

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS**

Microfilm Publication M246

REVOLUTIONARY WAR ROLLS

1775-1783

Roll 97

Virginia

Jacket Nos. 62-73



**THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**

WASHINGTON: 1976

## INTRODUCTION

On the 138 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced muster rolls, payrolls, strength returns, and other miscellaneous personnel, pay, and supply records of American Army units, 1775-83. A manuscript register of the series is filmed on roll 1. The records are part of War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, Record Group 93.

American Forces during the Revolutionary War included many types of military organizations created by the Continental Congress, States, towns, and counties. Regular units that were authorized by the Congress formed the Continental Army, but this Army was frequently supplemented by units of militia and volunteers from the States. The Revolutionary War rolls reproduced in this microfilm include those of regular units of the Continental Army and of units of militia, volunteers, and others who served with them. The larger entity is identified in this publication as the "American Army."

## The Continental Army

In 1775 the Continental Congress adopted as the Continental Army the military units of the New England Colonies that were besieging Boston. In resolutions of November 4, 1775, the Congress increased the Army, at least on paper, to 20,372 soldiers and standardized regimental size. Each regiment was to contain 728 men, divided among eight companies. Each company was to contain one captain, two lieutenants, one ensign, four sergeants, four corporals, two fifers or drummers, and 76 privates. Additional regiments, sometimes containing fewer men, were authorized by the Continental Congress for such purposes as the Canadian campaigns and the defense of the Southern States. Many of the authorized regiments in this and later reorganizations were never completely filled.

A major reorganization of the Army was authorized in resolutions of September 16, 1776. The Continental Congress ordered the enlistment of 88 battalions (or regiments) for the duration of the war and apportioned them among the States as follows: Connecticut, 8; Delaware, 1; Georgia, 1; Maryland, 8; Massachusetts, 15; New Hampshire, 3; New Jersey, 4; New York, 4; North Carolina, 9; Pennsylvania, 12; Rhode Island, 2; South Carolina, 6; and Virginia, 15. The States were to recruit the soldiers and appoint the officers for their battalions, although the officers would be formally commissioned by the Continental Congress. Some units raised in consequence of this resolution bore designations as numbered State regiments while others were numbered as Continental regiments.

On December 27, 1776, the Congress authorized General Washington to raise "from any or all of these United States" 16 infantry battalions "in addition to those already voted by Congress." These so-called "additional regiments" were enlisted regionally, although some were chiefly or solely from one State. The units were designated by the names of their commanding officers, and many were subsequently consolidated and adopted into the various State Lines, taking designations as numbered State regiments.

In 1778 the Continental Congress authorized a reduction of the Army to 80 battalions, each containing 585 men. In October 1780 the Congress further reduced the Army by ordering that after January 1, 1781, the Continental Army would consist of 4 regiments of cavalry or light dragoons, 4 regiments of artillery, 49 regiments of infantry (excluding Colonel Hazen's regiment), and 1 regiment of artificers. Finally, on June 2, 1784, the Continental Congress directed the commanding general to discharge all troops in the service of the United States, retaining only 80 privates, with a proportionate number of officers, to guard the stores at Fort Pitt, West Point, and other magazines.

A typical infantry regiment in the Continental Army, generally referred to in this publication as either regiment or battalion without the designation "infantry," might contain field officers with the grades of colonel, lieutenant colonel, and major; a regimental staff, including an adjutant, quartermaster, surgeon, surgeon's mate, paymaster, and chaplain; and eight to ten companies, each normally commanded by a captain.

Cavalry and artillery regiments were organized in a similar way, although a company of cavalry was frequently called a troop. An artillery company included specialized soldiers, such as bombardiers, gunners, and matrosses. Soldiers in artillery units often functioned individually or in small groups rather than as a regiment.

Artificers were civilian or military mechanics and artisans employed by the Army to provide necessary services. An artificer company included blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, harnessmakers, nailers, and wheelwrights.

