

Civil War Records for Genealogists

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The Civil War years between 1861 and 1865 are surely some of the most significant and tragic years in our nation's history. More lives were lost than in any other war. Not only was the North separated from the South, but families were divided among their own members, sometimes with brother fighting against brother. Consequently, genealogists often locate both Union and Confederate Civil War records for inclusion in their family histories. Texas is no exception.

At the time of this 150th anniversary, interest in the Civil War is vibrant and comprises a significant part of each family's history whose ancestors lived in our country during this troubled time. Genealogists are urged to include in their family histories, not only service records of their civil war ancestors but other artifacts such as photographs, newspaper stories, letters, diaries, poems, needlework, paintings, sculptures, songs and other remembrances of this tragic war. No American genealogy dating back prior to 1865 is complete without numerous Civil War records. Two excellent resources for locating Civil War Ancestors are *Tracing Your Civil War Ancestors* by David A. Norris and Family Tree Magazine Special War Issue, *Trace Your Civil War Ancestors*.

This presentation, "Civil War Records for Genealogists," outlines three main steps to follow when searching for and securing Civil War ancestral records. Sources are included in the Online Web Sites for locating civil war ancestral documents.

Steps for Civil War Ancestral Research:

I Determine Possible Civil War Veteran Ancestors

II Search for Three Key Items Needed to Locate Civil War Records

III Secure Civil War Military Service and Governmental Records for Genealogy and Family History Documentation

STEP 1: DETERMINE POSSIBLE CIVIL WAR VETERAN ANCESTORS

Begin by searching in your own home and with your own family:

A. Check with relatives for family traditions (Contact the oldest living members of your family for information, call cousins who might have stories you have never heard, check with aunts and uncles for their input, etc.)

B. Search family histories for male ancestors born around the 1840's.

Most who served in the Civil War were in their late teens or early twenties but could have been older or younger.

C. Look for old family photo albums, ask family members for photos, clippings from ceremonies, and perhaps even the family Bible.

D. Search the 1910 and 1920 US Federal Population Census Records for Veterans' Service. Instruction to the enumerators were as follows:

“1910 Survivors of the Civil War, Column 30. Whether a survivor of the Union or Confederate Army or Navy. --This question should be asked as to all males over 50 years of age who were born in the United States and all foreign born males who immigrated to this country before 1865. Write “UA” if a survivor of the Union Army; “CA” if a survivor of the Confederate Army; and “CN” if a survivor of the Confederate Navy. For all other persons leave the column blank.”

“1920 Veteran status (Items 30 and 31) excluded persons who served only during peacetime. The war or expedition was to be entered by an abbreviation: World War, WW; Spanish-American war, Sp; Civil War, Civ; Philippine insurrection, Phil; Boxer rebellion, Box or Mexican expedition, Mex.” *(Measuring America)*

- E. Look for state census records where your ancestor resided.
- F. Review Homestead Act for information for veterans who filed for land access under this act.
- G. Travel to the area where your ancestors resided.
- H. Search gravestones. Look for military symbols either on the gravestone or metal markers beside the stone.
- I. Check cemetery record offices for mention of Civil War service.
- J. Look for newspaper obituaries for your ancestors.
- K. Read county histories. These most likely will contain information regarding military regiments, officers, men who served from the county and other valuable information.
- L. Research in a genealogy library that houses complete microfilm records of all US Federal and State Census records from 1790 through 1930, such as the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research in Houston, Texas.
- M. Review the 1860 census for your ancestors. Notice the ages of the men who bear your family’s surname.
- N. Look for tax records. They occurred at more frequently intervals than

census records and when missed by a census enumerator, your ancestors were far less likely to evade the tax man.

- O. Check the 1890 Union Veteran's Census which lists the name of each soldier, sailor, marine, or widow of a veteran in a household; the veteran's rank; company; regiment or vessel; dates of enlistment and discharge; length of service in years, months, and days; post office address; nature of disability, if any; and remarks.

Do not overlook or forget "Galvanized Yankees," Southern soldiers who slipped through the Northern lines to enlist, secretly were loyal to the Union, were recruited to sign up when a Union force reached their home town, spent time in military prisons, or for various other reasons changed sides. In addition, substitutes could be hired by a draftee to avoid service. Most substitutes were older men past the age of conscription or a foreign national. Men exempted from service included those who cared for aged parents, exempted government officials, clergymen and workers in vital jobs such as railroad, steamboat and telegraph operators.

