

Ancestral Past

Handout – America at 250! Researching Your Revolutionary Ancestors

November 3, 2026 – Elgin Genealogical Society

Presented by: Scott Norrick, Ancestral Past scott@ancestralpast.com

Overview of American Revolution

- Timeline of Events During Revolutionary Period:
 - 1763 French & Indian War Ends
 - 1765 British Parliament Starts Money-Raising Acts
 - 1768 British Troops sent to Boston
 - 1770 “Boston Massacre”
 - 1773 Britain Passes Tea Act/Boston Tea Party
 - 1774 First Continental Congress Meets
 - **1775 Battles of Lexington & Concord**/Washington leads Army
 - 1776 Declaration of Independence Signed
 - 1778 France and America form Alliance
 - **1781 Cornwallis Surrenders to Washington at Yorktown**
 - 1783 Treaty of Peace Signed
- The Population of the 13 colonies was about 2.7 million in 1776
 - 75% White/European
 - 20% Black/African American
 - 5% Native American
- In prioritizing your research, consider you likely had hundreds of direct ancestors that were living at the time of the revolution
- Patriotic service could have taken a number of forms
 - Service in the Continental Army/Navy
 - Service in a Colonial (State) or Local Militia
 - Signing petitions or oaths of allegiance
 - Furnishing supplies or room & board to American soldiers
 - Providing medical care to injured patriots
 - Serving as a local/state official engaged in patriotic activities
- The total Patriot Soldiers were about 500,000
 - 240k served in the Continental Army
 - 300k served in Colonial (State) and Local Militias
- Discussion of Various Groups:
 - Patriot Soldiers

- Tories (Loyalists) – at least 20k colonists actively fought with the British
 - United Empire Loyalist Assoc. of Canada
 - Family Search has database of Loyalist soldiers
 - Fold3 has database of Loyalist prisoners
- Women – many included in the DAR database (see below for DAR)
- Blacks/Slaves – many served – primarily in northern colonies; also, many were recruited by British (*blackloyalist.com*)
- Native Americans – many fought in war, mostly with British
- Foreigners – for example, many Hessians deserted British and fought with Colonists; also many French volunteers
- Note: DAR has a publication on “Forgotten Patriots” (*dar.org/library/research-guides/forgotten-patriots*)

Sources for Records:

- Start with the sites you already know:
 - Ancestry.com
 - FamilySearch
(*familysearch.org/en/wiki/Finding_Your_Revolutionary_War_Ancestor*)
 - Fold3 (*fold3.com/collection/us-revolutionary-war-us*)
- Records kept at the National Archives (NARA)
(*archives.gov/research/military/American-revolution*)
 - United States Revolutionary War Compiled Service Records, 1775-1783
 - Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783
 - Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900
 - Archive of papers of Founding Fathers (*founders.archives.gov*)
- Colony/State Records:
 - United States Rosters of Revolutionary War Soldiers and Sailors, 1775-1783 (on FamilySearch.org)
 - 2 Largest Examples:
 - Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolution
 - Record of Service of Connecticut Men
 - State Archives/Libraries
 - Virginia has one of the best (*lva-virginia.libguides.com/revolutionary-war*)
 - Pennsylvania
 - State Archives (*pa.gov/agencies/phmc/pa-state-archives*)
 - State Library (*pa-gov.libguides.com/pagenealogy/americanrevolution*)

- Societies
 - Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) (dar.org/grs)
 - Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) (sar.org)
 - The Society of the Cincinnati (societyofthecincinnati.org)
- Other Research Sources
 - New England Historical & Genealogical Society (americanancestors.org)
 - Museum of the American Revolution (amrevmuseum.org)
 - Private Site Dedicated to Revolution (americanrevolution.org)
- Published Books
 - *Index to Revolutionary War Service Records* – 4 Volumes by Virgil White
 - *Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants Awarded by State Governments* by Lloyd Bockstruck
- Old Newspapers/Local Town Records/Local Historical & Genealogical Societies/Cemeteries
- Battle Research: (battlefields.org)

References for Additional Research:

- Article: *Finding Revolutionary War Patriots in Your Family Tree* by Melanie McComb American Ancestors Magazine (Fall 2024).
- Book: *Our First Civil War – Patriots & Loyalists in the American Revolution* by H.W. Brands, Doubleday (2021).
- Book: *Reporting the Revolutionary War* by Todd Andrlick, Sourcebooks (2012).
- Article: *Strategies for Tracing Revolutionary War Veterans* by David Alan Lambert American Ancestors Magazine (Summer 2010).
- Book: *American Prisoners of the Revolution* by Danske Dandridge (2005).
- Book: *The American Revolution* by Gordon S. Wood, A Modern Library Chronicles Book (2002).
- Research Guide: *Forgotten Patriots – African and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War* by Eric G Grundset, Daughters of the American Revolution.
- Video Tutorials: Craig Scott's YouTube Channel > *Just Genealogy* (has quite a few videos on various Revolutionary War genealogical topics).

Scott Norrick welcomes feedback and questions on the presentation. He also has a quarterly email on various family history/genealogical topics. If you have questions, feedback or would like to receive the quarterly genealogy email, please contact him at scott@ancestralpast.com.