The Sick and the Dead

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
CLAIM FILES
AND WORLD WAR I
BURIAL FILES

DARIA LABINSKY
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT ST. LOUIS
MAY 15, 2015
National Archives at St. Louis

Why we have these records:

• Federal repository for 20th century military and civilian textual personnel records

• Used to reconstruct service for veterans whose records were destroyed in the 1973 fire
Veterans Administration Claim Files

- Also known as Deceased Veterans Compensation Files, XC Files

- Record Group 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs

- Cases closed by the VA from 1917-1948, which were transferred to a Federal Records Center in 1952 and 1955

- National Archives began taking custody in 2013
A Brief History

- Revolutionary War era
- 1832 — Bureau of Pensions created
- 1914 — War Risk Insurance Act became law
- 1921 — Veterans Bureau created
- 1930 — Veterans Administration created
- 1989 — Department of Veterans Affairs
WWI-era benefits — Pvt. Michael Fitzpatrick

K – Life Insurance

A – Adjusted Compensation (Bonus)

T – War Risk Insurance

R – Rehabilitation

CT – WWI certificate (issued with bonus)

No I – permanent disability
WWI-era benefits — Pvt. Michael Fitzpatrick

The C Number:
What Can You Find in These Records?

Insurance Application

- Full name of individual
- Birthdate
- Beneficiaries
- Date(s) of enlistment
- Address of residence
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- Full name of individual
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What Can You Find in These Records?

Affidavit of Beneficiary

- Beneficiary’s full name
- Beneficiary’s birthdate
- List of relatives
- Circumstances of death
- Addresses of residences
What Can You Find in These Records?

Correspondence

U.S. VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, 
WASHINGTON D.C.

RADIO MARINE BUREAU/ MARE DEPT.
WESTERN UNION TELE CO,
60 HUDSON STREET,
NEW YORK N.Y.

JAN. 17TH 1947.

CAN YOU ADVISE WHERE THE BURIAL OF
LT. OR. CAPTAIN QUENTIN ROOSEVELT IS IN FRANCE. (WORLD WAR NO. 1.)

ALSO, FOR PERSONAL INFORMATION, WHEN
AND HOW HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION. HIS BIRTH PLACE AND DATE, AND,
ALSO A PHOTOGRAPH, AND IF HE WAS A TALL MAN. OR WHERE I MAY
OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION. ALSO IF HE WAS A BACHELOR.
THANKING YOU, I REMAIN,

RESPECTFULLY,

 DANIEL MAGANZA.

Harry Askin
Manager

Sousa and His Band

John Philip Sousa
Conductor

April 1, 1940.

Bureau of War Risk Insurance,
Washington, D.C.

Will you kindly explain to me the meaning of the enclosed application which I received a few days ago attached to receipt of my March premium.

I am not in arrears and have paid every premium from the time I took out War Risk Insurance. Will you be so good as send me all the laws and regulations regarding War Risk Insurance.

Yours sincerely,

John Philip Sousa
Lieutenant-Commander USN, Class G

Ph. I am enclosing my check for April premium. Please acknowledge.

April 10, 1940

M. M. M. M. M. M.
What Can You Find in These Records?

If died in service:
Cause of death

If died later:
Death Certificate
What Can You Find in These Records?

Foreign documents
What Can You Find in These Records?

Miscellaneous Interesting Items

- Photographs
- Receipts
- Medical records
- Wills
- Marriage certificates
- Baptismal records
- Affidavits
What Can You Find in These Records?

Errors

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Bureau of War Risk Insurance
Washington, D.C. 23713

Have just received a letter from my son, Captain Phil J. Keizer, Surgeon 30th Engineers, dated August 29th, and hasten to notify you.

The official notice from Harris acting the Adjutant General, stating that Captain Phil Keizer, Engineer, had been killed in action July 13, was certainly a mistake, according to above mentioned letter. Any information you can give me would be very welcome.

Respectfully,

Mrs. Isabel Keizer
517 Thompson Place
San Antonio, Texas

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT
Bureau of War Risk Insurance
Disallowance Memorandum.