STEP 2: SEARCH FOR THREE KEY ESSENTIAL ITEMS NEEDED LOCATE CIVIL WAR RECORDS

*Soldier's Name

*State Where the Soldier Enlisted

*Regiment Number

Once you determine the names of ancestors who possibly served in the military service during the Civil War, you now need to locate the state where he enlisted and his

regiment number. These three items are essential to locate and/or order civil war records from the National Archives. The copies of compiled military service records may include actual service and enlistment records, muster, pay, casualty rolls, and discharge papers. In addition, there often are Inventories of Effects for Deceased Soldiers.

An excellent online source and one of the first sites to visit for locating needed information for both Confederate and Union soldiers is the National Park Service nationwide Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System:

<http://www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss/soldiers.cfm>.

Click [Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System](#).

This index names soldiers from all military troops found in the microfilm series *Index to Compiled Service Records*, taken from the General Index Cards created in the 1900s by the Pension Bureau. Researchers will want to make this one of the first sites to visit when searching for a Civil War soldier.

Compiled Pre-Service related records include enlistment, mustering in, draft, and physical exams. Service Files include enlistment, mustered in, assigned to units, payroll records, signed payrolls, wounded and injury lists and medical records. Post Service Records include *Mustered Out and Received Discharge* which include a list of what they were issued such as clothing, rifle, etc. These are two different records and often can be found filed with the County Clerk where the soldier resided after leaving service.

Pension records are significant sources of personal information as they include the soldier's name, rank, unit, and terms of service and names of relationships of any dependents. Most pension files pertain to Civil War widows.

Other records created include Prisoners of War, Veterans Organizations, Soldier

Burial Records, War Decoration Medals, Bounty Land Records and National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

STEP 3: SECURE CIVIL WAR MILITARY SERVICE AND GOVERNMENTAL RECORDS FOR GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY DOCUMENTATION

Now that you have the three key essential items to locate Civil War records (name, state and regiment), you will want to move to step three and secure copies of the records for your genealogy and family history. Numerous resources can be found online, on microfilm and in printed sources. Listed below are many of the available records:

1. Enlistment Records for Regular Army, Union and Confederate Volunteers

www.militaryindexes.com/civilwar/

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Roster of Union Soldiers*. Wilmington NC:

Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1998. 33 volumes.

National Archives Records Administration (NARA) (M233).

2. Union Draft Records

NARA Record Group 110. Congressional District required:

www.house.gov/htbin/findrep?ZIP= Drafted Aliens, Record Group 59

3. Confederate Draft Records

NARA Record Group 109. Congressional District required:

www.house.gov/htbin/findrep?ZIP=

4. Union Compiled Military Service Records

NATF Form 86 (Volunteers not Regular Army)

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Roster of Union Soldiers*. Wilmington NC:

Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1998. 33 volumes.

Service Records of Sailors

Index to Rendezvous Reports, Civil War, 1861-1865 (T1099)

or Family History Library (FHL) 1570558-1570588

NARA Group 24 Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Union Galvanized Yankees

Compiled Service Records of Former Confederate Soldiers Who Served in
the 1st through the 6th U.S. Volunteer Infantry Regiments 1864-1866.

NARA M1017

5. Confederate Compiled Military Service Records

NATF Form 86.

Sailors: NARA M260 or FHL 191662-191668

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Roster of Confederate Soldiers*. Wilmington NC:

Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1996. 16 volumes.

6. National Archives Reproduction Schedules

NATF Form 85 Pension Files and Form 86 Military Service Files.

www.archives.gov/forms/

7. Officers of the Union and Confederacy

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Roster of Confederate Soldiers*. Wilmington NC:

Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1996. 16 volumes

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Roster of Union Soldiers*. Wilmington NC:

Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1998. 33 volumes.

Navy Officers; Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War
of the Rebellion: General Index. Washington DC: Navy Dept. 1927.

8. Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer
Union Organizations

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Supplement to the Army Official Records*.

Wilmington NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co. 2000. 100 volumes

(Also available in libraries and archives.)

9. Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Confederate Organizations

Hewett, Janet B., ed. *The Supplement to the Army Official Records*.

Wilmington NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co. 2000. 100 volumes.

(Also available in libraries and archives.)

10. Regimental Histories

Union

Dornbusch, Charles E., Compiler. *Military Bibliography of the Civil War*.

3 volumes, 1961-72. Dayton, Ohio: The Press of Morningside

Bookshop, 1987. (Union and Confederate).

Dyer, Frederick H. *Compendium of the Rebellion*. 2 volumes 1908. Reprint,

Dayton, Ohio: The Press of Morningside Bookstore, 1978 (Union).

Confederate

Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Confederate

Organization. National Archives Microfilm Publication M861.

