

Military Records & Genealogical Research
April 6, 2010
Researching Military Records: Colonial Era through World War II
Most Useful Records and Databases for Research Information

Serving in the military has always played an important role in the lives of many ancestors. This is especially true for male children of immigrant ancestors. Males who were needed on the farms, other than the first born, frequently went into the military. Wars and military conflicts have been part of American history from the Colonial Period to the present.

Many of our male ancestors are found in records created as a result of military service or by application for veterans' benefits. Proof of military service was mandatory for the ancestor or his widow to qualify for benefits or bounty land grants. This process was cumbersome and generated paperwork which can be valuable for researchers today.

While the National Archives and the Military Records Center in St. Louis are the primary repositories for this type of research, the Internet has made the search process easier. The following databases have added content in the form of indexes and/or digitalized images that may allow researchers to obtain some or all of the information necessary for their projects:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ancestry.com | 5. Family Search Pilot Project |
| 2. Ancestry Library Edition | 6. Cyndislist |
| 3. Footnote.com | |
| 4. Heritage Quest | |

In addition to the databases listed above, the National Archives website allows researchers to submit research requests via ordering specific forms or submitted information requests online. A short list of websites and their URL's is located at the end of this study guide.

Access to military records **pre-1900** records is normally a simple process for researchers. There are few if any restrictions beyond having to provide the specified information. Finding that information often poses more of a challenge than obtaining information from the National Archives. **Post 1900** records will present more of a challenge. As is the case with their pre-1900 counterparts, access is dependant on the researcher being able to supply specific information.

While there are exceptions made based on certain unique circumstances, most access is limited to the veteran or next-of-kin. Next-of-kin is defined in the following manner:

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Un-remarried widow or widow | 4. Brother or sister |
| 2. Son or daughter | |
| 3. Father or mother | |

Limited information is releasable to the general public depending on the time frame and nature of the request. You are considered a member of the general public if you are no relation to the veteran or you are related in some distant way to the veteran but do not meet the criteria as being next-of-kin.

Getting Started

The first step in searching for military records of an ancestor or veteran is to:

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| 1. Determine when and where the soldier served | 3. Rank |
| 2. What branch of the military they served in | 4. Unit |

The best sources for finding the correct answers or clues for additional research may be found in:

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|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Family stories | 6. Death records & obituaries |
| 2. Photographs and albums | 7. Military unit narratives |
| 3. Census records | 8. Local histories |
| 4. Newspaper clippings | 9. Grave markers |
| 5. Journals, diaries, and correspondence | |

Besides the obvious places such as the National Archives, National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, and the various state archives, researchers may also locate information related to what may be found in military in other less obvious sources and locations listed below:

1. Courthouses – Federal and State (Veterans Separation Papers, Litigation over wartime losses)
2. Employment Applications: As America became more industrialized, employers often looked for veterans because of the perceived belief about better discipline, specialized skills, etc.
3. Insurance Policies
4. College Admission Records/Applications (GI Bill)
5. Veterans Administration Medical Records
6. Published Histories of Brigades, Military Units, Battlefield Accounts & Narratives

Colonial Era – 1600's Through 1774

1. No official national military establishment outside of the British Crown, and foreign soldiers from Spain, France, and the Hessians recruited by the British to fight against the colonists.
2. Each colony had their own unique guideline but the most common criteria was: Every able bodied male, usually between the ages of 16 and 60 served in various local militias.
3. Militias were usually organized by county under the jurisdiction of the colonial legislature.
4. Exemptions from service tended to include:
 - a. Local officials (and family members)
 - b. Occupations such as doctors, clergy, teachers, or other important community figures
 - c. Those wealthy enough to bribe local officials
 - d. Mental and physically disabled
5. Surviving records are usually militia lists of soldiers and people who aided the cause in non-combat capacities.
6. Ancestor's service may have been in an English Unit or unit of a foreign power such as France or Spain.
7. Where to locate these records?
 - a. State archives records on militias (primary)
 - b. Published volumes of Colonial Soldiers from specific states, counties, etc. Two Prime Examples:
 - (1) Howard Chapins set of Rhode Island Colonial Soldiers and Sailors in King Georges War
 - (2) George W. Bodge's Soldiers in King Phillips' War

Major Record Types Containing Genealogical Information Revolutionary War Through World War II

Compiled Military Service Record Packets

1. Began compiling information in 1775 just prior to the Revolutionary War.
2. Quality, depth, and accuracy of information improved over time.
3. For the Revolutionary War period (1775-1783) surviving records may be found in two places
 - a. National Archives (Continental Army, published records for pensions, bounty land grants, etc.)
 - b. State Archives (state militias)
4. Another important note for the Revolutionary War period: While the Continental Army was the standard bearer historically as the main army, just as many soldiers fought in state militias but never received as much credit as they deserved.

