

FACILITIES FOR HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH IN WASHINGTON, D. C.

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In both history and genealogy the researcher must consider the written records of people and their activities. Workers in both fields must be prepared to test the authenticity of the records and to assess the comparative value of documents in order to determine the facts.

Genealogy in its broader sense is more than just the study of any one particular family; it is the history of families in both their immediate relationship to one another and the families' wider impact on society.¹ The English term, "historical genealogy," indicates this broader concept and stresses the close relationship that exists between the two.

A familiar example of the common meeting ground of history and genealogy is the field of biography, where the recital of the outstanding deeds of our national and local heroes, focused against the essential background of family origin, furnishes one of the most interesting types of historical reading.

Both during the earlier days of our republic and that period of stimulated nationalism which followed the War of 1812 and the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, ancestral ties with the old world were not stressed. Even as late as April, 1956, a writer in the *North American Review*

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stated, "It seems at first sight a positive misnomer to speak of American genealogy in this land of equality, where every man is as good as every other." John Farmer, of New Hampshire, who is generally recognized as the pioneer American genealogist, stated in the late 1820's that it was not improbable that posterity a few centuries hence would experience as much pleasure in tracing back their ancestry to the early American Colonists as some of the English feel in being able to prove their descent from the Normans.

What John Farmer anticipated was remarkably accurate, except for the length of time required, for, in much less than a century Americans were indulging a growing passion for genealogy to an extent that matched British efforts.

Among the great changes wrought in American life, both by the Civil War and by that influx of late 19th century emigrants to our country, was an increasing interest in American military exploits of the past and an accelerated quest for American ancestral lineage. There was a surge of pride in Colonial and Revolutionary ancestry. Published narratives of Revolutionary soldiers and genealogical works found a ready market. Among the patriotic societies organized in this period of our national life were the Sons of the Revolution in the centennial year of 1876, the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1890 and the Children in 1895; other societies organized about this time established ties of descent with the War of 1812, The Colonial Wars, the Mayflower, and even to the 1215 Barons of Runnymede. While all these societies carried a strong connotation of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, the Dutch and the Huguenots proclaimed in similar fashion their pride of nationality.

All these patriotic and hereditary societies found genealogical records and writings ready for their use. Their activities created an ever increasing demand for more and more genealogical material. The demand thus created has caused the publication of many genealogical periodicals and the establishing of genealogical libraries in various parts of the country. Among those so favored is the City of Washington in the District of Columbia. Washington has become a great central depository of genealogical source materials and with its many official depositories is gaining in importance along these lines.²

The Library of Congress, the United States National Archives, and the D.A.R. Washington Headquarters Library impels more and more genealogists either to settle in Washington or to make research trips to the city.

Any genealogy copyrighted after 1890 will be found at the Library of Congress, together with some of those copyrighted before that date; also, all the genealogical magazines and published colonial and state records. The map division of this library has one of the great map collections of the world. Many maps of our colonial period may be found here. Of particular interest to the historian and genealogists is the extensive collection of family papers and other miscellaneous material to be found in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress. Also of prime interest to the researcher is the large collection of Colonial and Early Republic newspapers of this great library.

The D. A. R. Library in Washington is one of the best genealogical libraries in the country. Here may be found almost as many published genealogies as in the Congressional Library as well as published court records and manuscripts of family histories, Bible records, tombstone inscriptions and church records not found elsewhere. At this library may be found the microfilm of all the available census records, beginning with that of 1830. Not to be overlooked is the very valuable master index card file, listing many thousands of individual names and family names appearing in many of

²Vol. 43 Natl. Gen. Soc. Quarterly, p. 104.

the publications and manuscripts to be found in this D. A. R. Library. Another sometimes very valuable source of information is the lineage papers of the individual members of the D. A. R. The office of the Registrar General will inform the inquirer whether any member of the D.A.R. is in the organization on any particular name of the Revolutionary period inquired about. If the name inquired about is an established "ancestor" for D.A.R. membership this office will allow the inquirer to examine the lineage papers and proofs of any resigned or deceased member having proven descent from that certain ancestor. The names and addresses of active D.A.R. members proven to the ancestor in question will be furnished upon request, so that one may write such members asking if they will grant permission to the D.A.R. to allow their lineage papers to be examined by the particular inquirer. Sometimes desired proof of some name or date may be found in this way. At the National Archives more and more official documents are being made available to searchers. This is the only place in the country where one will find all of the extant census records. All researchers appreciate the value of the census records. These decennial enumerations from 1790 to 1840 inclusive name the male head of the family and indicate the number of males and females in the family. In case of a widow, she is generally named as head of the family. The approximate age of all are indicated.

Perhaps the 1850 census affords the greatest comfort to the genealogist, for in this year not only is the name and occupation of the head of the family given, but also the name of each member of his household, with the country or state of birth and the year of birth of each indicated. The 1860 and 1870 census records furnish substantially the same data, with the added information regarding the value of real and personal property owned and occupations of all adult members of the family.

The 1880 census gives the additional information as to the state or country in which both parents were born and, what sometimes is very helpful, shows the relationship of each member to the head of the family.

The 1890 census has been destroyed by fire.

The 1900 census is not available to the public. However, if you furnish the Bureau of the Census, Pittsburgh, Kansas, with the name of the person concerning whom you are seeking information, together with his place of residence at the time, his death certificate, and a three dollar fee, you will be given the information contained in the 1900 census concerning that particular name.

