

Ancestry.com Unveils its Military Records Collection

By Jana Lloyd 03 June 2007

Like many of you, I spent Memorial Day weekend enjoying the great outdoors, hopping from barbecue to barbecue, and reflecting on the sacrifices that men and women have made and continue to make in the armed services.

I thought about my fifth great-grandfather, who served in the War of 1812 (see ["Finding Grandpa's Pension Files"](#)); my grandfather, who was a Link Trainer instructor at Minter Field during World War II; and my cousin, Charles Scott, who is serving in Iraq.

I know I wasn't alone in my reflections because the cemetery next to my apartment looked more like a garden than a cemetery; bouquets decorated every grave.

And when Ancestry.com announced the release of an unprecedented 90 million names on military-related records, the page on which the records were housed (see www.ancestry.com/military) crashed because of all the traffic. Men and women everywhere are eager to learn about and honor those individuals who have fought for our country.

In case you haven't already explored the new records, photographs, and videos in the collection, let me highlight a few of my favorites. After exploring these, search the site yourself and find the records that mean the most to you.

UNITED WORLD WAR II NEWSREELS

As soon as you open the Military Records Collection homepage, a newsreel titled "The War Ends in Europe" begins playing. President Truman reads a statement to the U.S. people about the victory. Germans sign a surrender document. I was surprised how emotional I got when Allied troops blew up a large swastika on top of the stadium of Nuremberg.

During WWII, the Office of War Information made 267 newsreels—each about ten minutes long—to promote war efforts. They contain actual military footage.

Although they were shown in the U.S., they were translated into numerous languages and deposited in supportive and neutral countries. Some were even translated into German and dropped behind enemy lines as counter-propaganda.

One of my favorite newsreels was the one titled ["D-Day."](#) Watching Allied forces storm Normandy by water and air brought the war alive to me in a new way. Again, I was surprised how emotional I got knowing that many of the men they showed on the front lines sacrificed their lives.

You can watch all 267 of these newsreels, sorted by year.

CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Besides having an index of records to [Civil War pension files](#), a collection of [Civil War POW records](#), and an index to 6.3 million [Civil War military service records](#), the Military Records Collection contains almost 7,000 photographs taken during the Civil War.

I spent a fun half an hour searching through these photos, using words like “cannon,” “Antietam,” and “Robert Lee.” Some of the pictures were domestic—they gave me a better idea of dress and lifestyle at the time. Other pictures were difficult to view—showing the wounded and dead on battlefields and in trenches.

The picture below shows a southern family in front of the table on which General Robert E. Lee signed his surrender.



The picture below is a 300-pound parrot rifle with the muzzle blown off.



Don't forget that if you're interested in seeing images from other wars, you can visit the [Ancestry Store](#) and browse through its vast collection of military photographs. You can purchase a 10" to 40" gallery print of any of these photographs for a reasonable price.

This first photograph, taken from the military collection in the Ancestry Store, shows anti-aircraft night fire above several fighter planes from the "Helle's Belles" squadron, WWII.



The second photograph shows an Air Force F-105 Thunderchief pilot refueling, on his way to bomb a military target in Vietnam.



WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II DRAFT REGISTRATION AND ENLISTMENT CARDS

As soon as I saw that the Military Records Collection contained draft and enlistment cards for both WWI and WWII, I searched for the names of my two grandfathers and my four great-grandfathers. I was surprised how easy it was—I just typed in names, first and last, and was quickly able to find a card for each one.

About 98 percent of men less than forty-six years old completed draft cards for World War I (1917–18). All men between eighteen and sixty-five were supposed to register for the World War II draft, but only records for those men between ages forty-five and sixty-four have been released to the public (due to privacy reasons). These records are available on Ancestry.com. So are the records for all those who enlisted in the army during World War II.

[World War I Draft Registration Cards](#)

[World War II Draft Registration Cards \(for those between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four\)](#)

[World War II Army Enlistment Cards](#)

Below is the WWI draft registration card for my great-grandfather, Lewis John Lloyd, who was twenty-nine during the draft. He claimed exemption because he had a wife and child.

The most interesting thing for me about this record was that I was able to see Lewis's original signature. He had a unique way of signing his first and middle initials, with the "J" on top of the "L."

Form 850 REGISTRATION CARD		REGISTRAR'S REPORT 30-1-10-A
1 Name in full <i>Leona F. H. H. H.</i>	Age in years <i>29</i>	1 Tell medium or short (specify which): <i>Tall</i> Height medium or short (check): <i>short</i>
2 Home address <i>1100 N. 1st St.</i>		2 Color of eyes: <i>Brown</i> Color of hair: <i>Black</i> Hair: <i>no</i>
3 Date of last previous registration <i>September 1911</i> <i>1887</i>		3 Has person had arm, leg, hand, foot or back lame, or is he otherwise disabled (specify): <i>is not Disabled</i>
4 How was (1) a natural born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or born in a foreign territory (specify which): <i>natural born</i>		I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:
5 Where born: <i>Leadville, Colorado</i>		
6 I am a citizen, if not specify on page 4 (specify which):		<i>Peggy A. Henderson</i> Registrar of Registrars
7 What is your present rank, occupation, or office: <i>Miss. Genl. Coal. Dept.</i>		
8 In what employed: <i>Albuquerque & Cimarron Coal.</i>		Present: <i>19</i>
9 Where employed: <i>Madison, Nev. Co.</i>		City or County: <i>Santa Fe</i>
10 Married or single (specify which): <i>Married</i> Name, rank or grade: <i>Wife of Col. H. H. H.</i>		State: <i>New Mex.</i> <i>June 5, 17</i> (Date of registration)
11 What subject matter have you had? Rank: <i>1000</i> Branch:		
12 Do you have dependent(s) (specify which): <i>Yes. Have 2 dependents</i>		
I affirm that I have verified these answers and that they are true. <i>G. H. H.</i>		

SEARCH THE COLLECTION

Besides the collections mentioned above, the Military Records Collection has records for each of the major conflicts in American history.

If you know one of your ancestors served in the military, you can quickly see what records Ancestry.com has available for the war he or she served in and search for mentions of their names. If you don't know whether your ancestors served in the military, sort through your family tree and make a list of all those who would have been of age to do so during a particular conflict; then, start searching. In addition, take a few minutes browsing through all of the photographs and videos on the site and give thanks for our common heritage of service and sacrifice.