Information in packets is compiled from a variety of sources:

Enlistment papers
Muster rolls

Payrolls
Hospital registers

Prison records
Chaplin records

Town, county, and church records (especially if the ancestor was part of a militia)

Compiled military service records are available at the National Archives for the following wartime periods:

Revolutionary War 1775-1783	Civil War-Union Soldiers 1861-1865
Post Revolutionary War Period 1784-1811	Civil War-Confederate Troops 1861-1865 **
War of 1812 and post war period 1812-1815	Spanish-America War 1898-1899
Indian Wars 1815-1858	Philippine Insurrection 1899-1902
Mexican War 1846-1848	

** NOTE: Researchers must also check with the various State Archives where the veteran resided or where the unit originated as well. Confederate records in the National Archives may or may not contain all available information.

As noted before, the depth and quality of information compiled in these records has evolved over time. The main features of interest to genealogists are listed below:

Colonial & Revolutionary Periods Through 1811:

Name	Length of service (occasional)
Rank (sometimes)	Personal/family data (occasional)
Military unit	
State of origin or enlistment (especially important in the case of a militia)	

Where to locate these surviving records of the Colonial and Revolutionary period?

National Archives	National Archives of Spain
State Archives for specific militia	National Archives of Germany
English National Archives	
National Archives of France	

War of 1812-Indian Wars (1815-1880) & Mexican War (1846-1848)

Name	If the soldier was a member of a state organization or militia
Rank	
Military Unit	Name of the organization, militia, and state
Dates of enlistment & discharge	

Civil War Union Troops 1861-1865

This was the first conflict where compiled service records often included personal information and detailed data about nature and places of soldier's service. Information included:

Name	Dates mustered in /out
Rank	Date of changes in rank
Military Unit	Date, place & nature of discharge
State of origin or militia	Age (sometimes)

Volunteer Enlistees: Packets may have included some or all of the following:

Name (sometimes physical description)	Dates Mustered In/Out
Age (sometimes)	Duties as a Volunteer
Residence at Time of Enlistment	

Soldiers Hospitalized: Bed cards show the following information:

Name (sometimes physical description)	Marital Status
Age	Residence
Birthplace	Date, place, and circumstance of wound

Soldier Fatalities: Casualty sheets provided the following:

Date and place of death	Circumstances
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Next of kin (sometimes)

Civil War Confederate Troops 1861-1865

Confederate service records often lack the quality in terms of detail as their Union counterparts. Most service packets include some or all of the following information:

Name	Military Unit
State of origin and/or enlistment	Rank

The information may below may or may not appear on a consistent basis:

Changes in rank status and date of change (sometimes)	Occupation prior to service
Discharge and circumstances	Physical description

IMPORTANT NOTE: In addition to what is available at the National Archives, the various State Adjutant Offices would also have this type of information for both Union and Confederate. The following link will provide you with contact information for each state

<http://www.agaus.org/contacts.asp>

Spanish-American War, 1898-1899

Name	Dates and places mustered in and out
Place of birth	Physical description
Place of residence	Name/address of spouse or parents
Occupation (before and during service)	
Rank	
Military Unit	

United States Regular Army Service Packets

Records relating to **officers** who served in the Regular Army during the period 1789-1917. Packets normally include some or all of the following information:

Name	Correspondence Files
Military Unit	Dates mustered in and out
Rank	Physical description
Place of birth	Medical records when applicable

Records relating to service by Regular Army **enlisted men** during the period 1789-1912 may include the some or all of the following information:

Name	Occupation
Rank	Military Unit
Age	Physical description
Place of Birth	Date and place of discharge
Date and place of enlistment	Medical records when applicable

United States Navy & U.S. Marine Corps Service Packets

Records relating to service in the navy & Marine Corps in the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783, are fragmentary. Even in the best of circumstances, the following minimal information is the best you can hope for:

Name	Dates of service
Rank	Date of payment
Name of vessel	

Records relating to Naval **officers** who served from 1798 to 1902 list the following information:

Name	Age and date of birth (sometimes both)
Rank	State of residence
State and town of birth (sometimes both)	Dates of service

Records for Naval **enlisted men** from 1798-1885 list the following information:

Name	Dates of service
Rank	Age (later records only)
Ratings	Birthplace (later records only)
Names of vessels of service	Place of enlistment (occasionally)

Records relating to men serving in the Marine Corps during the period 1798-1895 list the following:

Officers:

Name	Acceptance of commission
Rank,	Date of appointment

Enlisted Men

Name	Date and place of enlistment
Rank	Place of enlistment
Age	Term of enlistment