Another class of source material not found elsewhere is the military pension records of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, Mexican War and the early Indian wars. These pension records furnish varying degrees of information. Some are rich in genealogical data. Among some of the facts that sometimes may be determined from them are the veteran's place of birth, an outline of his military services, his post-revolution migrations from state to state, or county to county, the place and proof of his marriage, the maiden name of his wife, and names and ages of their children. Then again some pension records prove hardly more than the scant fact of military service.

Sometimes valuable information may be obtained from the Land Office Records at the U.S. Archives covering the military bounty lands records. This is especially true if the veteran filed for bounty land and died before actually getting the land. In such case, the record contains the names of his heirs, since they had to come in and prove their relationship to the deceased veteran. Another sometimes possible source of information at the U.S. Archives naming proven heirs of Revolutionary soldiers who applied for bounty land is fully discussed in Vol. 1 of "The Virginia Genealogist" at page 147. This article should not be overlooked. Also of importance to those in-

terested in determining the heirs of North Carolina Revolutionary soldiers is an article on that subject in the December, 1958, issue *The North Carolinian*, pages 484-486.

In Room 8-W of the War Records Division of the Archives one may see the Revolutionary Index to the Compiled Military Service Records. These service records also contain a variety of information. Sometimes they do no more than prove military service. However, among some of the things that may be indicated are: place of enlistment, the company in which the soldier served, length of service, date of mustering out, information regarding payment of salary or a personal description of the veteran.

Among other material to be found in Rm. 8-W at the Archives and of particular interest to those concerned with North Carolina material are:

- (a) Early maps of North Carolina
- (b) Records relating to the establishing of military posts in North Carolina
- (c) Information regarding public lands in North Carolina; also harbors and rivers in the state; and much information regarding the building of any particular bridge in North Carolina, since before a bridge may be built an Army engineer has to approve.

There are also Army Command Records of North Carolina, beginning about 1812, including the Civil War and Reconstruction Period and extending through World War II.

In this Room 8-W of the War Records Division one may see what is called the Revolutionary War Special Index. This index concerns the available photostats of the Court Order Books covering the Revolutionary period of the various counties in both Virginia and North Carolina; also Revolutionary war manuscripts which cover either or both matters of a military or civil nature. The material available for Virginia is indexed. However, no index has been compiled for the North Carolina photostats. These North Carolina photostats are stored in the twenty pasteboard boxes about 24x16 inches and about 5 inches deep. On the reverse of each photostat is a short concise legend, stating the gist of the photostat. Therefore each separate photostat must be handled to determine the names involved and what it is about.

Though the fact is not well known, the National Archives in Washington is a storehouse of Confederate records. These records came into the possession of the United States Government by capture, donation, and purchase. The records have been used to protect the United States Government against claims growing out of the War, in establishing meritorious pension claims and defeating others, and for historical purposes. These Confederate records consist chiefly of records of the Confederate War Department, including those of War Department Bureaus and of military departments and commands, muster rolls, hospital rolls, slave rolls and accounting records. There are also fragmentary records of the Confederate Treasury and Navy and Post Office Departments and the Congress; also, documents relating to United States Prison and Provost Marshall papers pertaining to Confederate soldiers and citizens. There are also miscellaneous documents relating to Confederate citizens, furnishing a great variety of information. These papers are known as the "citizen's" file and are filed under the individual's name. In seeking information concerning my own grandfather, Robt. Peterson, who during the Civil War was living in Sampson County, North Carolina, I found in the envelope indexed under his name a list containing his name and those of about 75 other men of that county who had contributed cash to the Confederate cause; also, some correspondence regarding expenses of the militia, receipts for supplies sold to the Confederate Government showing the name

of the seller and a list of free Negroes who were paid to work on the construction of Fort Caswell.

Since such records are not filed according to the County, the historian writing the Civil War history of any one particular county would have to use one, or several, county tax lists of the period and check each name thereon against the index of the Citizen's File at the National Archives.

Also to be found are "carded records" containing information gleaned from the original records concerning the military service of many individuals in the Confederate Army. These card records have been microfilmed in alphabetical order without regard to the soldiers' home states. When you come to the name you are looking for, you request the actual record of that man. Among some of the facts regarding the soldier that may be procured from such records are, age and birthplace, occupation, where enlisted, name of regiment, height and complexion. This index contains most of the names of North Carolina soldiers to which references were found in the records used in compiling the service records.

Reproduction of specific compiled service records corresponding to entries in the index reproduced in this microcopy may be obtained from the National Archives for a fee. Requests for such reproductions should give the state, regiment or battalion and company for each soldier exactly as shown in the index.

In 1957, the National Archives published an index to the Confederate Records to be found there. This index is "Preliminary Inventories No. 101 — War Dept. Collection of Confederate Records" — compiled by Elizabeth Bethel. At this writing, this index may be secured from the U. S. Archives free of cost. Some of the records here indexed are of a general nature, while some concern definite named men, cities or states in the Confederacy. Access to this "Number 101" is a "must" for the historian or genealogist engaged in an exhaustive research project regarding the Confederacy.

In conclusion, anyone doing genealogical research, either in the District of Columbia or in any of the states, would do well to obtain a copy of *Is That Lineage Right?* published in 1958 by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. This may be purchased from the Society's headquarters in Washington, for 51c. This 61-page booklet contains a wealth of miscellaneous information which cannot be elaborated upon here — information helpful both to the beginner and to the more advanced genealogist. This publication was compiled by a D.A.R.-appointed committee selected from the more outstanding genealogists in the District of Columbia and Virginia.