

FINDING YOUR CIVIL WAR ANCESTOR

Presented to The Middlesex Genealogical Society
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The Civil War ran from April 12, 1861 to April 9, 1865. The greatest number of Union and Confederate veterans were 18-25, although some served as young as 16 or as old as 55. Any man who was born (broadly) between 1806 and 1849, and who was residing in the United States at any point during the war, whether a citizen or not, should be considered a potential veteran.

Research Strategies

Start by identifying one or more ancestors who were the right age and in the country at the right time to have served. Then obtain as much information as you can about the candidate(s): when and where they were born, who their families were, their occupation, and where they were living.

Be sure to check the 1940, 1930 and 1910 U.S. census records for mention of military service. Look for widows and minor children as well. Also check the 1890 Veterans Schedule (it survives only for states from Kentucky to Washington, alphabetically, and Washington, D.C.), and the appropriate state census records shown below for both veterans *and their widows*. Many state census records are now available on Ancestry.com and at FamilySearch.org Use Google to locate others.

Alabama (1907 & 1921)

Arkansas (1911)

Iowa (1895)

Kansas (1865 & 1885)

Louisiana (1911)

Michigan (1894)

Minnesota (1865, 1885, & 1905)

New Mexico Territory (1885)

New York (1865)

North Dakota (1885)

Oklahoma Territory (1890)

Rhode Island (1905)

Wisconsin (1885, 1895 & 1905)

Use as many sources as possible to gather as much information as you can to isolate your ancestor from everyone else with the same name. Remember that census records are not always accurate; if someone didn't indicate he was a veteran, don't stop searching.

Union Draft Registration & Quota Records—A census you shouldn't overlook

Union draft registration records can help place your ancestor in a specific town in 1863–1865, and may help identify whether or not your ancestor served. All men who were 20-45 and were living in *Union occupied areas* had to register. Some of the **Union draft registration records** (RG 110, NM-65, Entry 172) are at the National Archives regional branches, and on Ancestry.com at:

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1666>

Some states compiled lists of draftees to verify that each county had met its quota. The surviving New York lists are on Ancestry.com at: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1964>

Confederate Draft Records

Some **Confederate draft registration records** are at NARA (RG 109) and a few are at the University of North Carolina. Please see: http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/C.S.A.Bureau_of_Conscription.html

Researching Your Ancestor in Civil War Records

After you have isolated the person you are researching, *then* begin examining Civil War records to see if there is a match. Remember that not all records have survived, and not all records are available online. If you don't find your ancestor listed, it doesn't necessarily mean he didn't serve. Study each collection of records you use to understand what it includes, and how complete it is. Check back often for new records. Try not to make assumptions about where an ancestor may have served; not everyone enlisted locally.

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Civil_War,_1861_to_1865

Union Pension Records (for Volunteers, USCT, Navy, and Regular Army)

Not every Civil War veteran applied for a pension, and many who applied were rejected. When available, the pension files contain a great deal of genealogical information that can help you to prove a connection or eliminate an incorrect match. Check online pension indices to begin narrowing your list of candidates. If you don't find the soldier's name, try searching again using the name of his wife, dependent children, and/or parents. Some online pension resources are as follows:

- **General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934 (Series T288)**
This index is sorted by the veteran's surname; it sometimes lists the widow's name and the state where the pension was filed. Available on Ancestry.com and on microfilm at local NARA branches.
- **Organization Index to Pension Files ... 1861–1900 (Series T289)**
This index, available on fold3.com, is sorted by state, unit, company, and then surname; it sometimes includes date and place of death.
- **Veteran's Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907–1933**
These cards include payment details *not found* in the pension records. View them at FamilySearch.org or through archive.org. Be sure to look for separate cards under the veteran's name *and also* under his widow's name, if they were alive between 1907 and 1933.
- **Numerical Index to Pensions, 1860–1934 (Series A1158)**
This index to the Union Army and Navy pension files at NARA is sorted numerically by pension application and/or certificate number. It is partially digitized on fold3.com (19% complete as of May 2015): http://www.fold3.com/title_851/pension_numerical_index/
- **Index to US Military Pension Applications of Remarried Widows for Service between 1812 and 1911** (a book available at some libraries, and also on Ancestry.com), and the **List of Pensioners on the Roll as of January 1, 1883** (a book available at some libraries, and online at Archive.org and Ancestry.com).
- **Civil War Widows' Pensions**, for widows of Union volunteers, are being scanned and posted on fold3.com. This collection is only about 11% complete as of May 2015.
- **Union Navy Pensions**, for survivors and widows (both those approved and those rejected), have been fully scanned and posted on fold3.com. These collections usually contain useful genealogical details. Ancestry.com has an index (but no scanned images) for **U.S. Navy Pensions, 1861–1910**.