United States Coast Guard Service Packets

Records under this classification cover veterans who served in the Coast Guard and its later processor agencies for the period 1791-1919. The predecessor agencies are listed below:

Revenue Cutter Service	Lighthouse Service
Life-Saving Service	

Pension Application Records

Following the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress promised compensation in money or land to the following:

Soldiers disabled in the Revolutionary War	Widows and orphans of officers killed in the war
Soldiers who served to the end of the war	

Pension Act of 1818 enacted provisions for pensions for all Revolutionary War soldiers who served a minimum of 9 months if they were deemed “in need”. The Pension Act of 1832 eliminated the “in need” provisions. The Pension Act of 1836, coverage extended to widows of Revolutionary War soldiers for the first time. Congress followed up this precedent by authorizing pensions for all veterans:

1. Serving in succeeding wars
2. Veterans who suffered service-connected disabilities while serving in wartime or peace
3. For the dependants of men who died in battle or while on duty
4. For widows of service men who would have qualified for pensions

Pension application files consist of packets containing the formal application with supporting documentation needed to verify the service of the applicant. Important points to remember:

1. Pension applications & claims were often rejected for a variety of reasons.
2. Packets will contain subsequent applications based on the same service that was originally rejected and all supporting documentation
3. Application and claims that were filed by the veteran, widow, or other survivors of the widow, under benefits and stipulations extended via later Pension Acts implemented by Congress.
4. Every pension application file packet must contain at least four types of information:
 - a. Evidence establishing the identity of the applicant
 - b. Evidence of the soldier’s service
 - c. Whether the application or claim was approved or rejected and when (due to the numerous occasions where applicant had to re-apply multiple times before approval was granted).
 - d. Supporting documentation (may include some or all of the following):
 - (1) Original declaration or application of the veteran or widow
 - (2) Affidavits of witnesses
 - (3) Report of War Service by a representative of War Department
 - (4) Copies of death and marriage record

Pension application files are arranged in the following series:

1. **Revolutionary War Invalid Series (1792-1795)**
 - a. Many early returns were destroyed by fire
 - b. Surviving reports submitted to Congress between 1792-1795 were transcribed and have been published in titles such as *American State Papers, Class IX, Claims*; Reports submitted to the War Department for years 1794-1796 were transcribed and published in the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* Volume 46 March and June 1958; Reprints of many have also been published in the title *Pension Lists of 1792-1795* by June Clark Murtie.
 - c. Filed by both veterans and widows of veterans
 - d. Information in files may include
 - (1) Name and Rank
 - (2) Military Unit or ship
 - (3) Date and nature of disability
 - (4) Place of residence at time of report
 - (5) Action taken on claim
2. **Revolutionary War Service Series**
 - a. Pension applications are based on Acts of Congress from 1818 through 1853.
 - b. Applications and claims may have been filed by either veterans or widows
 - c. Basic information in file would include
 - (1) Veterans name and rank
 - (2) Military unit or ship
 - (3) Period of service
 - d. If the application was filed by the veteran, it may show the following additional information
 - (1) Age and date of birth
 - (2) Birthplace
 - (3) Place of residence at time of application
 - e. If application was filed by the widow, it may show the following additional information
 - (1) Date and place of veteran's death
 - (2) Widow's age and place of residence at time of application
 - (3) Date and place of her marriage to the veteran, and her maiden name, and possibly names of under aged children
 - (4) Some files may contain correspondence from the War Department in response to queries about the veteran.
3. **"Old War" Series**
 - a. Contains applications based on death or disability from service rendered between the end of the Revolutionary War and April 14, 1862, but not including the War of 1812.
 - b. Conflicts included are The Mexican War, various Indian Wars and Removals, Regular Army, and early Civil War.
 - c. Information in files include some or all of the following:
 - (1) Veteran's name and rank
 - (2) Military Unit
 - (3) Period of service
 - (4) The veteran application will usually provide the following additional details:
 - (a) Age and/or date of birth
 - (b) Place of residence
 - (c) Birthplace (sometimes)
 - (5) The widow's application will usually provide the following additional details
 - (a) Her age and place of residence
 - (b) Date, place, and circumstances of veteran's death
 - (c) Date and place of her marriage to the veteran (a copy of the marriage certificate is often part of documentation)
 - (d) Her maiden name
 - (e) If the veteran left children, the application may provide their names, ages, and places of residence

4. War of 1812 Series

- a. Veteran's declaration:
 - (1) May show his name, age, rank and place of residence
 - (2) Place of birth and sometimes specific date
 - (3) Birthdate and place (sometimes)
- b. Widow's declaration:
 - (1) May show her age and place of residence
 - (2) Name, rank, and military unit of veteran
 - (3) Date and place of entering service
 - (4) Date and place of discharge
 - (5) Date and place of marriage to the veteran , with the name of the official who conducted the ceremony (documentation may also include copy of the marriage certificate)
 - (6) Date and place of the veterans death

