

Revolutionary War Pensioners of Columbia County

by
Andre Dominguez

The elusive family records from the first half of the 1800s have long challenged many researchers. If you are lucky enough to have an ancestor who was a pensioner in 1840, you may find him or her in the 1840 census along with their age and the name of head of family with whom pensioner resided, if applicable, on June 1, 1840. The following discussion by Kathy Leigh explains this data set.

The 1840 Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services was originally compiled by the federal government from the 1840 U.S. Federal Census, which required enumerators (census takers) to list the names and ages of Revolutionary War or other federal military services pensioners in households. The 1840 census did not include the ages of any household members other than military pensioners, and no names appear in it other than those of military pensioners and heads of household. All other household members were enumerated numerically using what are commonly referred to as "fence post tallies," meaning that each household member was categorized by race, sex and free/slave status, with the totals for each category entered by the census-taker in the appropriate column.

All the states in 1840 had this pensioner data taken which was then published in a separate publication in 1841. Kathy Leigh designed a Web Page for USGenNet that includes an alphabetical listing of all the pensioners by state (see source 1 below). In addition, the pensioner's publication organized by state, county and township or borough is also available (see source 2 below).

Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, Columbia County was in the Pennsylvania – Western District, along with Northumberland, Lycoming and Luzerne Counties. Pennsylvania had two districts; Eastern and Western. These two districts did not represent the geographical eastern and western parts of the state. The Eastern District included the southeastern counties of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Bucks, Northampton, Schuylkill, etc., while the Western District contained the remaining and less populous counties.

If your ancestor was a Revolutionary War veteran, additional records may be available through *Footnote.com*, (you need a subscription for full access to this Web site, but access to the Pennsylvania Archives books is free), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Web site, which is free, or you can request a copy of pension files from the National Archives Records Administration (NARA). The request from NARA is free, but there is a charge for a copy of the file. For example, on Footnote.com you can search for Peter Blank of Orange Township and discover that he was born in Whitehall Township, Northampton Co., his wife was Catherine and she was a widow on 1 August 1844. Additional information can be found through the Daughters of the American Revolution Ancestor search Web site found by logging on to <http://services.dar.org>, then selecting *DAR Library*, then *Online Research* and then clicking on *DAR Genealogy Research System (GRS)*. Finally clicking on *Click Image to Open GRS* and then clicking on the *Enter* button, sends you to the search screen. As you can see, this is a little more complicated to do a search than the previous Web site. Searching for Peter Blank results in six applications that can be purchased, but the following information is also provided online. Peter Blank was a private serving under Capt. Kennedy in the militia. He was born circa 1757 in Northampton Co., PA and died 13 December 1840 in Mt. Pleasant Township, Columbia Co. Had Peter died six months earlier, he would have been missed in the 1840 Pensioners Census.

Searching the associated applications revealed that Peter's wife, Catharine, was born 22 April 1955 in Northampton Co., PA, was married on 15 April 1779 in Northampton Co., PA and died in Mt. Pleasant Township, Columbia Co. Additionally a child, Catharine Blank, was identified, born on 1 Jan 1783 in Northampton Co., PA. She married David Smith in 1801 and died 29 January 1857 in Sandusky Co., Ohio.

There were only 24 military pensioners listed for Columbia County as follows.

Mifflin Township

Jacob Sewank , 81
Eve Mary Stahler, 92, with John P. Klingeman
Anna Mary Durnbauch, 67
Laurence Christ, 77, with Thomas Knox
Harry Erwine, 88

Roaring Creek Township

Andrew McClure, 85

Briar Creek Township

Christian Marical, 81
Thomas Ward, 92
Jacob Johnson, 85

Orange Township

Peter Blank, 84

Hemlock Township

John Hartman, 84
Abraham Shoemaker, 81

Montour Township

John Foust, 84

Danville Borough

William Clark, 84

Washingtonville Borough

Rachel McCoy, 85, with Robert McCoy

Madison Township

Christopher Woolheaver, 85
John Allen, 83
Valentine Christian, 84

Valley Township

Phebe Gray, 86, John Gray
Frederick Calehoffer, 84

Liberty Township

Jane Bell, 69
Daniel Evellon, 81

Limestone Township
Joseph Fulton, 87

Sugarloaf Township
John Keeler, 76

The Columbia County portion of the 1840 Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services publication can be found at the Society's Library in the Pamphlet File in the Veterans – Revolutionary War folder.

SOURCES:

1. Kathy Leigh, USGenNet 1840 Pensioners Census Web Page (<http://www.usgenet.org/usa/topic/colonial/census/1840>).
2. 1840 Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services images (<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1840c-01.pdf>).