issued under the act of 1855. Old original jackets, contained within the file,

make similar references, and, in Leeson’s file, the original jacket also includes a cryptic notation to “allowed 80 acres” and “Warrant No. 2172 iss<sup>d</sup> March 15, 1851,” which refer to Leeson’s warrant under the act of 1850. Confused by the notations? Don’t despair; this essential information is also easily found by doing the land patent search described below.

## **Surrendered BLW file**

Surrendered BLW files provide information about the exchange of the BLW for a land patent to land in the federal domain. The records are part of Record Group (RG) 49, Records of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (known in our ancestors’ time as the General Land Office (GLO)). Although these files seldom provide information about the veteran or his family—because they often sold the warrant to an unrelated third party—copies should be obtained to discover the actions taken by the veteran, his widow, or heirs regarding the warrant. It is also interesting to learn the location of the land chosen by the patentee. Surrendered military BLWs are filed by the year of the act of Congress that authorized the warrant, the amount of acres, and the warrant number, so that file numbers have this format: 50-80-2172.

Richard Leeson’s surrendered BLW file (50-80-2172) informs us that he used the warrant to get land for his own use. Leeson went to the GLO at Indianapolis on 11 April 1851. He signed the warrant in the presence of the Register, William H. L. Noble. His location (that is, selection) of eighty acres in Madison County, Indiana (specifically the west half of the northeast quarter of section twenty-eight in township twenty-two north of range six east), was signed by himself, Register Noble, and Receiver John H. Thompson. Finally, he instructed the GLO to send his patent directly to him at Jacksonburgh, Wayne County, Indiana.

Jane Leeson’s surrendered BLW file (55-80-9862) informs us that on 29 April 1856 Jane Leeson assigned her warrant to Jacob Brooks “for value received” in the presence of John Miller and Justice of the Peace James Russell. On 30 April 1856, Wayne County Circuit Court Clerk

Andrew F. Scott certified Russell's authority to act as Justice of the Peace. On 16 May 1856, at the Chariton, Iowa, Land Office, Jacob Brooks of Wayne County, Indiana, acknowledged his location of eighty acres in Wayne County, Iowa (specifically the west half of the southwest quarter of section thirty-two in township sixty-eight north of range twenty-two west), before Receiver L. H. Sales and Register R. Coles. Since the maximum acreage allowable per veteran under the 1855 act was 160 acres, Jane's warrant was for eighty acres because Richard had already



Richard Leeson Land Patent, Accession Nr. MW-0594-361, Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records website, <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>.

received a warrant for eighty acres.

## Land patent

Land patents for most public land states have been scanned and are freely available online at the BLM's GLO Records website at <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. It also provides the three pieces of information needed to locate the related surrendered bounty land warrant file at the National Archives: (1) year of the act of Congress; (2) number of acres; and (3) warrant number (called the "document" number in this database).

## Pension file

Whether a veteran or his widow received a pension depends on how long-lived they were. An act of Congress of 1871 (16 *Statutes at Large* 411) provided pensions to veterans who had been cited by Congress for specific service, so long as they had not subsequently supported the Confederate cause during the Civil War, and to widows of those veterans if the marriage had occurred before the 1815 peace treaty. An act of Congress of 1878 (20 *Statutes at Large* 27) provided

pensions to veterans who had served fourteen days or more, and to their widows regardless of what date the marriage occurred. Thus, if the veteran or his widow died before 1871, there won't be a pension file. This is the case with Leeson, since he died in 1854, and his widow, who died in 1864.

Locating the pension record is a two-step process. First, consult the alphabetical index published as NARA microfilm publication M313, *Index to War of 1812 Pension Application Files* (102 rolls) (also available on Ancestry.com). Second, get a copy of the pension file. These have not been microfilmed, and are not online, so copies must be requested from NARA.

Let's take a look at the pension application of another Ohioan, Rizpah Hayford, the widow of Jonathan B. Hayford, who served in a New York militia company. The file contains three declarations for pension made by Rizpah during 1878 and 1879 that provide the date, place, and officiant of her marriage to Jonathan, as well as his date and place of death and his physical description at the time of his enlistment (blue eyes, light brown hair, slim, medium height). There are additional affidavits from family members attesting to her marriage and that she had not remarried, correspondence between her attorney and the Pension Office, and correspondence between the Pension Office and the Treasury Department regarding their attempt to verify Jonathan's military service. Rizpah never received a pension, however, because she was unable to remember the correct name of her husband's captain; she thought it was McNorton or McHenry, but it was actually McFarland.

## Obtaining records from NARA

Researchers are welcome to do their research in person at the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. For more information about hours, rules, and procedures, and self-service copying, see "Information for Researchers at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC" at <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/washington/researcher-info.html>. Researchers choosing this option will do their own copying

## Selected bounty land warrant laws

The act of Congress of 28 September 1850 (9 *Statutes at Large* 520) granted BLWs to commissioned officers in the Mexican-American War, and to commissioned and non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates who were “regulars, volunteers, rangers, or militia” who performed military service in the War of 1812 or any Indian war since 1790. The amount of acreage allowed depended on the length of service: 160 acres if enlisted for twelve months or more and actually served nine months; eighty acres if enlisted for six months and actually served four months; and forty acres to those who enlisted “for any or an indefinite period” and actually served one month. Anyone honorably discharged on account of disability would receive “the amount to which he would have been entitled if he had served the full period” for which he enlisted. Those who deserted or received a dishonorable discharge, as well as those who received a BLW under a prior act of Congress, were disqualified from benefiting from this act. Widows who had not remarried whose husbands were killed in battle received 160 acres. The act also clarified that time in captivity as a prisoner of war counted toward a soldier’s period of actual service.