5. Mexican War Series

- a. Veterans declaration
 - (1) Name, rank, military unit
 - (2) Dates & Places of birth, enlistment, and discharge
 - (3) Places of residence since discharge
- b. Widow's declaration
 - (1) Age & place of residence
 - (2) Date & place of marriage to veteran (documentation may also include copy of the marriage certificate)
 - (3) Name & place of the person and place where ceremony took place
 - (4) Date & place of veterans death
 - (5) Widow's maiden name
 - (6) Names and birthdates of living children

6. Civil War & Later Series

- a. Contains applications based on service rendered between 1861 & 1934, excluding service in some of the Indian Wars and World War I.
- b. Includes service in the following wars/conflicts:
 - (1) Civil War (Union Troops only)
 - (2) Spanish-American War
 - (3) Philippine Insurrection
 - (4) Boxer Rebellion
 - (5) Regular Army
- c. Information in files varies depending on the pension act under which the original application was made.
- d. Some or all of the following information is included:
 - (1) Name, rank, & military unit
 - (2) Place of residence
 - (3) Summary of military record
 - (4) Age or date of birth
 - (5) Birthplace date & place of marriage
 - (6) Date & place of death
 - (7) Maiden name of wife
 - (8) Date of wife's death
 - (9) Names of surviving children with dates & places of their births
 - (10) Divorce records (occasionally)
 - (11) NARA index is known as *General Index to Pensions 1861-1934.*

7. Indian War Series

- a. Contains pension applications based on service in various Indian campaigns during the periods of 1817-1898.
- b. Information in packets includes the same general breakdown as what is found in the Civil War & Later Series described in the previous section.

Bounty-Land Warrant Application Records

Bounty-land warrants offered to servicemen in lieu of monetary compensation. These warrants gave its holder the right to free land in the public domain as a result of the completed the specified military service.

Warrants were earned by veterans or their survivors based on military service performed during the period of 1775-1855. It is important to note that individual colonies also had a similar albeit less formal setup during the pre-1775 era as well.

While many veterans took advantage of these warrants to obtain tracts of land, researchers should be ware that many sold their warrants to land speculators. Since this was the case, the land entry papers often refer to land owned and settled by someone other than the veteran or his heirs.

Bounty-land warrant applications are filed in the National Archives in the following two series. This :

1. Revolutionary War Series

- a. Most warrants were used to obtain land in the United States Military District of Ohio.
- b. By 1830, warrantees were able to exchange their warrants for scrip that was good for land in other parts of the public domain.
- c. Files typically contain some or all of the following information:
 - (1) Name, rank, & military unit of veteran
 - (2) Period and nature of service
 - (3) Name, age, & place of residence of his widow or his claimant
 - (4) If application was approved, the file also shows:
 - (a) Warrant number
 - (b) Number of acres granted
 - (c) Date issued
 - (d) Assignee if there was one
 - (e) Year of the congressional act under which the warrant was issued

2. Post-Revolutionary War Series

- a. Series contains bounty-land warrant applications based on service performed between 1790-1855, chiefly in the War of 1812, Indian wars, and the Mexican War.
- b. Files typically contain some or all of the following information:
 - (1) Name, rank, & military unit of the veteran
 - (2) Period and nature of service
 - (3) Physical description (sometimes)
 - (4) If applicant was the widow or other survivor, it may show information such as:
 - (a) Date and place of the veterans death
 - (b) Name of widow or surviving heirs
 - (c) Degree or nature of relationship
 - (5) If application was approved, the file will also shows:
 - (a) Warrant number
 - (b) Number of acres awarded
 - (c) Date issued
 - (d) Assignee if there was one
 - (e) Year of the congressional act under which the warrant was issued

Draft Registration Cards

More than 24 million men born between 1873-1900 registered in one of three World War I drafts. Copies of the original World War I draft registration cards are deposited on microfilm at the National Archives, Southeast Regional Branch in East point Georgia (outside Atlanta). Additional microfilmed copies are available through the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, local Family History Centers, and online through databases such as Ancestry.com or Ancestry Library Edition, , Heritage Quest, and Family Search.

These draft registration cards may contain some or all of the following information:

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Name | 5. Nearest relative |
| 2. Birth date and place | 6. Physical description |
| 3. Occupation | 7. Country of allegiance of an alien |
| 4. Dependents | |

In order to locate an ancestor using these records, the researcher must be able to provide the following:

1. Full name of the person
2. His city, county, and state of residence at the time of registration

State Military and Veteran Benefit Records

1. Many states have records pertaining to military service performed for state militias or other designated military or para-military groups under local or state jurisdiction.
2. Most of the original thirteen colonies (later states) provided pensions or bounty land for their Revolutionary War soldiers
3. Each of the former Confederate States began to offer pensions to veterans residing in their respective jurisdictions.
4. Most of these records are on file in the state archives. Ancestry.com and Footnote.com are also adding these on their databases.