#### History of the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records

Most of the records of the American Army in the custody of the War Department were destroyed by fire on November 8, 1800. The War Department collection of Revolutionary War records was begun in 1873, when Secretary of War William Belknap made the first of several purchases of Revolutionary War records for the Department. War Department orders of July 3 and 16, 1889,

established a Record and Pension Division within the Department to take custody of the military records of the volunteer Armies of the United States and to transact the pension and other business of the Department connected with those records. The Division was changed to the Record and Pension Office of the War Department by an act of May 9, 1892 (27 Stat. 27), with Col. Fred C. Ainsworth as Chief. At Ainsworth's instigation, the Congress passed acts on July 27, 1892 (27 Stat. 275), and August 18, 1894 (28 Stat. 403), that directed all other Federal executive departments to transfer military records of the Revolutionary War in their possession to the War Department. Many documents in this microfilm publication bear stamps indicating the date of transfer and the Department from which acquired. A final major addition to the collection was made in 1914-15, when photographic copies of Revolutionary War records in the possession of individuals and institutions in several States were made by the War Department to supplement the original records.

#### Revolutionary War Rolls

The primary function of the many Revolutionary War rolls maintained by the American Army was to provide basic information about the identities, numbers, condition, equipage, and pay status of the men and units that comprised the Army in order to facilitate administrative control.

The Continental Congress required the periodic mustering of regiments and companies for the verification of rosters by a commissary of musters. The requirement was included in the rules and regulations for the Continental Army (approved November 7, 1775) and in the Articles of War (approved September 20, 1776). A commanding officer was required to submit certificates to the mustering officer explaining all absences, and a surgeon or surgeons' mate was required to provide certificates of illness for sick or injured soldiers. The mustering officer then added to the muster roll the information contained on the certificates. If convicted by general court-martial of submitting false certificates or of falsifying the muster roll, an officer could be dismissed from the service and barred from holding public office under the authority of the United States.

A resolution of the Congress on April 4, 1777, established the office of commissary general of musters and provided for four departmental deputy muster masters general and for a deputy muster master for "each grand division of the army." The same resolution specified that each company (or troop) was to be mustered monthly by a deputy muster master and at least quarterly by the deputy muster master general for the department. The mustering officer was formally charged with examining the "cloaths, arms, accoutrements, and pay of the troops" and with reporting any observed deficiencies to the departmental commander. The resolution also required the company commander to prepare and

sign five copies of each muster roll, and directed the disposition of four of the copies as follows: one copy, upon certification by the mustering officer, to the captain of the company; another copy to the Board of Treasury; a third copy to the departmental paymaster general; and a fourth copy to the regimental paymaster, who affixed it to his payrolls. Another resolution (May 2, 1777) directed that the officers of the mustered company were to appear before a general officer (or before the post commander if a general officer was unavailable) and swear under oath that the muster roll was correct. The form of the oath as prescribed in the resolution required the officers to affirm that the roll represented the "true state of the company, without fraud to these United States, or to any individual, according to our best knowledge." The oath, dated and signed, appears on the reverse of the muster roll.

A resolution of the Continental Congress on February 5, 1778, established a formal requirement for company payrolls. The resolution instructed the company commander to submit a monthly payroll to the regimental paymaster. The paymaster, in turn, retained "true copies of such pay rolls," and added the amount due to each company to the payrolls of the field and staff officers and noncommissioned officers, "that the whole may be examined. . . by Congress."

The principal kinds of rolls reproduced in this publication are muster rolls, strength returns, and payrolls. Muster rolls were prepared for companies and regiments, while tabulated strength returns were prepared for brigades, corps, divisions, and armies. In addition, this publication includes a number of miscellaneous rolls of a more specialized nature, dealing with matters of personnel, supply, and finance.

