

THE MILITARY LEVYING ROLLS OF DENMARK

Records of genealogical value in Denmark are among the finest in the world. This helps to offset the fear of the problem of a strange language, a patronymical system of naming, and recordings in a Gothic script. It is always interesting to observe how records compiled for local and national purposes can be used in research work.

One of these valuable Danish sources is the military levying rolls.

BACKGROUND

The regular Danish army consisted of volunteers prior to 1700. These volunteers were primarily foreigners. In 1701, and again in 1733, this "standing" army was supplemented with a national militia, consisting of young men drafted from the rural areas. From 1733 to 1788, the period of "compulsory residence" (*Stavnsbaandet*), the great majority of the Danish farmers leased their farms from the owners of large estates, or lords of the manors. These landowners had the responsibility of supplying the national militia with a specified number of men from among those leasing or working on the land owned by them. A few levying rolls are preserved from this period, but they seldom contain information as complete as the later rolls. This paper, therefore, will deal with those commencing in 1788.

In that year, the method of enlistment changed so that the large estate owners no longer had any influence as to who should serve in the militia. The country was divided into a number of levying districts (*lægd*s) which usually were identical with the ecclesiastical parishes. Normally, the largest landowner in each levying district was assigned the responsibility of keeping a current list of all the young men living in the district, with the exception of the sons of nobility, large landowners, parish ministers and clerks, schoolteachers and other prominent people.

Bornholm County and the incorporated cities were the exception to this rule. They had their own militia, and are not included in military levying rolls.

From 1843, the incorporated cities kept levying rolls, but only for those persons who had moved from the rural areas into that city, and were still liable to service in the army. Prior to this period, these men would be found on the roll of a levying district next to the city. Copenhagen was the exception to this rule, and had its own levying district for persons moving into the city from a rural district as early as 1832.

In the years following 1788, the national militia was integrated into the regular army, and from 1803 the army consisted, with a few exceptions, of young men drafted from the rural districts of Denmark.

The navy was manned primarily by men drafted from the coastal areas, among that part of the population who had its living from the fishing fleet or the merchant marine. While the military levying rolls are complete from about 1790, for those people liable for military service, it was not until 1802 that Navy Levying Rolls were prepared, except for the counties of Odense and Svendborg, which began in 1796.

Prior to 1793 there were 48 counties in Denmark and the early military levying rolls were based on that county arrangement. In 1793 a new arrangement reducing the number of counties was made, but in several areas of Denmark the old county system was still being used in military levying roll recordations until about 1806.

DESCRIPTION AND CONTENTS

1. The *Military Levying Rolls* (Army) consisted of a complete list of conscripts from each particular district. This list was usually made up every three years. For the other years, where a complete list was not made, a special supplement listed all males born in that year or the last part of the previous year, and also the males that moved into the levying district in that period, provided they had previously been listed in another district. The rolls are arranged chronologically, and it is easy to discern the two years that are supplementary lists and which are the complete rolls occurring every three years. In addition, there is a supplemental list for each third year, in which the complete roll is prepared, recording any changes that had occurred during that year.

A male child was listed on the levying roll shortly after he was born. Also a record was made immediately if a person moved from one district to another. So it is possible to follow a male from the old list to a new one, thus tracing his movements from parish to parish.

During the period 1789-1849 males were listed on the rolls from birth and continued to be listed there until they were around 44 years of age unless removed earlier because of poor health, added responsibilities or other legitimate reasons. After 12 Feb. 1849 names were dropped from the rolls when the persons had reached about age 38. Also, after that date male children were not recorded on the rolls until they had been confirmed or became 15 years of age. After 1869 the names were not entered on the rolls until the males were 17 years of age.

Each levying roll contains:

The conscript's name, his age, place of birth, residence, height, old and new serial number, miscellaneous information pertaining to his service record, disabilities, exemptions from military service, notification of death, name of father (if the person is born illegitimate, the name of the mother is given).

2. The *Navy Levying Rolls* contain the same information as the Army Rolls and, in addition, provide information concerning a conscript's marriage and the number of his children. In those cases where the conscript is a young man, reference is given to the place where his father appears on the lists.