Family History Library (FHL) 1380856--1380929.

Crute, Joseph H., Jr. *Units of the Confederate States Army*. Midlothian, VA:
Derwent Books, 1987.

Dornbusch, Charles E., Compiler. *Military Bibliography of the Civil War*.
3 volumes, 1961-72. Dayton, Ohio: The Press of Morningside
Bookshop, 1987. (Union and Confederate).

PERSI--Periodical Source Index CD-ROM (Keyword: Regimental History)

Civil War Histories: *Regimental Histories and Personal Narratives.*:
FHL microfiche, 973, M2cwu.

Heritage Quest films: *Regimental Histories of the American Civil War*.

Sifakis, Stewart. Compendium of the Confederate Armies. 5 volumes.
New York: Facts on File, 1991.

11. Union Prisoners of War

NARA Record Group 249 17 June 1862-19 August 1867.

Confederate Prisons where Union Soldiers were incarcerated.

FHL Civil War, 1861-1865 PRISONERS AND PRISONS.

12. Confederate Prisoners of War

NARA Record Group M598.

*Registers of Confederate soldiers, D\Sailors, and Citizens Who Died in
Federal Prisons and Military Hospitals in the North*, NARA M918.

Confederate Naval and Marine Personnel Records NARA M260.

FHL: CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865 PRISONERS AND PRISONS

[STATE] - MILITARY RECORDS - CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865 PRISONERS AND
PRISONS.

Compiled Military Service Record located where soldier was held prisoner.

13. Union Pension Records

General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 NARA T288.

Veteran's Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907-1933 (NARA M850)

FHL 1634036-1636574.

Index to Pension Application Files of Remarried Widows Based on Service in Civil War and Later Wars and in the Regular Army after the Civil War. NARA M1785.

White, Virgil D. *Index to US Military Pension Applications of Remarried Widows for Service Between 1812 and 1911.* Waynesboro, TN: The National Historical Publishing Company, 1999.

Organization Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861-1900 NARA T289 and FHL 1725491-1726255.

Case Files of Disapproved Pension Applications of Widows and Other Dependents of Civil War and Later Navy Veterans. NARA M1391 and FHL 6333805-6333996.

14. Confederate Pension Records

Pensions were granted to Confederate veterans, widows, and orphans through state funds. Contact the state archives in which the veteran lived, even if he served in a unit in a different state. Generally a veteran was eligible for a pension only if he was indigent or disabled. See FHL records. This information is not available through the National Archives.

15. Confederate Amnesty Papers

Pardon Petitions in Response to President Andrew Johnson's Amnesty

Proclamations of May 29, 1865 -- NARA M1003.

Pardons by the President: Final Report of the Names of Persons Who Lived

in Alabama, Virginia, West Virginia, or Georgia, Were Engaged in the

Rebellion and Pardoned by the President, Andrew Johnson. Bowie, MD:

Heritage Books, 1986.

16. Soldiers' Homes

Consult Family History Library Catalog for records available for states with

both Union and Confederate homes.

17. Veteran's Organizations

Sons of Union Veterans www.suvcw.org

Sons of Confederate Veterans www.scv.org

18. Union Death and Burials

NARA Record Group 92

Family Tree Maker Family Archive CD #351

19. Confederate Deaths and Burials

NARA Film Group M836 and FHL Catalog Series

Family Tree Make Family Archives CD # 119, Military Records

Confederate soldiers 1861-1865.

20. Photographs and Prints from the Library of Congress:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>

FINDING AIDS:

National Archives Regional Branches: Southwest: [ftworth.archives@nara.gov/](mailto:ftworth.archives@nara.gov)

Libraries and Archives for Genealogy and Civil War Research:

Confederate Research Center Hillsboro, TX

Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, TX

Texas General Land Office, Austin, TX

Center for American History, Austin, TX

Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, Houston, TX

State Archives and Libraries

1890 Eleventh Census of the US-- Union Veterans and Widows of Union Veterans

1910 US Federal Population Census, Column 30-- "Survivor of the Union or

Confederate Army or Navy" NARA film series T624

State Census Records containing Civil War Information

Civil War Web Sites

References and Sources

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Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses From 1790 to 2000. US Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration. 2002. p. 55.

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Norris, David a. *Tracing Your Civil War Ancestors.* Toronto, Ontario: Morehead Magazines Ltd., 2001.

Pfeiffer, Laura Szucs. *Hidden Sources. Family History in Unlikely Places.* Orem Utah: Ancestry, 2000.

Thomas, William G., Carter, Alice E. *The Civil War on the Web. A Guide to the Very Best Sites.* Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001.