The act of Congress of 22 March 1852 (10 *Statutes at Large* 4) extended eligibility for BLWs to any volunteers or militia called into military service since 18 June 1812 whose services were paid by the U.S. government. It also clarified that, for computing the length of time served, one day would be credited for each twenty miles the soldier’s unit marched from the place it was organized to the place of mustering in, and from the place of discharge to the place of organizing. This act also repealed a provision of the act of 11 February 1847 (9 *Statutes at Large* 125–126) that limited BLW eligibility to those volunteers who had actually “marched to the seat of war.” While the 1847 act specifically

or scanning. For information, see “Self-Service Copying at the National Archives Building” at <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/self-service-copying.html>.

Copies of War of 1812 records can be obtained by mail for the following costs: CMSRs, \$25; complete pension files, \$50; BLW application files, \$25. For more information, see “Ordering Copies of Older (pre-WWI) Military Service Records” at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records.html>. Copies of surrendered military bounty land warrant files can be ordered by mail for \$40. For more information, see NATF Form 84, “National Archives Order for Copies of Land Entry Files,” at <http://www.archives.gov/forms/pdf/natf-84.pdf> (boxes 11, 12, and 13—year of Congress, warrant number, number of acres—are the critical information boxes). Ordering copies online provides faster service; go to <http://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline>. For copies of records that cannot be ordered online, such as the caption cards, write to Old Military and Civil Records, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001, or send an e-mail to [archives1reference@nara.gov](mailto:archives1reference@nara.gov).

### For more information

Researching Regular Army soldiers involves a different process. To get started, read Claire Prechtel-Klusens and Jo Ann Williamson’s article, “Regular Army Registers of Enlistment and Enlistment Papers” online at <http://mysite.verizon.net/cklusens/NGSN2009Oct.pdf>.<sup>6</sup> Many Regular Army soldiers also have a BLW application file, surrendered land warrant file, and land patent, as described in this article. In addition, NARA microfilm publication M848, *Military Bounty Land Warrants, 1815–1858* (fourteen rolls), provides information about warrants issued under acts of 24 December 1811 (2 *Statutes at Large* 669), 11 January 1812 (2 *Statutes at Large* 672), and 6 May 1812 (2 *Statutes at Large* 729), in which Congress provided that noncommissioned officers and soldiers serving for five years (unless discharged sooner), or their heirs, would be entitled to 160 acres of land

from the public domain in partial compensation for military service. It also includes information about warrants for those who enlisted after the act of 10 December 1814 (3 *Statutes at Large* 147) who were entitled to 320 acres.

Researching Navy personnel also involves a different search path. To get started, read Lee D. Bacon's article, "Early Navy Personnel Records at the National Archives, 1776–1860," online at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1995/spring/early-navy-records.html>.<sup>7</sup> Navy personnel may also have a BLW application file, surrendered land warrant file, and land patent, as described in this article.

For more information about these and other military and land records in the National Archives, read Anne B. Eales and Robert M. Kvasnicka, editors, *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States*, 3d edition (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2000), which is available in many libraries and is for sale from NARA at <http://estore.archives.gov>. 

## Notes

1. Andrew W. Young, *History of Wayne County, Indiana, from Its First Settlement to the Present Time...* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Company, 1872), 234.

2. *History of Wayne County, Indiana, Together with Sketches of Cities, Villages and Towns...*, volume II (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Company, 1884), 507; see also page 494. Language removed by the ellipses relates to the writer's mistaken attachment of Leeson's post-war Indiana militia rank to his Ohio war service.

3. *Roster of Ohio Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968), 38.

4. Indexes for three states were also published separately as NARA microfilm publications M229, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from the State of Louisiana* (three rolls); M250, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from the State of North Carolina* (five rolls); and M652, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from the State of South Carolina* (seven rolls).

5. Microfilmed CMSRs include NARA microfilm publications M678, *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from the Territory of Mississippi* (twenty-two rolls); M1829, *Compiled Military Service Records of Major Uriah Blue's Detachment of Chickasaw Indians in the War of 1812* (one roll); and M1830, *Compiled Military Service*

Records of Major McIntosh's Company of Creek Indians in the War of 1812 (one roll). pertained to BLWs for service in the Mexican-American War, it is likely that the "seat of war" provision caused problems in evaluating applications related to other wars.

The act of Congress of 3 March 1855 (10 *Statutes at Large* 701–702) opened the doors to a claim for a BLW by nearly every man with military service, or his heirs. This act granted a BLW for 160 acres to each officer, soldier, and sailor who had served at least fourteen days in any U.S. war since 1790, or, if deceased, to the surviving widow, or, if no widow, to surviving minor children. Of course there were additional details. In addition to those who had served at least fourteen days, eligible veterans included those who served fewer than 14 days but who had actually been "engaged in battle," as well as volunteers in particular battles, chaplains, wagon masters, teamsters, Indians, and Revolutionary War veterans. The claimant had to provide proof of service, of marriage (if widow), or of parentage (if minor child). If the veteran or his surviving claimant had previously received a BLW, the prior acreage was deducted from the new BLW. 

*Records of Major McIntosh's Company of Creek Indians in the War of 1812* (one roll).

6. The article first appeared in *NGS Magazine* 35 (October–December 2009): 48–52.

7. The article first appeared in *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* 27 (1995): 76–80.

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