




Researching Your Civil War Ancestor



Did your ancestor fight in the Civil War?

- ▶ Neither the Union or the Confederacy had a large standing army. Both sides instituted drafts and used state militias.
- ▶ Was your ancestor between the ages of 15 to 44 during the years 1861 through 1865?
- ▶ Family traditions: Do you know of stories, photos, or any artifacts that show they fought in the Civil War?
- ▶ Tombstones:
 - ▶ Were they buried in a National Cemetery? Check the National Cemeteries' database. www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-cemeteries.htm
 - ▶ Were they a Confederate soldier? Check the Confederate Graves Registry. <https://cgr.scv.org>
 - ▶ At any burial site, was there a symbol or writing that shows they had military experience.

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- Obituaries: Military service was often mentioned in obituaries, sometimes giving regimental details.
 - U.S. Federal Census:
 - There were specific questions about military experience in the 1910 and 1930 censuses.
 - In the 1890 census, a veteran schedule was included. Half of it survived the fire that destroyed the 1890 U.S. Census. If your ancestor lived in the states of Kentucky to Wyoming, you may have good information to use.



- Draft Registration cards

- All men needed to fill out draft registration cards. Information provided may have included:

- Name

- Residence

- Age


- Occupation

- Marital status

- Place of birth

- Previous military experience


- Some draft registrations were preserved. They can be found at the National Archives and on Ancestry.


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- ▶ Draft registration does not mean that the person served. There were a number of exemptions.
 - ▶ Over or under age limits
 - ▶ Disabilities
 - ▶ Other circumstances such as being widower with minor children, only son of a widow, or son of aged parents.
 - ▶ People would pay some one else to be a substitute for them when drafted.




If you have a Civil War veterans, you can find more information about their war experience in the following sites.

- ▶ Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database (<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>)
 - ▶ This is a free National Park Service site which indexes more than 6 million soldiers and 18,000 African-American sailors.
 - ▶ Show the state where they served, unit/regiment served in, function (infantry or cavalry) and other names used.
 - ▶ Some people are listed multiple times because they signed up with different units.
 - ▶ Can be found at the above site as well as on Ancestry and Fold3.

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- ▶ Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR)
 - ▶ Every military personnel has a CMSR, both Union and Confederate.
 - ▶ Contents were compiled from muster lists, enlistment and discharge papers, and documentation of being wounded or hospitalized, being prisoner-of-war, and whether they received military honors and medals.
 - ▶ CMSR are held at the National Archives.
 - ▶ They are not microfilmed.
 - ▶ You can go personally to the National Archives and see the contents.
 - ▶ You can order a copy of the contents using NATF Form 86.
 - ▶ Ancestry has indexed the Union volunteer Army CMSR's.
 - ▶ Fold3 has digitized the Confederate CMSR's.

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- “Alphabetical Card Name Indexes to the Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers who served in Union Organizations not Raised by States or Territories.”
 - This is a National Archives microfilmed series.
 - It is a collection of cards created for each person serving the Union. It shows:
 - Service activity
 - Enlistment facts
 - Person description and where born
 - Muster in date and place
 - Company muster
 - Prisoner
 - Hospitalization
 - Muster out date
 - Just for those who volunteered, was drafted, or enlisted.
 - Available on Ancestry and Fold3

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- ▶ Cards for Service Records of Hospital Attendants, Matrons, and Nurses, 1861 to 1865”
 - ▶ Available at the National Archive as well as on Ancestry.
 - ▶ Remember that these are for the U.S. and Confederate armies. Many states had militias that fought in the war. Their documents will be in state archives and state libraries.
 - ▶ Fold3, Ancestry, and Family Search have many indexes on line. Original service records need to be attained at the National Archives.
 - ▶ Once you have found what regiment your ancestor was in, you can research online the history of the regiment to find where they fought and other important information.



Post Service Records

- ▶ Federal Pension Files for the Union Army, Navy, and Marine Services
 - ▶ Considered a rich source for genealogical information
 - ▶ The veteran, his widow, and/or his minor children could have applied for a pension.
 - ▶ Information often included in the application:
 - ▶ Name and military experience
 - ▶ Medical history after the war including post war disabilities
 - ▶ Evidence of marriage
 - ▶ Evidence of children's births
 - ▶ Where the soldier lived after the Civil War
 - ▶ Indexed by Family Search, Ancestry, and Fold3.
 - ▶ You may order a copy of the contents of the pension folder from the National Archives using form NATF-85. Could cost \$75.00 and up.



- Confederate pensions were implemented by various states after the war.

- Indexed by Family Search

- Check State Archives.

- Southern Claims Commission

- This federal commission started processing claims for reimbursement for southern livestock and property taken by the Union troops.

- An estimated 10% of Southerners gave testimony for this commission,.



Other Sources of Information

- ▶ Newspapers: You can learn a lot by reading the local newspaper.
 - ▶ Draft and exemptions
 - ▶ Battles and name of who died or were captured
 - ▶ List of casualties
 - ▶ Obituaries
- ▶ Photos
 - ▶ Photography had become affordable during the Civil War.
 - ▶ Photos can be used to identify regiments and type of job in the military
 - ▶ The Library of Congress has a great collection of Civil War pictures.
 - ▶ Also look for photos at state archives.

Other websites

- ▶ Civil War. www.civilwar.com
- ▶ eHistory www.ehistory.osu.edu
- ▶ American Battlefield Trust. www.battlefields.org
- ▶ Nationwide Gravesite Locator.
<https://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/ngl/>
- ▶ Ken Burn's Civil War <https://www.pbs.org/show/civil-war/>
Library of Virginia. www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/civil-war