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://glorecords.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

Where are the Bounty Land Applications?

Pension — No pension

In the pension file — Filed separately

A-S are on Fold3 (free access!)   S-Z are at the National Archives   Most aren't online, only available at National Archives   Indexed on Fold3 (A-L)

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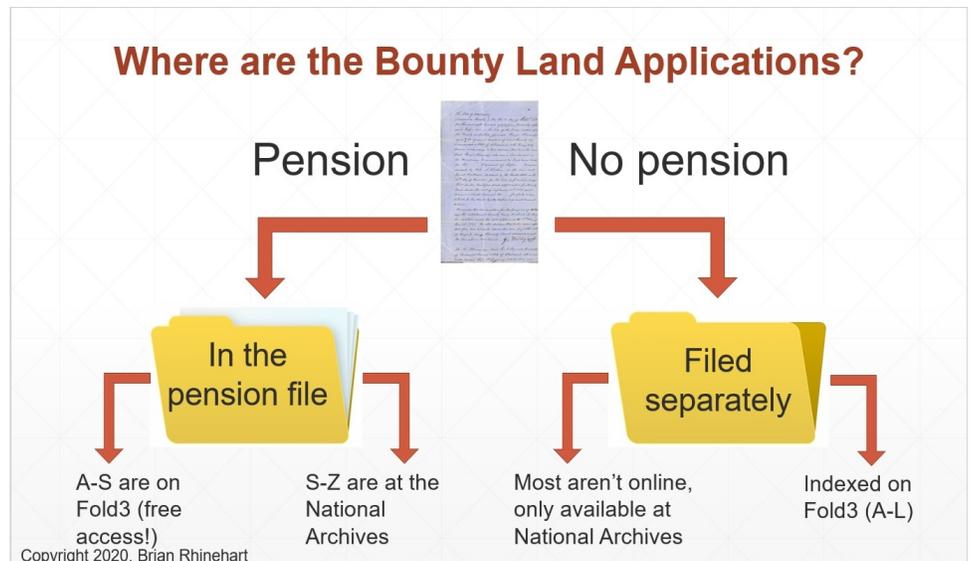
Enlistments: Many enlistment *papers* were destroyed in the 1814 fires. Enlistment *registers* are on Fold3 and Ancestry. These exist only for regular army soldiers.

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.