The vast majority of muster rolls in this publication are company rolls. They consist of a list of names in descending order of rank of all officers and men of the company present or absent on the day the unit was assembled for muster. For officers, the rolls give rank, date of commission, and an explanation of absences. For noncommissioned officers (sergeants and corporals), fifers, drummers, and privates, the information includes date (and frequently place) of enlistment, term of service (generally duration of war, 3 years, or 9 months), and an explanation of absences noted in the remarks column with an appropriate term, such as "sick," "on guard," "on furlough," or "on command" (absent from camp on official business). Frequently, these entries were supplemented by dates of absences and the locations of those absent, sick, or on command. Concluding the rosters for each rank are the names of soldiers to be dropped from the rolls by reason of transfer, discharge, desertion, or death. On the reverse of each muster roll is a tabulated statement titled "Proof of Effectives," giving the number of officers and

men of each rank present and absent, excluding those who were to be purged from the rolls.

Regimental muster rolls normally provide only a list of names of all commissioned officers of the regiment not assigned to specific companies. The names of field officers (colonel, lieutenant colonel, and major) precede the names of staff officers (adjutant, paymaster, surgeon, quartermaster, and chaplain), and each list is arranged in descending order of rank. Occasionally, the names of company officers are listed after those of the staff officers. Following the name of each officer appears his rank and date of commission and an explanation of any absence. Sometimes the names of noncommissioned officers serving at regimental headquarters are also listed, with their dates of enlistment and terms of service plus explanations of absences.

The returns of larger Army units differ from the muster rolls in that they do not provide a name list of officers or men. Instead, each return contains a tabulated statement of the number of soldiers of each rank in each unit (normally a regiment or larger unit) listed on the return. Total numbers of officers and enlisted men are tabulated for each unit and finally for each rank of all units on the return.

Payrolls were maintained for both companies and regiments. Company payrolls list generally alphabetically officers, noncommissioned officers, fifers, drummers, and privates in descending order of rank, with columns for date of commencement of pay period, length of pay period, rate of subsistence, rate of pay, and amount due. Space is also provided for remarks about absences.

Regimental payrolls (also called general pay abstracts, general abstracts, or pay abstracts) list field and staff officers and such noncommissioned officers as were assigned to regimental headquarters, in descending order of rank and thereunder generally alphabetically. After each officer's name is listed his rank, date of commencement of pay period, length of pay period, rate of subsistence (in dollars per month), rate of pay (in dollars per month), and amount due (in pounds). A final column titled "casualties" provides space for remarks about absences. A total amount due to the field and staff personnel is given, below which the amount due to each company of the regiment is listed (in pounds), followed by the total due the entire regiment (in pounds and dollar equivalents).

In addition to muster rolls and payrolls, the American Army created a large number of specialized rolls and other records concerning personnel, supply, and finance. These miscellaneous rolls were not standardized from unit to unit and show considerable variation in size, format, and content, even among rolls performing a similar function.



## NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS

Personnel records include inspection reports detailing the appearance, general condition, state of combat readiness, and quality and quantity of arms and equipment of the inspected company or regiment; field returns tabulating the numbers of officers and men of individual regiments; promotion and vacancy lists; and lists of men who, by reason of transfer, discharge, death, or desertion, were stricken from company or regimental muster rolls and payrolls. These latter lists often provide information about money owed to the United States at the time the men were dropped from the rolls. Included also are special rolls prepared upon the consolidation of two or more units, listing the names of officers and enlisted men of both the new unit and the older ones from which it was derived; affidavits from individuals attesting to service in the American Army, submitted in support of claims for compensation for such service; and records concerning military service copied by the Record and Pension Office from original State records.

Supply rolls consist primarily of receipts for clothing, equipage, guns, and ammunition and commonly include name, rank, and signature of the issuing officer; date of issue; name, rank, and signature (or mark) of the receiving officers or enlisted men; date of receipt; and type and quantity of issued items. Other records include receipt rolls for money received in lieu of clothing (listing members of the regiment or company by name, the amount due to each, and their signatures or marks), ration abstracts (listing the per diem ration allowance, in dollars, of all officers of the regiment and the total amount due to each), and ration deficiency returns (listing the dollar amounts due to the regiment for subsistence stores authorized but not issued).

The financial rolls include pay accounts of the regimental paymasters (showing sums received and disbursed) and pay receipt rolls of individual companies (including name, rank, amount of money received, and signature or mark of each officer and enlisted man).