Information of a person's shipping experiences and occupation are also recorded. Before 1849 the men would remain on rolls as long as they lived. After 1849 the names were removed around the age of 50 years, or in cases where they were not employed with the fishing fleet or the merchant marine, the names would be removed around the age of 38 years.

An important difference between the Army and Navy Rolls is the arrangement of the complete list, that is the list taken at three-year intervals. The Navy list for that third year has three sections:

- A. Roll of young men (*Sø Ungdomsrulle*). In this section are listed the young men from birth until the age when they would be able to serve in the Navy.
- B. Active Roll (*Sø Hovedliste*). This roll contains the names of the men who are at an age to serve in the Navy.
- C. The Extra or Reserve Roll (*Sø Extrarulle*). In this roll is the list of the older men, the Reserve, who probably would be asked to serve in event of a national emergency.

EXAMPLES TAKEN FROM A PAGE IN THE
MILITARY LEVYING ROLLS (LAEGDSRULLE) FOR THE YEAR 1802

(Laegd No. 39)

	Gl. Løbe No. (Old Serial No.)	Nye Løbe No. (New Serial No.)	Fædrenes og Sønneres Navne. (The names of the fathers and the sons.)	Sønneres Fødested. (The son's birthplace)	Alder Aar. (Age, Year)	Højde Tommer. (Height, Inches)	Nu havende Opholdssted (Present residence)	Vedtegninger (Misc.)
1.	286	294	Christen Knudsen Knud Afsked Sess. 1804 (Dismissed)	Brøderup	25	63½	Brøderup	Gmd. 1802 (Farmer 1802)
2.	287	225	Christen Larsen Lars	Siolte	27	62½	Siolte	Soldat 98 (Soldier in 1798)
3.	288	226	Hans Jensen Christen	Sneseere	6	-----	hjemme (at home)	
4.	295	298	Jens Sørensen Jens 51 B 316	Herslev	7	-----	Siolte	
5.	296	299	Jens Sørensen Søren 51 B 317	Herslev	3	-----	Siolte	
6.	310	291	Niels Olsen Ole Vejle 16 C 122	Brøderup	3	-----	hjemme (at home)	
7.	315	233	Maren Larsdatter Peder Nielsen	Siolte	3	-----	hjemme (at home)	
8.	L317	234	Rasmus Lauridsen Sven	Brøderup			hjemme (at home)	født (born) 11 August 1802
9.	L320	235	Morten Larsen Morten	Bredston	19	64	Brøderup	fra (from) 41-276
10.	L321	236	Hans Svenningsen Svenning	Vorup	22	62	Brøderup	fra (from) Randers 7-342

NOTE: On the example sheet some names and numbers are crossed out. This indicates that that person was deleted from the roll by transfer to another roll or some other reason as indicated by the information shown just under the name.

Explanation of Examples

1. Knud Christensen became a farmer in 1802 and was able to be removed from the list in 1804; he will not be found in any lists for later years.
2. Lars Christensen will be found in the next complete list of the parish (or district) as no. 225.
3. Christen Hansen is only 6 years old. His present residence is listed as "hjemme" (at home) with his parents.
4. Jens Jensen moved to parish (or district) no. 51 (within the same county) and will be found here on supplement list "B" (the 1804 supplement list) as no. 316.
5. Søren Jensen is very likely a brother to Jens Jensen (see example 4) as he moves to the same place and will be found on the same list as no. 317.
6. Ole Nielsen moved to parish no. 16 in Vejle County and here will be found on supplement list "C" (the 1805 supplement list) as no. 122.
7. Peder Nielsen is an illegitimate child, and the mother's name is given instead of the father's name.
8. Sven Rasmussen was born 11 August 1802; the male children are listed on the supplement list shortly after their birth. The full date of birth is given only on the first supplement list and, in some cases, on the first complete third year list.
9. Morten Mortensen has just moved into the parish (or levying dist.). He came from district no. 41 in the same county and is found on the last complete third year list from that parish as no. 276.
10. This example is similar to no. 9, but Svenning Hansen came from another county, Randers.