Ordering Forms From the National Archives-Washington, DC

The list below shows the most popular forms for ordering records from the National Archives in Washington, DC. This list has been taken directly from the National Archives website. You may also contact the National Archives by mail at the following address for Pre-1900 Military Records Requests

National Archives & records Administration
Textual Archives Services Division
Washington, DC 20408

Passenger Arrival Records (NATF Form 81)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

Federal Census Records (NATF Form 82)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

Eastern Cherokee Applications (NATF Form 83)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

Federal Land Entry Files (NATF Form 84)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

Military Pension/Bounty Land Warrant Applications (NATF Form 85)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

(Pre-WWI) Military Service Records (NATF Form 86)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

(Post-WWI) Military Records (SF 180)

[Order Online](#)  | [Download the Form](#) | [Use for](#)

Note: NATF 80 is no longer used. Use NATF 85 for military pension and bounty land warrant applications, and NATF 86 for military service records for Army veterans discharged before 1912

National Personnel Records Center-St. Louis Missouri

The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis is the repository for all military personnel records, including medical records, for discharged and deceased veterans of all services during the 20th century.

Medical records on file include treatment records of retirees from all services, as well as records for dependent and other persons treated at naval medical facilities.

Requests may be made online at the National Archives website or by downloading or submitting electronically, a copy of standard form-180. The form includes complete instructions for preparing and submitting all requests. All written requests must be signed and mailed to the following address:

National Personnel Records Center
 Military Personnel Records
 9700 Page Avenue
 St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Records Available at the National Personnel Records Center

Branch of Service	Dates
U.S. Army	Officers separated after June 29, 1917 Enlisted personnel separated after October 31, 1912 Note: Many records were destroyed by fire in the St. Louis Center in 1973. Personnel records of Army members discharged/retired after September 30, 2002, are retained in electronic format by the Army. NPRC has access to the Army's electronic system and will respond to requests for those records.
US Air Force	Officers and enlisted personnel separated after September 24, 1947 Note: Many records were destroyed by fire in the St. Louis Center in 1973. Personnel records of Air Force members discharged/retired after September 30, 2004, are retained in electronic format by the Air Force and are not transferred to NPRC.
US Navy	Officers separated after 1901 Enlisted personnel separated after 1884 Personnel records of Navy members discharged/retired after December 31, 1994, are retained in electronic format by the Navy and are not transferred to NPRC.
US Marine Corps	Officers separated after 1904 Enlisted personnel separated after 1905 Personnel records of Marine Corps members discharged/retired after December 31, 1999, are retained in electronic format by the Marine Corps and are not transferred to NPRC.
US Coast Guard	Officers separated after 1897 Enlisted personnel separated after 1905
U.S. Coast Guard predecessor agencies	Civilian employees of agencies such as Revenue Cutter Service, Lifesaving Service, and Lighthouse Service, retired after 1919.

Discharge Papers and Separation Documents	This is also known as DD Form 214 in modern times. Prior to January 1, 1950, this form was listed under categories such as It has also been known as WD AGO 53, WD AGO 55, WD AGO 53-55, NAVPERS 553, NAVMC 78 PD, and NAVCG 553.
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DD Form 214, Discharge Papers and Separation Documents

The form known to many as **DD Form 214** or **Report of Separation** is usually issued when a serviceman or woman performs active duty for at least 90 consecutive days of active duty training. The Report of Separation contains information normally used to verify military service to qualify for benefits related to education, employment, medical treatment, and membership in veterans support organizations.

Information shown in these documents may include:

1. Date and place of entry into active duty
2. Home address at time of entry into service
3. Date and place of release from active duty
4. Home address after separation
5. Last duty assignment and rank
6. Military job specialty
7. Military education
8. Decorations, medals, badges, citation, and campaign awards
9. Total creditable service
10. Foreign service credited
11. Separation information
 - a. Type of separation
 - b. Character of service
 - c. Authority and reason for separation
 - d. Separation and reenlistment eligibility codes

The Report of Separation form issued since January 1, 1950 is the standard form **DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty**. Prior to this date, several similar forms were used by the military services, including the following:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. WD AGO 53 | 4. NAVPERS 553 |
| 2. WD AGO 55 | 5. NAVMC 78PD |
| 3. WD AGO 53-55 | 6. NAVCG 553 |