### Arrangement of the Revolutionary War Rolls

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are arranged by numbered folders ("jackets") under three broad categories: individual States (arranged alphabetically), "Continental Troops," and "Miscellaneous." Units arranged under individual States include regular units of the Continental Army raised in a State plus elements of its militia and volunteers. Within each State grouping, numbered units (arranged numerically) generally precede named units (arranged generally alphabetically). Although Vermont was not organized as a State until 1791, units raised in that State are arranged separately in this section under "Vermont."

Units arranged under "Continental Troops" consist primarily of specialized units created by the Continental Congress, infantry regiments organized as a result of the Continental Congress resolutions of 1776, and units raised in more than one State. "Continental Troops" are arranged in four parts: (1) cavalry, artillery, and artificer units, arranged by type of unit, with numbered units usually preceding named units; (2) numbered infantry regiments of 1776, arranged numerically; (3) "additional regiments," arranged alphabetically by unit name; and (4) miscellaneous units, arranged alphabetically by name. The latter include, among others, the Commander in Chief's Guard, the German Regiment, and a company of Delaware Indians.

The section designated "Miscellaneous" is reserved for the returns of units larger than a regiment and for special returns not easily classified under another designation. They include returns of the French Army under Count Rochambeau, arranged chronologically; brigade, division, and army returns, arranged by organization and thereunder chronologically; and general returns of Washington's Army, also arranged chronologically. Special returns include those of the Hospital and Quartermaster General's Departments, arranged by department and thereunder chronologically; guard reports; and prisoner-of-war lists.

Records of individual regiments, whether State or Continental, are arranged so that regimental rolls precede company rolls. Thereunder, the rolls are arranged by type, with muster rolls first, payrolls second, and various miscellaneous rolls last.

Because Continental Army units were frequently reorganized, there are sometimes several series of jackets for the different reorganizations, each bearing the same number or name designation. When the records for each reorganization were maintained separately, the year of original formation is often included in the title. The New York records, for instance, include a 1st Regiment, 1775; a 1st Regiment, 1776; and a 1st Regiment, 1777-83. When a consolidation of several regiments was made, the new unit designation sometimes reflected the combined designations of the several regiments involved; e.g., a Virginia unit that was designated the "4th, 8th, and 12th Regiment."

#### Register

In 1906 the Record and Pension Office compiled a manuscript register ("catalogue of records") to the Revolutionary War rolls in its custody, which is reproduced on roll 1 of this microfilm publication. The register is arranged in the same order as the records and lists for each organization the year established, jacket numbers that cover its records, names of commanding officers, and, occasionally, types of records. Jackets



are numbered consecutively for the records of each State, for the records of the Continental Troops, and for miscellaneous records.

#### Related Records

The muster rolls represented in this publication were used extensively by the Record and Pension Office in the preparation of compiled service records for the men who served in the American Army during the Revolutionary War. The compiled service records, also part of Record Group 93, have been reproduced as two National Archives and Records Service (NARS) microfilm publications: *Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel and Members of the Departments of the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General of Military Stores Who Served During the Revolutionary War* (M880), and *Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War* (M881). A general name index to the compiled service records is available as *General Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Revolutionary War Soldiers* (M860).

Other publications of records from Record Group 93 are *Numbered Record Books Concerning Military Operations and Service, Pay and Settlement of Accounts, and Supplies in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records* (M853); *Miscellaneous Numbered Records (The Manuscript File) in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1775-1790's* (M859); and *Special Index to Numbered Records in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1775-1783* (M847).

Pension and bounty-land-warrant application files, based on the service of Revolutionary War veterans, are in Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15. They have been reproduced in two NARS microfilm publications: *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files* (M804), and *Selected Records From Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files* (M805).

Journals, correspondence, and other records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses are in Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, Record Group 360, and have been reproduced in NARS microfilm publications *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (M247), and *Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (M332). International and Indian treaties are in General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11; the Indian treaties have been microfilmed as *Ratified Indian Treaties, 1722-1869* (M668).

Robert B. Matchette wrote these introductory remarks and prepared the table of contents.

