

## August Found in the Archives

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August 14, 2023

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# FAIRFAX COUNTY

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## VIRGINIA

### Found in the Archives no. 89 Circuit Court Clerk's Office Historic Records Center

#### Military Records at the HRC

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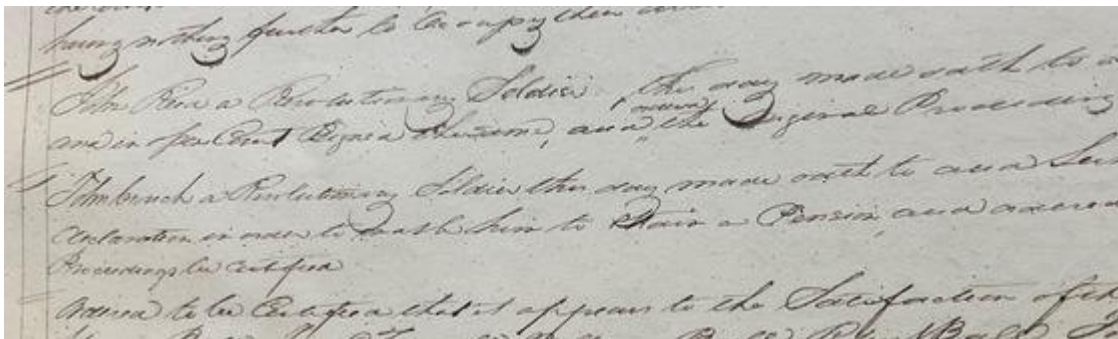


Happy August, and welcome back to *Found in the Archives*, a publication of The Clerk of the Fairfax Circuit Court, 19th Judicial Circuit, who proudly serves The City of Fairfax & Fairfax County. Thank you for reading our newsletter! If you would like to reach out with questions or for more information, please email us at [CCRhistoricrecords@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:CCRhistoricrecords@fairfaxcounty.gov)

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This month, we look at the many types of military records held here at the Historic Records Center. Our collection of military records covers the history of our nation, with its birth in the colonial period all the way through World War II. These historic court-held records are helpful for researchers of genealogy, students applying for veteran scholarship funds, and patrons trying to prove lineage to soldiers who fought in America's wars.

Our records detailing the American Revolution can be found in our Court Order books, which function similarly to a court docket, or list of actions taken by the Court when it is in session. For instance, our order books after the Revolution show soldiers claiming pensions for serving in the Continental Army. In August 1835, John Reid and John Crouch came to the Court in Fairfax to receive their pension for service as "Revolutionary Soldiers." This book entry reads, "John Reid a Revolutionary Soldier, this day made oath to a declaration and in open Court Signed the same, and ordered the Original Proceedings be certified."



Fairfax Court Order Book 1835-1842, page 6

Many Fairfax County citizens fought in the War of 1812, which was an attempt by England to retake control of America and re-subjugate it to colonial status. The Historic Records Center's order books contain references to pension applications from soldiers and widows of soldiers who had served in this war. For example, in August 1853, Jane Allen, widow of Andrew Allen, filed a claim for her husband's pension for serving in the War of 1812. This entry states "that Jane Allen is the widow of Andrew Allen, and that the said Andrew Allen was a private in the company of Captain Thomas Jennings of Virginia Militia in the War of 1812, and died at Hampton Roads in Virginia on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October 1813 in consequence of disease contracted while in service in the line of his duty."

Jane Allen personally appeared before the Court and submitted and made oath to a declaration in writing, in order to obtain the benefits of an Act of Congress passed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February 1853; and it is ordered to be certified, that it appears to the satisfaction of the Court, by the oath of E. Davis & L. P. Thompson of the county, or are credible witnesses, that Jane Allen is the widow of Andrew Allen, and that the said Andrew Allen was a private in the company of Captain Thomas Jennings of Virginia Militia in the War of 1812, and died at Hampton Roads in Virginia on the 10th of October 1813 in consequence of disease contracted while in service in the line of duty —

Fairfax Court Order Book 1852-1855 page 151

While the Historic Records Center has limited records relating to the Mexican-American War (1843-1845), we do have a fascinating 1852 chancery case involving veteran Presley Gunnell. Gunnell, who was in Missouri at the time of his lawsuit, was thought by his family to have been killed while serving in the Mexican-American War, since he never returned to Fairfax. However, upon his father's death in 1848 he filed with the Fairfax Court to receive his portion of the Gunnell family inheritance.