In the examples just quoted, it may be wondered how the year of the new list is determined (see examples nos. 4, 5, 6 and 9).

In example no. 4, for instance, Jens Jensen is simply indicated as having moved, by the entry "51 B 316."

"51" signifies the levying district, "B" indicates the year (1804) and "316" is the entry number on the 1804 supplemental list. The year 1804 is determined by referring to the list which follows. Thus, a reference such as "51 B 316" made BACK to the roll for the year 1802, refers to the year 1804, it being the first year following the year 1802 having a reference "B."

In other words, when the move was made in 1804, the roll for 1802 (which was a complete third year roll) was pulled out and the cross-reference made.

Each of the supplement lists was designated by a letter, except the year 1807 (none) and the year 1842 (two lists). The letter "j" was used for both "i" and "j" in those days.

Supplement lists:

1793-A	1803-A	1815-A	1826-A	1851-A
1794-B	1804-B	1816-B	1827-B	1852-B
1795-C	1805-C	1817-C	1828-C	1853-C
1796-D	1806-D	1818-D	1829-D	1854-D
1797-E	1807-(none)	1819-E	1830-E	1855-E
1798-F	1808-E	1820-F	1831-F	1856-F
1799-G	1809-F	1821-G	1832-G	1857-G
1800-H	1810-G	1822-H	1833-H	1858-H
1801-J	1811-H	1823-J	1834-J	1859-J
1802-K	1812-J	1824-K	1835-K	1860-K
	1813-K	1825-L	1836-L	
	1814-L		1837-M	
			1838-N	
			1839-O	
			1840-P	
			1841-Q	
			1842-R and S	
			1843-T	
			1844-U	
			1845-W	
			1846-X	
			1847-Y	
			1848-Z	
			1849-AE	
			1850-Ø	

There is also, of course, a complete list for every third year to which the above are supplemental.

How to use the Military Levying Rolls

1. Locate on the map the parish and the county where your ancestor lived.
2. Check the book: *Genealogical Guidebook and Atlas of Denmark*, by Smith and Thomsen, to determine under what levying district the parish is located.
3. Locate the parish by finding the levying district number on the roll.
4. Since the names of the persons on the roll are listed with their given names only, use the father's given name (listed just above the other name) and add "sen" to the proper surname for the son.

Value

Probably the greatest value of the military levying rolls to the researcher is that it provides a genealogical tool which makes it possible to follow a family moving from one place to another. This is particularly valuable in the period 1790-1830 when most of the parish registers do not contain any incoming or outgoing lists. Fortunately, the vast majority of the Danish population lived in the rural areas at that time, and the husbands and the sons are found listed in these records.

However, the benefit is not just the possibility of following the movement of a family, but since the place of birth, the age and the name of the father is given for the persons on the lists, it also becomes possible to find the place of birth for all the males recorded as early as 1790. If a person was age 44 in 1790 and listed on the rolls, we would learn where he was born and the name of the father: i.e., birth place and parentage as early as 1746-50 can be located in military levying rolls.

Examples of Their Value

No. 1

Suppose Peder Nielsen and Ane Kirstine Jensen were married in Graese in 1793 and had two children born there, namely Jens in 1794 and Maren in 1796. No more children were found in the parish registers and the family could not be found in the 1801 census of Graese. The military levying rolls were then used and it was learned that Jens moved to "Kronborg 15 E 215," i.e., Kronborg County, Levying Dist. 15 (Grønholt parish), Supplement list "E" (year 1779) entry no. (new no.) 215. (The levying districts from that area continued to be under the old county system until about 1806). However, when this supplement list was searched it was discovered that Jens was again listed as having moved to another parish. The following information was given: "10 F 178," i.e., Levying Dist. 10 (Søborg parish), Supplement List "F" (year 1798) entry no. 178. Jens stayed on the military roll in district 10 for many years.