Name: Keizer, Phil J.
Rank: Captain

Disallowed

Reason: Reported dead in error.

Date: 11/4/19

Treasurer
Keizer
1955 transfer—World War I plus:

- Civil War
- “Indian Wars”
- Spanish-American War
- Philippine Insurrection
- China Relief Expedition
- and, of course, the “regulars”
Records of 19th century service
Some Cases Are Still Open

As of May 2014:

• 1 Civil War child still receiving benefits—Irene Triplett

• 16 children and spouses from Spanish-American War

• 4,038 surviving children and spouses from World War I

Only a percentage of files are in NARA custody
Burial Case Files

- Official name: Correspondence, Reports, Telegrams, Applications, and Other Papers Relating to Burials of Service Personnel (Also known as “Cemeterial Files” or “293 Files”)

- RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General’s Office, 1915-1939

- Record information relating to veterans burials

- Arranged alphabetically
What Can You Find in These Records?

Grave location details

Report of Disinterment and Reburial

Isolated grave... Fismes. Map 1:20000 at crosspoint of coordinates 200, 62 273.81. Approximately 1/2 kilometer due east of Chamery, France.

Field sketch No. 14 Wyman.

Headboard:

Identification Tags:

Was one buried with body... Not known

Was one fastened to name peg or stake used as a grave marker... No

If name unknown and tags missing; description and mark should be given here.

CONFIRMED

Killed in action.

QHP 333E E 220.66 M 276

REPORTED BY:

Charles Wight

(f) Wounds or missing parts (received at time of casualty)

Fractured left femur. Missing: Right and left tibia and fibula.
What Can You Find in These Records?

Disposition of Remains

“... Father, Theodore Roosevelt ... wishes the body to remain where it lies and not be transferred to an established cemetery ... ”
What Can You Find in These Records?

Death testimony

Grave identification tags

3. On July 3th, the battalion was obliged to march by the flank and pass a narrow draw, through which heavy German machine gun fire was penetrating. Sergeant Kilmer materially assisted the Battalion on that occasion in bringing up the various elements, in maintaining order among the several groups and in getting the men through the narrow draw. On this day and on the day following, heavy losses were sustained among the officers, particularly on the Battalion Staff. The Battalion Adjutant has been killed and I called upon Sergeant Kilmer to act as Adjutant. During the remainder of the 29th and all through that night he worked unceasingly and efficiently. On the afternoon of the 30th, we started an attack and ran into a freshly launched German counter-attack. The officer commanding the company making the attack was wounded and I went forward to take charge. Sergeant Kilmer, at his own insistence, went with me. We were lying together along the Bois Colas. Machine gun fire was coming down the draw from the village of Seringes. A bullet hit him full in the head killing him instantly.

4. Not only did Sergeant Kilmer find a soldierly joy in the conflict and actually seek danger, but he was a cool headed soldier. On the day of his death and on the day preceding, he performed the very trying duties of adjutant and was full of eagerness at all time to give his full measure of service.

5. I cannot pay too high a tribute to the soldierly qualities he displayed while serving under my command.

WILLIAM J. DONOVAN
Lt. Col. USA, 156th Inf.
What Can You Find in These Records?

Congressional Correspondence

Mr. Jansen states that the marker has been received, but that the name of her son is spelled Daughty M. Jansen, instead of Doughty M. Jansen.
What Can You Find in These Records?

Errors

Conclusive identifications by dental charts reveal the fact that the body shipped to the United States as Private Wilhelm C. Briel is that of Private George Bonfield, the body reported as Pvt. Albert Anderson is actually that of Briel, and the one reported as Private George Bonfield is Private Albert Anderson.
Burial Case Files—
Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimages

• WWI mothers and widows, 1930-1933, whose sons or husbands were buried in Europe

• All expenses paid

• More than 6,600 women made the trips
Gold Star Widow’s ID Card

Name: BANKS, Mrs Willie Mae

Paris Hôtel: HOTEL IMPERATOR, 70 Rue Beaubourg

Home address: 4619 Lyons Ave. Houston, Harris County, Texas

Party: 4  Group: 2  Unit: 58 AMER. MERCHANT

Date of arrival: Aug 25, 1930  Date of departure: SEPT. 7, 1930 s/s AMER. MERCHANT

Relationship: Widow

Name of deceased: BANKS, Wm.W.