To obtain copies of the forms, you have two options:

1. Use the eVetRecs request system (online at the NARA website)
2. Mail or Fax a copy of Standard Form SF-180

How to Request Military Service Records or Prove Military Service

The procedures for requesting copies of any types of military or pension related service records are listed below:

1. Most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of military and medical records.
2. Requests can be made in one of two ways on the National Archives website:
 - a. Use the eVetRec request system to create your request
 - b. Mail or Fax Standard Form SF-180
3. Requests must contain the following mandatory information
 - a. Veteran's complete name used while in the service
 - b. Service number
 - c. Social security number
 - d. Branch of service
 - e. Dates of service
 - f. Date and place of birth (especially if the service number is unknown)
 - g. If you suspect that your records may have been destroyed in the 1973 fire, also include:
 - (1) Place of discharge

- (2) Last unit of assignment
- (3) Place of entry into military service if known
- 4. All requests must be signed and dated by either the veteran or next-of-kin.
- 5. If you are the next-of-kin of a deceased veteran, you must provide proof of death of the veteran such as a copy of death certificate, letter from a funeral home, or published obituary.

Optional (But Highly Recommended) Information

While the following information is optional, it is strongly recommended that you be prepared to provide as much as possible. This is especially true in the aftermath of 9/11, rise in concerns about identity theft, the Patriot Act, and strengthened national security measures. One must remember that military records do not fall under regular public record information guidelines.

- 1. The purpose or reason for your request, such as applying for veterans benefits, preparing to retire, or researching your personal military or family history.
- 2. Any deadlines related to your request. Example: you may be applying for a VA-guaranteed Home Loan and need to provide proof of military service by a specific date.
- 3. Any other specific information, documents or records you require from your Official Military Personnel File besides your Report of Separation.

Special Notice to Veterans and Family Members Regarding Requests for Copies Military Personnel and/or Medical Files

The National Archives and Personnel Records Center responds to over 1.4 million requests annually for copies of military personnel and/or medical records. Most queries are from veterans or their families to obtain information to qualify for benefits and entitlements. Nearly half of all queries seek a copy of the separation document which is the main source of proof required for veteran's benefits. However, many also ask for a complete copy of their file.

Since the 1970s, our standard procedure for replying to requests for entire files has been to provide only copies of key documents and extracts of vital information, rather than a copy of every document in a personnel and/or medical file. This approach avoids costly delays in reviewing and copying some documents -- such as leave papers, identification card applications, and clothing issuances -- that are not normally needed for benefit claim purposes. As a result, we are able to respond to more requesters, faster, and at less cost to the taxpayers. Exceptions to this procedure are files more than 62 years old, US Marine Corps files, all certified legal cases, and all requests from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In these instances, all documents are provided.

This extract contains copies of all essential documents to certify entitlement to most rights and benefits associated with military service, to identify key events in a military career, and to identify significant events in health care. Personal data pertaining to third parties is redacted from the file, pursuant to Privacy Act provisions.

When only key documents and extracts are provided from the Official Military Personnel File and the Medical Record, the response package contains a copy of all separation documents and all of the following information if it is in the file:

- 1. Military Services Dates
- 2. Character of Service
- 3. Promotions and Reductions
- 4. Duty Stations and Assignments
- 5. Foreign or Sea Service
- 6. Military Schooling and Training
- 7. Awards and Letters of Commendation
- 8. Disciplinary Actions
- 9. Lost Time
- 10. Enlistments Contracts

11. Entry and Separation Physical Exams
12. Immunizations
13. Dental Examinations
14. Clinical Summaries/Cover Sheets

If, after receiving an extract of a file, a requester submits a follow-up request for additional information or documents, NPRC will automatically send copies of all the other documents in the file.

Short List of Useful Websites for Military Records Research

Ancestry.com (Commercial Paid Subscription Site)

<http://www.ancestry.com>

Ancestry Library Edition (Free access on Lee County Library System Home Page-Electronic Resources)

Cyndi's List – American Revolution

<http://www.cyndislist.com/amrev.htm>

Cyndi's List – Civil War

<http://www.cyndislist.com/cw.htm>

Cyndi's List-Military (United States)

<http://www.cyndislist.com/military.htm>

Cyndi's List – Military Resources Worldwide

<http://www.cyndislist.com/milres.htm>

Cyndi's List – National Archives

<http://www.cyndislist.com/na.htm>

Family Search Pilot Project (Free)

<http://pilot.familysearch.org>

First World War.com (Excellent overview of the causes and issues related to researching veterans)

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/>

Footnote.com (Commercial Paid Subscription Site-Works in conjunction with the National Archives On digitalizing many of their materials)

<http://www.footnote.com>

Grave Site Locator (Dept. of Veterans Affairs)

http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1

Heritage Quest (Free access on Lee County Library System Home Page-Electronic Resources)

National Archives-Military Records

<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/military/>

National Archives & Records Administration – Military Records

<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/military/>

<http://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1.html>

<http://www.archives.gov/pacific/archives/laguna/finding-aids/world-war-2-records.html>

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2005/spring/spotlight-nprc.html>.