The parish registers of Grønholt were searched, and it was found that Peder Nielsen and Ane Kirstine Jensdatter had another daughter, Ane, born there in 1797. This child died a few weeks after birth. The couple then had several children born in Søborg parish and all were found in the 1801 census returns of Søborg.

Without searching the military levying rolls it would have been very time consuming to find the family in Søborg in the 1801 census returns, but it *would have been almost impossible to find the daughter, Ane, who was born and died in Grønholt parish, quite far away from any of the other parishes.*

No. 2

Suppose Søren Knudsen was born 14 Sept. 1801 in Vandborg Parish, the son of Knud Sørensen and Marie Kirstine Nielsdatter. According to the parish registers of Vandborg, the father died in 1803 when he was 27 years old. No probate record could be found and there were no clues as to where Knud Sørensen was born. The military levying rolls were checked for the year 1801 and the following information found:

Knud, the son of Søren Rasmussen, age 25, born in Skjern. Died 1803. There was no question that this was the correct person, since it listed the death date. We were then able to locate his place and date of birth in the parish registers and were able to continue on the line. This would have been almost impossible without the military levying rolls.

CORRELATION WITH OTHER SOURCES

It is stressed that no one source alone should be used to develop a pedigree or to complete a particular family group. Each source should be used in careful conjunction with other important sources that exist for the same period of time, as each provides its own particular type of information.

DENMARK: MILITARY LEVYING ROLLS

I. BACKGROUND

- A. The regular Danish army consisted of volunteers prior to the year 1700. These volunteers were primarily foreigners.
- B. In 1701 and again in 1733, this "standing army was supplemented with a national militia, consisting of young men drafted from the rural areas.
- C. In the period of "compulsory residence" (Stavnsbaandet), from 1733 to 1788, the landowners had the responsibility of supplying the national militia with a specified number of men from among those leasing or working on the land owned by them.
- D. Some military levying rolls for the period 1700-1788 are preserved.
- E. After 1788, the method of enlistment changed. The country was divided into a number of levying districts (laegder). In each of these districts a prominent man was assigned the responsibility of keeping a current list of the young men in the district. Prior to 1849 the sons of the more prominent people were not on these lists.

II. PERIOD COVERED

- A. 1700-1788 (incomplete)
- B. 1789 to 1860 (complete)

III. CONTENTS

- A. The Military Levying Rolls (Army):
 - 1. The name of the conscript
 - 2. Serial numbers (old and new laegd numbers)
 - 3. The name of the conscript's father. (If born out of wedlock, the name of the mother is given instead.)
 - 4. His height
 - 5. His age
 - 6. His place of birth
 - 7. His present place of residence
 - 8. Various remarks

- B. The Navy Levying Rolls - the same basic information as the Army rolls. In addition, these rolls will provide information concerning a conscript's marriage and the number of his children. Notations pertaining to a person's shipping experience, occupation and reference to where his father is found on the rolls are also recorded.

IV. AVAILABILITY

- A. The period 1700-1788 - The rolls are located under the name of the parish where the soldier or his father lived. The rolls have been microfilmed and are available at the Family History Library.
- B. The period 1789-1849:
1. Each levying district usually covered the area of a parish.
 2. No rolls exist for the cities. They had their own militia.
 3. No rolls exist for the county of Bornholm. It had its own militia.
 4. Only a few of the parishes of the counties of Aabenraa-Sonderborg, Haderslev and Tonder are included in the military levying rolls system. The remaining area was part of the duchy of Schleswig-Holstein.
 5. The remaining areas of Denmark are covered by the rolls. The rolls are available on microfilms at the Family History Library.
 6. Separate Navy rolls began in 1802. In the counties of Odense and Svendborg they started in 1796.
- C. The period 1860-1869 - For the islands of Sjaelland and Fyn available on microfilms at the Family History Library. For the remaining counties available on microfilm until 1860.
- D. The period after 1870 - The rolls for the island of Sjaelland available on microfilm until 1886. The rolls for the island of Fyn available on microfilm for some years after 1886.

