



New York State Archives

**New York State Adjutant General's Office World War I
Veterans Bonus Cards B1357**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	This series consists of 16mm negative microfilm of card files that were apparently part of the process to award bonus payments to New Yorkers for military service in the United States armed forces during World War I. The cards contain basic military service data, but do not show the amount of individual bonuses awarded.
Creator:	New York (State). Adjutant General's Office
Title:	World War I veterans bonus cards
Quantity:	1 cubic foot
Quantity:	97 microfilm rolls 16mm; negative
Inclusive Date:	1914-1919
Series:	B1357

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Arrangement

Alphabetical by first letter of last name; names coded by Soundex system.

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Administrative History

Bonus payments were first authorized under Chapter 872 of the Laws of 1920, which allowed bonds to be issued, upon agreement of the voters in the general election of 1920, with the money realized from the sale of the bonds to pay for the bonuses.

The program was administered by an unnamed commission, which was created by Chapter 315 of the Laws of 1921 to administer payments provided for by the previous law. The commission consisted of the adjutant general (chairman), the comptroller, and the attorney general. It had the right to appoint deputies in each county, the right to subpoena witnesses and testimony, and to adopt rules and regulations for distribution of the bonuses. It was to be abolished by executive order of the governor as soon as its purposes were accomplished, and

its records turned over to the adjutant general. This commission was superseded by the New York State Bonus Commission, created in 1924 (Chapter 19) after a constitutional amendment was passed to authorize financing of the bonus payments.

The bonus program was marked by constitutional, financial, and administrative problems. It required additional appropriations and extensions of its original 2-year application deadline well into the 1930s. The foundation legislation for the program, Chapter 872 of the Laws of 1920, was declared unconstitutional (in *People versus Westchester County National Bank*). In 1923 a concurrent resolution was passed proposing an amendment of article 7 of the state constitution, to empower the legislature to authorize by law the creation of debt for payment of the bonuses. The amendment (new section 13 of article 7) was submitted to the people and passed by voters in November of 1923.

Chapter 19 of the Laws of 1924 was the resulting act to authorize creation of the debt and issuance and sale of bonds for the bonuses. The proceeds of the bond sales were to be distributed by the New York State Bonus Commission which was created by this law. The commission was made up of the adjutant general (chairman), attorney general, comptroller, and the state treasurer. At the same time eligibility was extended specifically to any person in the army or navy nurse corps. Bonus awards were to be made by application filed within two years. Surviving relatives could claim the bonus in this order: widow or widower, child, mother, father, brother, and sister.

Chapter 26 of the Laws of 1925 redefined "honorably discharged" to include those who died or were killed in service (in which case the bonus could be paid to relatives). Filing deadlines were extended numerous times and additional appropriations were passed throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

On April 22, 1926 the functions of the New York State Bonus Commission were transferred to a unit of the Adjutant General's office called the Soldier's Bonus Bureau. According to a 1929 report of the Adjutant General, approximately 518,000 people from New York served in the war and by the end of 1928 over \$48 million had been paid out in bonuses and administrative costs. The Bureau was closed June 30, 1937. Chapter 40 of the Laws of 1937 authorized the Board of War Records to take over the bureau's records.

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Scope and Content Note

The series consists of 16mm negative microfilm of card files that were apparently part of the process to award bonus payments to New Yorkers for military service in the United States armed forces during World War I. Initially, eligibility for bonuses applied to any person who served honorably in military service from April 6, 1917 through November 11, 1918 and resided in New York at the time of service. The amount of the bonus was based on the number of months served (at \$10 for every month of service), but no bonus could exceed \$150. These records do not show the amount of individual bonuses awarded. Some applications were

disallowed and are so marked on the cards. Neither the original cards nor the applications for bonuses are extant.

The cards usually contain the following information: index number (Soundex code); claim number; name; serial number; residence; date of enlistment or induction; date of discharge; and date reported for active duty. The cards are usually stamped "Army" or "Navy" and some carry remarks (e.g., "no active military service," "officer," or "investigate"). Most information is typescript, although there are some manuscript entries.

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Related Information

Related Material

13721Series 13721, Abstracts of National Guard Service in World War I, contains additional information on officers and enlisted men from National Guard units.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

Access Terms

- Military history
- Assisting military personnel
- Sailors--New York (State)--History
- Cards (information artifacts)
- Armed Forces
- World War, 1914-1918--Veterans
- New York (State)
- Soldiers
- Military records
- Card files
- Nurses--New York (State)

- Documenting military personnel
- Veterans--New York (State)
- World War, 1914-1918
- New York (State). Bureau of Occupational Health
- New York (State). Division of Occupational Health and Environmental Epidemiology