Rank: CPL. Organization Co. G. 370th Inf.

Cemetery: Oise-Aisne
Gold Star Widows Pilgrimage

Schedule

Itinerary

Accommodations:
Standard sleeper Houston, Texas to St Louis, Mo and St Louis, Mo to New York, N Y.

Elapsed Time:
51 hours - 36 minutes.
“... I would be an ingrate if I failed to mention Capt. Joseph Cistero, by whose thoughtfulness ... I was enabled to complete the journey to Houston in the manner befitting the widow of one who has made the supreme sacrifice for the safety of his country.”
Train trouble

“Mrs. Banks reported after her arrival from Europe that the Pullman conductor refused to allow her to occupy this space even though the attached ticket was furnished her. It was necessary for her to travel from Houston to St. Louis spending the night in the day coach and it was not until after she left St. Louis was her Pullman ticket honored.”
Investigation—Western Military Bureau

We are unable to confirm the advice that party presented ticket to Pullman Conductor and he refused to honor same, and we quote in part letter received from the Pullman Company regarding this matter:

"Our conductor noticed that the diagram on this trip had the notation that the room would be used by a colored passenger. He waited for some time after departure, figuring the passenger might come aboard the train up the line. Inquiry was made of the train conductor if a Gold Star Mother was using coach, Porter was sent to coaches to see if he could locate the passenger, but without results."

Our train conductors advise that no mention was made to them by any colored passenger that she was supposed to occupy pullman space.

We are sorry if any inconvenience was caused this passenger, however she probably went direct to the colored coach on arrival at the depot and failed to request the pullman space from any of our representatives, or the pullman conductor.

From the above, it will be seen that both the train and pullman conductors endeavored to locate this pilgrim, in order that she could avail herself of the accommodations reserved, but were unsuccessful which, perhaps, was caused by the fact that the pilgrim did not wear her badge as a means of identification.

Attention is invited to the fact that a refund is due on the unused pullman ticket, which matter you will no doubt desire to take up with the Pullman Company for adjustment.

Yours truly,

Chairman

[Handwritten signature]
“I followed the instructions relating to the means of identification. I pinned my badge on a conspicuous place ... and fastened it there with a safety pin for added security. ... I presented the Pullman ticket to the train conductor and asked information about the Pullman conductor, but the gentleman returned my ticket without replying. I also told him that I was a "War Widow," but that made no difference to him that I perceived. Understand, if you..."
Decision

“... it would appear that the Pullman Company was in no way at fault, but that it was due entirely to lack of interest on the part of the train conductor.”

“... requested that the matter be again taken up with the I & G.N.-Mo. Pac. with a view to assurance being given by them that a similar occurrence will not arise during the 1931 pilgrimage.”
“... it would appear that the Pullman Company was in no way at fault, but that it was due entirely to lack of interest on the part of the train conductor.”

“... requested that the matter be again taken up with the I & G.N.-Mo. Pac. with a view to assurance being given by them that a similar occurrence will not arise during the 1931 pilgrimage.”
Request a record

Mail:  
National Archives at St. Louis  
ATTN: Archival Programs  
P.O. Box 38757  
St. Louis, MO 63138

Email:  stl.archives@nara.gov

Fax:  314-801-9187

Copy fees:  Eighty cents ($.80) per page  
minimum charge $20.00
Please supply ...

VA Claim Files:
- Full name
- Date of birth and/or death
- Claim file number, if known
- Place of residence or enlistment

Burial Case Files:
- Full name
- Date of birth and/or death
- Unit
Visit our Archival Research Room

1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO

Public Hours:
Tuesday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Contact Information:
(314) 801-0850 stlarr.archives@nara.gov

Researchers:
http://www.archives.gov/research/hire-help/