V. HOW TO USE THE MILITARY LEVYING ROLLS

- A. Locate on the map the parish and the county where the person lived.
- B. Check the FHLC looking under the Danish county and the subject heading "Military Records".
- C. Find the name of the parish, write down the old and new laegd numbers.
- D. Continue reading for the year of the desired levying roll and then the rolls' film number.

E. Since the names of the person on the rolls are listed with their given names only, use the father's given name (listed just above the other name) and add "sen" for the proper surname of the son.

VI. VALUE

Probably the greatest value of the military levying rolls to the researcher is that it provides a genealogical tool which makes it possible to follow a family moving from one place to another. This is particularly valuable in the period 1790-1830 when most of the parish registers do not contain any incoming or outgoing lists. Fortunately, the vast majority of the Danish population lived in the rural areas at that time and the husbands and sons are listed in these records.

VII. PECULIARITIES

During the period 1789-1849 males were listed on the rolls from birth and continued to be listed there until they were about 44 years of age unless their names were removed because of poor health, added responsibilities, or other legitimate reasons. After February 12, 1849 names were dropped from the rolls when the person reached about age 38. Also, after that date male children were not recorded on the rolls until they were confirmed or about age 15 years. After 1860, the names were not entered on the rolls until the males were 17 years old.

On the Navy rolls between the time period 1802-1849 the men remained on the rolls as long as they lived. After 1849 the names were removed around the age of 50 years or in some cases, if the person was not employed with the fishing fleet or in the merchant marine, his name could be removed around the age of 38 years.

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6.	310	284	Niels Olsen Ni Vejle 16 C 122	Brøderup	3	-----	hjemme (at home)	
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MILITARY LEVYING ROLLS

REGULAR OR COMPLETE ROLLS

These rolls were started between the years 1788 and 1790 in Denmark by a law enacted 20 June 1788. A new roll was started every three years, with annual supplementary rolls covering intervening periods. None were required for Bornholm. Until 1849 the levying rolls excluded urban areas. The sea coast areas were covered by the naval levying rolls from 1802 and thereafter, except on the Island of Fyn, where naval levying rolls were started in 1796.

Each male individual received a number for the first roll on which his name appeared. In subsequent rolls a column was prepared with the old roll number of the person concerned as well as the current personal roll number. For each male individual whose name is entered the military roll gives: 1) the name of the individual's father, 2) the individual's place of birth, age 3) (date of birth upon first entry as an infant), 4) height, 5) residence and 6) remarks.

From 1788-1790 to 1848, entries were made at the time of the child's birth, and continued, being retained normally until he was 43-44 years of age. From 1849-1869 entries were made at the age of 14 and continued normally until he was 38. In 1869 the age of entry on to the rolls was changed to 17 years.

These records are extremely valuable in following the movements of male persons, especially between the age of 14 and the time of marriage. Because of the commonness of most patronymics used in Denmark, these records should be used if there is any question of identity of the individual concerned as he appears in other records of genealogical value.

SUPPLEMENTARY ROLLS

Supplementary records were prepared each year between the preparation of the regular rolls. They are identified by a letter of the alphabet, with a new letter being assigned consecutively for each succeeding year. Other than this the record is basically the same as the regular roll.

New male births in the parish are listed in the supplementary rolls, as well as male persons moving into the parish who at the time of change of residence were listed on the levying rolls of some other parish. When such a transfer occurs, identification is maintained by the proper cross reference of the personal entry number in the various rolls. Thus these personal entry numbers can be followed from roll to roll as links in the chain of movements, and complete identity can virtually always be guaranteed.

NAVAL LEVYING ROLLS

At the beginning of these rolls, they were included in the army rolls, which have "S. L." written on each entry. After 1803 they were separated from the army rolls and broken into three series:

- 1- The Main Roll
- 2- The Roll of Young Men (under age 14)
- 3- The Extra Roll (mainly older persons, and men with master and mate licenses.)

Coastal cities are included on separate lists, and usually are carried for a much longer period of time between main rolls.

The Naval Rolls have a slightly different format, but are not difficult to follow. When a person is added to a complete roll, he will commonly be placed in the first vacated number of that district, rather than at the end.