(NOTE: The previous site listed above provides an excellent overview on the availability of 20th century veterans' records)

Online Military Indexes and Websites

<http://www.militaryindexes.com/index.html>

United States Gen Web Pensions Project (Free Site)

<http://usgwarchives.net/pensions/>

Additional Sources For Military Service Information

While some of these facilities, agencies, or organizations may hold some information on individual veterans, many more are focused on historical information regarding military history, units, and specific conflicts. Where a website is mentioned, it is a good idea to consult the site for details on the holdings, research, and reference policies before requesting information. The Naval Historical Museum, for instance, sells cruise books for families and crewmembers of Seabees battalions.

Please also note that URL's or website links/address change on a regular basis. If the link does not work, simply back out and type in the name of the organization. Whether you use Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc., the organization is usually the first option you get under possible links. Most of the organizations listed below will have "Contact Us" icon as part of their websites.

American Battle Monuments Commission

Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500

2300 Clarendon Boulevard

Arlington, VA 22201

Tel: (703)-696-6897

<http://www.abmc.gov/home.php>

Marine Corps Historical Center

Washington Navy Yard, Building 58

9th and M Streets, SE

Washington, DC 20374-0580

Tel: (202)-433-3483

<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/>

National Cemetery System

Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20420

Tel: (202) 273-5221

E-Mail: ncscss@mail.va.gov

Internet: <http://www.cem.va.gov/>

National Guard Association of the United States Library

One Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20001

Phone: 202-789-0031

Fax: 202-682-9358

email: ngaus@ngaus.org

<http://www.ngaus.org/>

National Guard Education Foundation

(Formerly called the Historical Society of the Militia and the National Guard)

One Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 2001

Internet: <http://www.ngef.org/tier.asp?sid=3>

For more information about the National Guard Educational Foundation or the Museum, please contact:

Jonathan Bernstein
 Director, National Guard Educational Foundation
 One Massachusetts Avenue, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20001
 Phone: 202-408-5887
 Fax: 202-682-9358
 Email: jonathan.bernstein@ngaus.org.

For library or research assistance, please contact:

John Sterne
 Librarian
 Phone: 202-408-5890
 Email: john.sterne@ngaus.org.

National Personnel Records Center

Military Personnel Records
 9700 Page Avenue
 St. Louis, MO 63132-5100
 Tel: (314) 538-4243 (Air Force Records); (314) 538-4261 (Army Records); (314) 538-4165 (Navy, Marine Corp, Coast Guard Records)
 Internet: <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/>
 E-mail: MPR.center@nara.gov *
 Status Check: mpr.status@nara.gov *
 NOTE: This e-mail is for general information only. No e-mail requests for records will be answered. See the website for options.

Naval Historical Center

Washington Navy Yard
 901 M Street, SE
 Washington, DC 20374-5060
 Internet: <http://www.history.navy.mil/>
 Library
 Tel: (202) 433-4132
 Fax: (202) 433-9553
 Museum
 Tel: (202) 433-4882
 Fax: (202) 433-8200
 Operational Archives
 Fax: (202) 433-2833
 Ships History Branch
 Tel: (202) 433-3643
 Fax: (202) 433-6677

United States Air Force Historical Research Agency

Mailing Address:
 HQ AFHRA/RSA
 600 Chennault Circle
 Maxwell Air Force Base, AL 36112-6424
 Internet: <http://afhra.maxwell.af.mil/>
 Research Division: (334) 953-2241
 Customer Service: (334) 953-5834
 Archives Branch: (334) 953-2395
 Organizational Histories Branch: (334) 953-2296

E-Mail: AFHRANEWS@maxwell.af.mil

United States Army Center of Military History

Location:
Building 35
102 Fourth Avenue
Fort McNair
Washington, DC

Mailing Address:
103 Third Avenue
Fort McNair
Washington, DC 20319-5058
Tel: (203) 761-5413
Internet: <http://www.army.mil/cmh/>
E-Mail: cmhanswers@hdqa.army.mil

United States Army Military Institute-Carlisle Barracks

950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle, PA 17013
Tel: (717) 245-3971
Internet: <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/>

United States Coast Guard Historian's Office

Historian's Office (CG-09224)
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, DC 20593-0001
(202) 372-4651
Fax: (202) 372-4984
Internet: <http://www.uscg.mil/history/collect.html>

United States Military Academy

Museum/Library Archives
Building 2107
Pershing Center
West Point, NY 10996-2099
Tel: (914) 938-7052
Internet: <http://www.usma.edu/museum/>
E-Mail: museum@www.usma.edu

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
Tel: (202) 233-4000 or Toll-Free (800) 827-1000
Internet: <http://www.va.gov/>

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American Records and Research: Focusing on Families-Course Two. Salt Lake City, UT: Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy. Coordinator-Paula Stuart Warren.

