

## The Mexican Border Campaign (1913-1917)

by Andre Dominguez

Did your Pennsylvania ancestor serve in the Mexican Border Campaign just before World War I? If he did, the Pennsylvania State Archives has an on-line database that can provide great genealogical information. First, a brief background discussion.

The following background information is provided with permission from *GlobalSecurity.org*.

*In 1913, when President Wilson became President, he denounced the new revolutionary government in Mexico and refused to recognize it as legitimate. As a result, violence toward Americans intensified and there were incidents of murder, robbery, kidnapping for ransom and property destruction. In response, President Wilson sent 4,800 Regular Army troops under General John "Blackjack" Pershing to defend the border towns and their citizens. In 1915, Mexico elected a new government and president, Venustiano Carranza. Carranza had one major opponent, a bandit-turned revolutionary named Francisco "Pancho" Villa. President Wilson recognized Carranza's constitutional government and created an enemy in "Pancho" Villa.*

*An increasing number of border incidents early in 1916 culminated in an invasion of American territory on March 8, when Francisco "Pancho" Villa and his band of 500 to 1,000 men raided Columbus, New Mexico. Elements of the 13<sup>th</sup> Cavalry repulsed the attack, but there were 24 American casualties (14 military, 10 civilian). Immediate steps were taken to organize a punitive expedition of about 10,000 men under Brigadier General Pershing to capture Villa. Villa was never captured.*

*On June 18, 1916, President Wilson mobilized the National Guard. Before the National Guard could be mobilized and sent to the southwest, soldiers had to be gathered and equipment distributed. War would probably have been declared but for the critical situation in Europe. Even so, virtually the entire Regular Army was involved, and most of the National Guard had been federalized and concentrated on the border before the end of the affair.*

*Fighting was limited to guerrilla warfare since Villa's forces could not afford to confront the U.S. Army directly. Accidents, climate and disease were the primary killers of U.S. soldiers during the Mexican Border Campaign. The presence of U.S. troops on the border was a constant drain of resources and cost American taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars per day. As a result, on January 27, 1917, President Wilson ordered their withdrawal. However, with the escalation of World War One in Europe, the United States Army and National Guard would soon be redirected to the battlefields of France. Normal relations with Mexico were restored eventually by diplomatic negotiation, and the troops were withdrawn in February 1917.*

The above history helps put the conflict in perspective. The Pennsylvania National Guard recruits, 1,100 strong, traveled to Mt. Gretna, Lebanon County, to prepare for action in the conflict. Their training lasted from August 15 to October 5, 1916, or a little better than seven weeks. For Columbia County, many men were involved in the Mexican Border Campaign. Thanks to the records at the Pennsylvania State Archives, a list of men who claimed Columbia County as their residence now exists. Each veteran has a card on file similar to the one below.

Regt. 13th Inf., Co. I.

**Mexican Emergency, Call of President June 18, 1916**

MEXICAN SERVICE MEDAL. 11750  
 Name, Wood, James Rank, Cook,  
 Age, 26 Height, 5-7 Complexion, Ruddy Eyes, Blue Hair, Rd. Brn.  
 Born, Catawissa, Pa. Occupation, Shoe Maker.  
 Married or single, Single Residence, Catawissa, Pa.  
 Emergency notification, Mrs. Casper Rhawn, Mother,  
 Catawissa, Pa.  
 Date commission or enlistment State Service, 6-21-16  
 Home Station and date of rendezvous, Bloomsburg, Pa. 8-14-16  
 Acceptance into U. S. Service, 9-26-16  
 Remarks, Enl. Ex. 6-20-1920.

The cards contain information about each Pennsylvania veteran including their regiment, company, rank, age, height, complexion, color of eyes, color of hair, place of birth, occupation, marital status, residence, name and address of person to notify in case of an emergency (including relationship), date of commission or enlistment, home station and date of rendezvous, date of acceptance into U.S. service and remarks that include the date their service expired. In addition, most of the veterans received a Mexican Service medal and the number of their medal is written on their card. While a few of the cards are not completely filled out, the vast majority have data for all the requested items.