The Historic Records Center has a vast collection of records from the Civil War era. While not strictly military records, we are custodian to such antebellum records as the Ordinance of Secession vote, and several records in our collection were graffitied by soldiers. We also have many Civil War pension applications. As most of Fairfax County supported the Confederacy, virtually all of these pension applications are for Confederate soldiers. After the Civil War, Confederate veterans were eligible to apply for and receive state-funded pensions, but could not receive federal pensions, having rebelled against the United States. We do, however, have one pension application from a Union soldier named Reuben Murry.

Record *Die.* *JTB.* *Es'r.* *3-380.*  
 No. *368,772* Department of the Interior,  
 BUREAU OF PENSIONS,  
 Washington, D. C., *June 30, 1897*

*Reuben J. Murry*  
 Co. *1<sup>st</sup>* Reg't. *U.S. Inf.*  
 Returns this with your reply.

SIR: In the claim for pension above entitled, the genuineness of the signature and the official character as *Notary Public* on *May 31*, 1897 of *John W. Sherwood*, County of *Fairfax*, State of *Virginia*, should be certified by the clerk of the county or court of record or other proper officer under the seal of such county court or public officer, which should be in form of the blank at the foot hereof, that it may be placed on file for future reference, so that all persons filing papers executed before him during his term of office may refer thereto, and thus obviate the necessity of filing a certificate in each case.

This circular should be returned with your response.  
 Very respectfully,

*Gas. Tanna*  
*Washington*  
*D.C.*

*McKay Grand*  
 Commissioner.  


(Signature of Magistrate): *John W. Sherwood Notary Pub.*  
 (Post-office address of Magistrate): ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

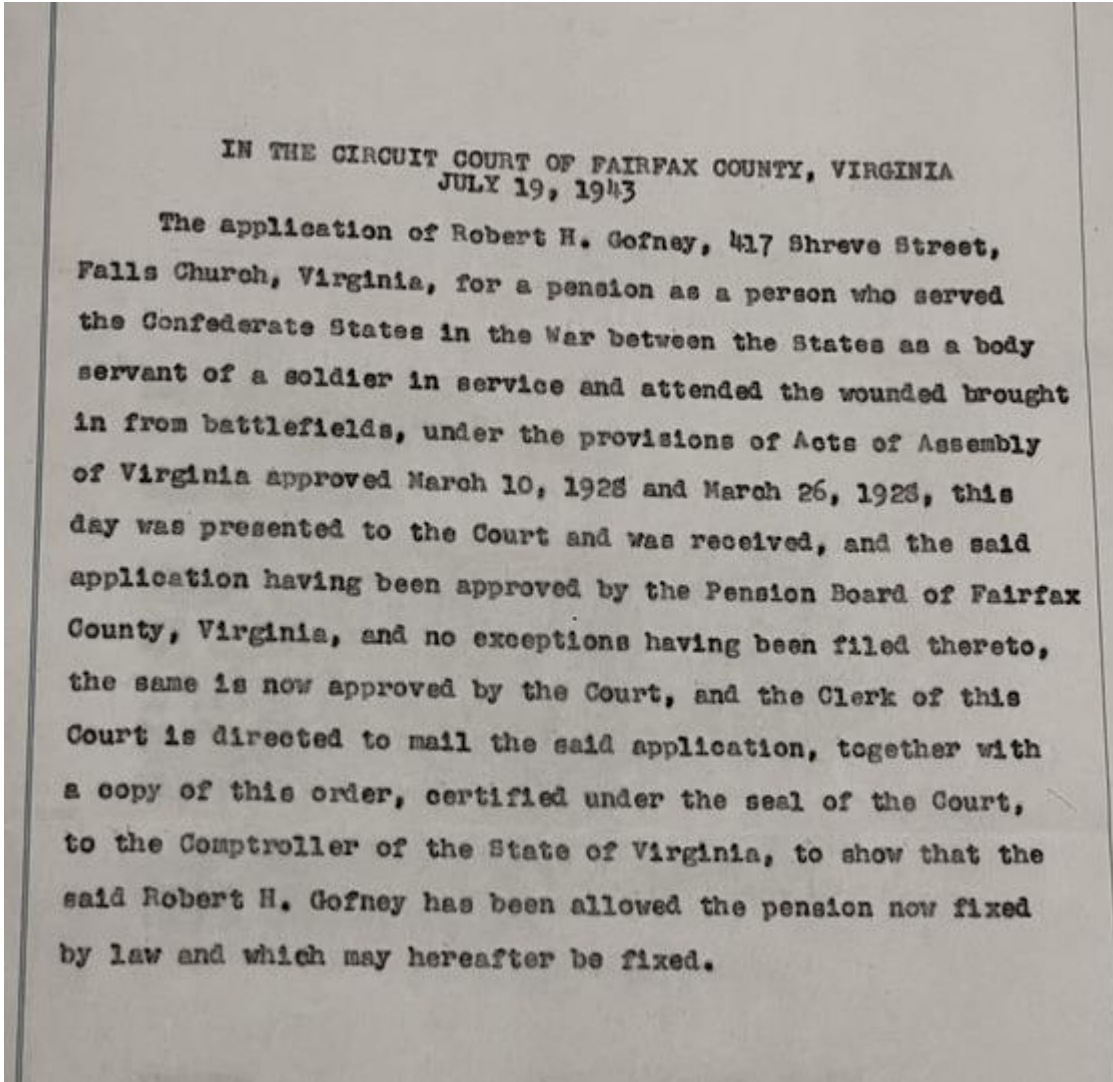
STATE OF *Virginia*  
 County of *Fairfax*  
 I, *J. W. Richardson*, clerk of the *County Court* of the county and State aforesaid, do hereby certify that it appears of record in my office, pursuant to law, that *John W. Sherwood* is a *Notary Public* in and for said *County*, duly qualified to act as such; that his term of office commenced on the *17th* day of *January*, in the year 1895, and will expire on the *17th* day of *January*, in the year 1899, and that his signature is ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
 GIVEN under my hand and the seal of the said *County Court* at *Fairfax Va* on this *22* day of *July*, in the year of our Lord 1897.  
*J. W. Richardson*  
 Clerk.