Contributors- Chuck Knuthson, Marianne Crump, Thomas McGill, Anne Wuehler, Anne Roach, Ruth Maness, John Phillip Colletta, Kory Meyerink, Judith W. Hansen, and Birdie Monk Holsclaw, c2008.

Genealogy Reference 929.1 SALT

Index Of Revolutionary War Pension Applications. Washington, DC: National Genealogical Society, c1966. **Genealogy Reference 929.3 Nat**

Military Records: A Select Catalog Of National Archives Microfilm Publications. Washington, D.C.: National Archives & Records Administration, c1996. **Genealogy Reference 016.355 Nat**

Roster of Confederate Soldiers 1861-1865. 16v. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing, c1995-1996. **Genealogy Reference 973.742 ROS**

Roster of Union Soldiers 1861-1865. 33v. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing, c1997-2000.

NOTE: Call numbers vary. All have 973.7 or variations such as 973.74 or 973.3443 etc. Union soldier volumes are broken down by state. We have one volume in this series for the United States in general that has the following call number 929.373 ROS. All copies are in the Genealogy Reference collection.

Barbuto, Domenica M. *Guide to Civil War Books: Annotated Selection of Modern Works on the War Between the States.* Chicago, IL: American Library Association., c1996. **Professional Collection (Fort Myers) 973.7 BAR**

Dupuy, R. Ernest and Trevor. *The Encyclopedia Of Military History From 3500 B.C. To The Present.* 2nd Edition. New York, NY: Harper and Row, c1986. **Genealogy Reference 355.009 Dup**

Greenwood, Val D. *Researchers Guide To American Genealogy.* 3rd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, c1997. **Genealogy Reference 929.1 GRE**

Groene, Bertram Hawthorne. *Tracing Your Civil War Ancestor.* Winston-Salem, NC: Blair Publishing, c1995. **Genealogy Reference 929.1 GRO**

Johnson, Richard S. *How To Locate Anyone Who Is Or Has Been In The Military.* 8th Edition. Spartanburg, SC: MIE Publishing, c1999. **Adult Reference 355.0222 Joh**

Neagles, James C. Neagles, James C. *Confederate Research Sources: Guide To Archive Collections.* Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing, c1986. **Genealogy Reference 929.373 NEA**

----- *U.S. Military Records: A Guide To Federal & State Sources, Colonial America To The Present.* Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing., c1994. **Genealogy Reference 929.373 Nea**

Roland, Charles Pierce. *An America Iliad: Story of the Civil War.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, c1991. **Adult Non-Fiction 973.7 ROL**

Schweitzer, George K. *Civil War Genealogy.* Knoxville, TN: George K. Schweitzer, c2003 **Genealogy Reference 016.9737 SCH**

Sifakis, Stewart. *Compendium Of The Confederate Armies: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia.* New York, NY: Facts On File, Various Publication Years. **Genealogy Reference 973.742 Sif**

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- Szucs, Loretto Dennis. *The Source: A Guidebook Of American Genealogy*. 3rd Edition. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing, c2006. **Genealogy Reference & Adult Non-Fiction 929.1 SOU**
- United States Pension Bureau. *List Of Pensioners On The Roll: January 1, 1883 Giving The Name Of Each Pensioner, The Cause For Which Pensioned, The Post-Office Address, Rate Of Pension Per Month, And The Date Of Original Allowance*. 5v. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, c1970. **Genealogy Reference 973.74 Uni**
- United States Quartermaster Department. *Roll Of Honor: Names Of Soldiers Who Died In Defense Of The American Union, Interred In The National Cemeteries, Numbers I - IV, Reprinted With Alphabetical Index To Places Of Interment Of Deceased Union Soldiers In The Various States & Territories, As Specified In Rolls Of Honor Numbers I - XIII*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, c1994. **Genealogy Reference 973.7 Uni**
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NOTE: This study guide is meant to serve as an overview or outline for patrons using the genealogy collection at Fort Myers-Lee County Library. The compiler emphasizes that the information contained in this study guide should not serve as a substitute for taking the time to read one of the books or articles cited in the bibliography, or attend lectures given by the subject specialists cited as authors.

Compiled by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian, Fort Myers-Lee County Library, 3/26/2010