➤ **Old War Index to Pension Files, 1815-1926 (Series T316)**

This index to pension files includes some Civil War veterans, but *only* if they were serving in the **Regular Army, Navy or Marine Corps** *before* the Civil War. It is available on microfilm at NARA and online at: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1979425>

You may not find a pension (Union or Confederate) for your ancestor, but you can use these files to narrow your list of candidates *before* you try to locate service records for your ancestor (see below).

Confederate Pension Records

The U.S. government did NOT give pensions to Confederate veterans. Instead, the former Confederate states granted pensions to their own veterans, and those records are in the various states' archives. Some states have published lists of pensioners, and others have posted indices and/or full pension files online. Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org have also scanned and posted online some of the Confederate Pensions. Please note that former Confederates applied for a pension *in the state in which they were living*, not the state for which they had served.

Civil War Compiled Military Service Records: Union and Confederate

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSRs) are synopses of a variety of original records and can include information such as physical characteristics, POW status, attendance, and medical and pay information. Many Union and Confederate volunteers who served in the Civil War, regardless of whether or not they filed for a pension, *should* be listed in the CMSRs.

- The National Park Service's Civil War Soldiers & Sailors (CWSS) database is a free online index to the CMSR's for Union **Regular Army** servicemen, as well as for both the **Confederate** and the **Union Volunteers** (and the **Union National Guard and US Colored Troops**).
- You can view *digitized copies* of the **Index to Confederate and Union CMSR files** on fold3.com at: http://www.fold3.com/category_19/ The original Union and Confederate CMSR files are at NARA in DC. Ancestry.com has posted full images of the CMSRs for just the **United States Colored Troops** at: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1107>
- The National Park Service's database is a great source for identifying **African American sailors**, because it includes personal details such as age, occupation, height, & place of birth.

Civil War Enlistments and Muster Rolls: Union and Confederate

- For Union naval personnel (not officers), check the **Naval Enlistment Weekly Returns for 1855–1891**, on fold3.com and FamilySearch.org For more suggestions on searching Union naval records (for officers *and* enlisted men), see: https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/U.S._Navy
- Use Ancestry.com to search the **US Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1892** for Union Marines at: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/DB.aspx?dbid=1089>
- For **Confederate Navy and Marine Corps** records, visit fold3.com to view: http://www.fold3.com/title_779/confederate_navy_subject_file/

- Many states published their own lists of Civil War veterans, some of which may include genealogical information. For a full list of state **Adjutants-General's Reports**, please see: <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military/civil-war-adjutant-general-reports.html>
- Use Google to search for other state-specific Civil War enlistment, roster and muster records. For example, **New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861–1900**, housed at the NY State Archives, is on Ancestry.com at: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1965> and the **Connecticut Adjutant-General's Reports** are on the Internet Archive at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/catalogueofconne00conn#page/n5/mode/2up>
- Don't forget to check the **U.S. Army** (the regular, non-volunteer Army). Visit <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1880762> to explore the **Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914**. You can also explore this collection on fold3.com, and on Ancestry.com at: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1198&path> **Confederate Regular Army** records are included in the CMSRs on fold3.com

To Learn More About a Veteran

Many communities published **local histories** listing their Civil War veterans; be aware that these books are sometimes *incomplete or inaccurate*. Be sure to check state archives for similar records of interest, including membership lists and reunion booklets for the **Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)**. For a list of state archives, please visit: <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/state-archives.html>

Ancestry.com has an index & images for **Homes for Disabled [Union] Volunteer Soldiers, 1866–1938**. These records (see: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1200>) sometimes include place of burial and names & addresses of next-of-kin. For a list of records for Union and Confederate homes, see: https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/US_Military_Old_Soldiers_Home_Records

Summary

Start by identifying an ancestor who may have served. Conduct multiple searches in a variety of records both online and offline to find uniquely identifying information for your ancestor. Use federal, state and local records. Keep looking, since more and more records are being made accessible every day. Do not begin looking in the Civil War records until you have learned enough about your ancestor to be able to separate him from other people with the same name.

Use many different types of Civil War records to determine whether or not your ancestor served. If you don't find him listed in an online database it does NOT prove he didn't serve during the Civil War.

Understand the organization and contents of each collection and database you are using. Remember, not everyone living in one state after the war was living there before the war, and not everyone who served enlisted in a unit formed in his home state. Don't automatically accept or discount a possible match simply because of the state designation. Be sure to always check multiple sources to verify a connection, and never give up!

Good luck and enjoy the hunt!