Fairfax County Civil War Pension, Reuben J. Murry, PENS-0001

The last record we have of a Civil War Pension application being filed in Fairfax County is the application of Robert H. Gofney, whose pension application was approved in July

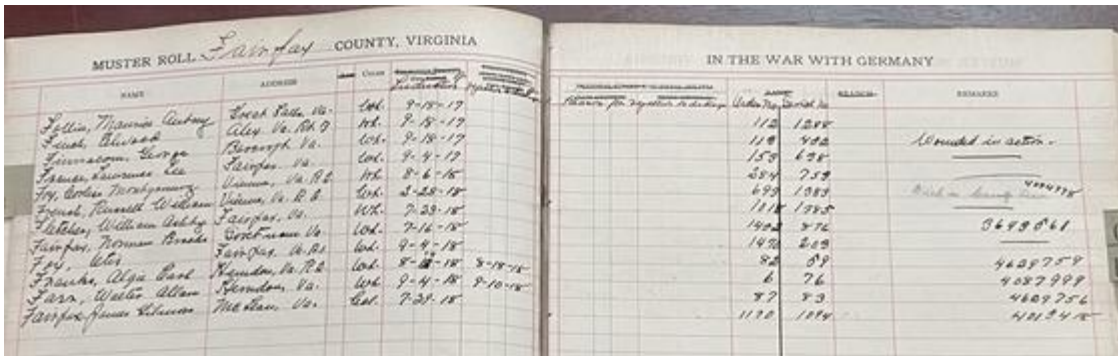


1943, just over a year into America's entry into World War II. Gofney was "a body servant of a soldier in service and attended the wounded brought in from battlefields." After Gofney's pension approval, it would have been sent to the state Auditor of Public Accounts for state funding.



Fairfax County Civil War Pension, Robert H. Gofney, PENS-0075

The Historic Records Center even has a World War I Muster Book, notably titled "In the War with Germany." The Muster Book lists men who enlisted, or were drafted, for World War I, as well as men who joined the S.A.T.C., the Student Army Training Corps. This organization allowed for students to enlist in the military, while simultaneously taking college courses.



Fairfax County World War I Muster Book

The Muster Book gives researchers the name, hometown, race, and other service information and notations about the soldier. For example, on the “F” alphabet page, we can see notes that Elwood Finch was wounded in action, and Corliss Foy died while at Camp Lee in Prince George County, Virginia.

Military records are just a small part of our collections of court records here at the Historic Records Center, but they help tell the stories of our Fairfax citizens, and provide valuable information for researchers, genealogists, students, and military history buffs.