

Veterans Administration Master Index File

FamilySearch has digitized 258¹ microfilm reels that reproduce the VA Master File index cards to veterans' claims based on service in World War I. Claims may include pension applications, insurance applications, WWI bonus claims, and claims based on permanent disability or rehabilitation. These records are part of RG 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to claims numbers, each card may contain the veteran's birth and death dates, unit (either first assigned or last served), rank, branch of service and service number, enlistment and discharge dates, home address, and cross-reference to the beneficiary. See ARC ID 76193916 (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/76193916>) for more details. **Begin your research** into these records from the *FamilySearch* catalog (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2968245>).

The *FamilySearch* digital collection breaks up each microfilm reel into three to five parts, each part containing 5,000-8,000 images. There are a total of 1001 parts – more than 6 million cards! Although the reel parts are listed consecutively, the reel numbers themselves may not be.

Veterans Affairs master index, prior war file 76193916 RG 15, Crum, Lawrence M. - Curry, Lawrence Leon, dup roll 49A, pt. 3 of 4, 1917-1940	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Digital	105158027  
Veterans Affairs master index, prior war file 76193916 RG 15, Crum, Lawrence M. - Curry, Lawrence Leon, dup roll 49A, pt. 4 of 4, 1917-1940	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Digital	105158028 
Veterans Affairs master index, prior war file 76193916 RG 15, Ellis, Frank Agnew James - Ensworth, Grant Abbott, dup roll 65A, pt. 1 of 4, 1917-1940	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Digital	105178740 
Veterans Affairs master index, prior war file 76193916 RG 15, Ellis, Frank Agnew James - Ensworth, Grant Abbott, dup roll 65A, pt. 2 of 4, 1917-1940	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Digital	105178741 
Veterans Affairs master index, prior war file 76193916 RG 15, Ellis, Frank Agnew James - Ensworth, Grant Abbott, dup roll 65A, pt. 3 of 4, 1917-1940	Granite Mountain Record Vault	United States & Canada Digital	105178742 

A few of these digital objects have been partially indexed. If there is a magnifying glass next to the camera icon representing a film of interest, it's worth clicking on it to check that index. Note, however, that these are usually only very small partial indexes. None of the people I've searched have been indexed.

Record organization:

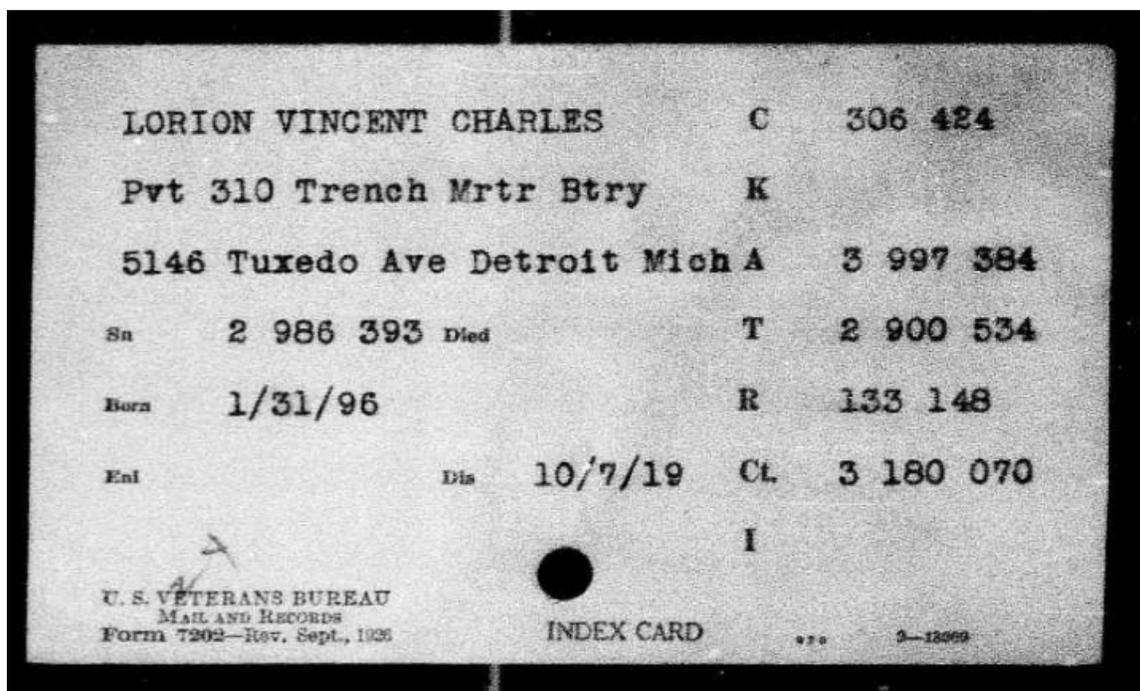
The arrangement of these cards is not intuitive. This is Archives' catalog explanation. The explanation is correct, but it's more easily understood when actually looking at the images. It takes time to become familiar with these records.

“Arranged alphabetically within pre-selected 'primary' and 'secondary' guides. Primary guides are short surnames or part of a surname (i.e., DALF, DALIcondro). Usually, the first four letters of the last name. A primary guide (i.e., DALF, followed by DALK) include all the surnames between the two primary guides (i.e., DALF, DALIcondro, and DALJesus). Thereunder, secondary guides are arranged alphabetically consisting of one or more first name initials (i.e., A & B, C, and T through Z). For each

¹ The National Archives catalog states there are 259 microfilm reels, but only 258 appear in the *FamilySearch* listing.

primary guide, there is nine separate secondary guide segments. Each secondary guide is arranged alphabetically by first name and if applicable, middle name (or initial).”²

To date, I have found 58 veterans in these records, every person who I knew served in WWI and many of those who I thought might have served.



Example citation:

United States, Veterans Affairs master index, 1917-1940, DGS 105158015 (image 4220), Dwight Jason Cowles index card; National Archives at St. Louis (RL-SL), St. Louis, Missouri; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/2864050> : accessed 5 September 2018); browse: Catalog > United States > Military Records > Indexes; imaged from “Costanzo, Peter - Cox, William Claude,” dup roll 46A, pt. 3 of 4.

Benefits key:

- C [Pension number]
- K [Life insurance]
- A [Adjusted compensation (Bonus)]
- T [War risk insurance]
- R [Rehabilitation]
- Ct. [WWI certificate]
- I [Permanent disability]

² “Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-9/16/1940?” catalog entry, *National Archives Catalog* (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/76193916> : accessed 2 September 2018).

See *The World War Veterans' Act: 1924* (<https://archive.org/details/worldwarveterans00unit>) for information on some of these benefits.

For information on the World War Adjusted Compensation Act, see 43 Stat. 121 (<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/68th-congress/session-1/c68s1ch157.pdf>).

For additional background information on the history of these military benefits, see Stuart Murray, "Between the Two World Wars, 1918 to 1939" (https://abqgen.org/military_research_between_world_wars.pdf : February 2019).