To access the Mexican Border Campaign Veterans' Card File log on to the Archives Records Information Access System (ARIAS) on the Pennsylvania State Archives web site. This can be easily accomplished by typing <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/> in your web browser and then pressing the Enter button. This page contains two links. One is a help page to learn how to use ARIAS and the other allows you to explore historical records through ARIAS now. By clicking on the explore link, you will gain access to all the on-line archives, that includes the Pennsylvania National Guard Veterans' Card File (1867-1921), Civil War Veterans' Card File (1861-1866), Mexican Border Campaign Veterans' Card File, World War I Service Medal Application Cards, Spanish American War Veterans' Card File of the United States Volunteers, Revolutionary War Military Abstract Card File, and Militia Officers Index Cards (1775-1800). You will want to explore all of them, but for now, click on the link for the **Mexican Border Campaign Veterans' card file**. Since many of the veterans from Pennsylvania in this campaign were from the National Guard, after you find your ancestor, take a look at the PA National Guard Veterans' Card File, 1867-1921 collection too. Additional information on the Mexican Border Campaign veterans is contained in this collection.

As mentioned, many Columbia County men were involved in the Campaign, with most enlisting in August 1916. Sixty-six veterans have been identified in the table below. Most were assigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, Company I, but a few others were assigned to other regiments. The location of the regiment while on the border was eight miles north of El Paso, Texas. While there the Army continued to prepare for action, but there is no record of any military engagement for the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry in this conflict. The border duty for the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment

terminated on March 21, 1917. After the Mexican Border Campaign, the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry Pennsylvania National Guard was consolidated with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry to form the 109<sup>th</sup> Infantry in preparation for World War One. In addition, a portion of the 13th was also consolidated with other troops making the 108th Machine Gun Battalion. Most of the Columbia County enlistments expired in 1922 after their tours in France. For more details on the Mexican Border Campaign read the *History of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment, National Guard of Pennsylvania*, (CCHGS – 929.3/Mil/P415), available at the Society Library.

#### Columbia County Veterans of the Mexican Border Campaign

Name	Residence
Appleman, Clyde	Rohrsburg
Barton, Harry S.	Bloomsburg
Beaver, Martin H.	Berwick
Bitler, Ralph R.	Bloomsburg
Black, Carl H.	Rohrsburg
Black, Jay A.	Rohrsburg
Boice, Harold E.	Bloomsburg
Boone, Henry L.	Lime Ridge
Boone, Peter M.	Lime Ridge
Bradley, Clyde J.	Bloomsburg
Bradley, Raymond O.	Bloomsburg
Bradstreet, Floyd A.	Bloomsburg
Brobst, William	Bloomsburg
Dieffenbach, Oliver H.	Bloomsburg
Eckenroth, Harry S.	Bloomsburg
Eckenroth, Paul E.	Bloomsburg
Eckert, Harry A.,	Almedia
Edwards, Pierson	Lime Ridge
Erein, Ross D.	Bloomsburg
Fenstermacher, Ross S.	Catawissa
Gennaria, Abraham H.	Bloomsburg
Gregg, William E.	Berwick
Grimwood, Claude	Bloomsburg
Gross, John R.	Bloomsburg
Hagenbuch, Henry	Bloomsburg
Hahn, Lamar	Bloomsburg
Hartman, Clark T.	Berwick
Hess, Doyle E.	Benton
Hilderbrant, Thomas F.	Bloomsburg
Holmes, Olmstead	Bloomsburg
Hoover, Horace	Bloomsburg
Hummell, Paul	Espy
Jacoby, Benjamin	Bloomsburg
Kessler, Samuel C.	Bloomsburg
Kisner, Carlton E.	Bloomsburg

Name	Residence
Kitchen, John W.	Lightstreet
Kline, Harry B.	Rohrsburg
Leiby, William E.	Bloomsburg
Lynch, William J.	Bloomsburg
Megill, Charles H.	Bloomsburg
Mateer, Charles H.	Berwick
Millard, Edwin E.	Berwick
Mordan, George	Bloomsburg
Mordan, Samuel	Bloomsburg
Neff, Robert C.	Bloomsburg
Neufer, Boyd H.	Bloomsburg
Neufer, Wallace S.	Bloomsburg
Nuss, Otto	Bloomsburg
Ohl, Daniel C.	Bloomsburg
Penman, Robert B.	Espy
Remley, William	Lightstreet
Ritter, Frank	Berwick
Rupert, Lester	Bloomsburg
Shultz, Judson	Berwick
Smith, Deily A.	Bloomsburg
Snyder, Elmer E.	Bloomsburg
Strausser, Joe	Bloomsburg
Taber, Robert R.	Bloomsburg
Thomas, Benton E.	Bloomsburg
Wall, Robert P.	Orangeville
Warr, George W.	Bloomsburg
Washburn, Harry	Bloomsburg
White, John F.	Berwick
Wood, James	Catawissa
Woolley, Fred. E.	Lime Ridge
Yocum, Frank	Catawissa