

GENTREK: Researching Your Civil War Ancestors

by Jayne McCormick

Where to Begin

You've found you have an ancestor who was in the Civil War...

First you will want to order NAFT (National Archives Trust Fund) forms 85 and 86 so you can send for his Pension/Bounty Land warrant Application and his Compiled Military Service Record. You can get the forms 2 different ways:

1) You may order them online at:

<http://www.archives.gov/contact/inquire-form.html> - click the little box in front of the form/s you want and then fill in any other information necessary, click on "Review Your Entries". If all your information is correct, click on "submit". I usually order the maximum number because you're bound to find others who served.

2) The forms can be obtained via snail mail. Write to:

National Archives and Records Administration,
Attn: NWCTB
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Washington, DC 20408-0001.

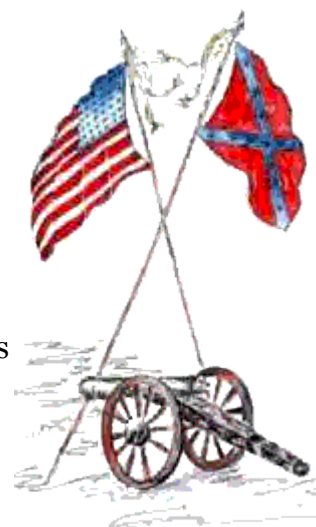
If you don't know the regiment your ancestor was in, while waiting for the forms to arrive, you will want to check out the Civil War Soldier and Sailors System to see if your ancestor is there. If so, you will learn his Regiment, Company, rank when he mustered in and rank when he mustered out.

<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/> This is a National Parks Service website and holds many Civil War records. Normally you wouldn't think about the Parks Service holding record, but this site is a must see.

If your soldier isn't listed, it does not mean he didn't serve.

You might also check your local FHC, they have much of the same information that is available in the Archives branches. Original records, however, are only available at the National Archives. If it is at all possible, you really want to make that trip. There is nothing like holding those originals in your hands.

Another option is *The Roster of Union Soldiers: 1861 – 1865*, Edited by Janet B. Hewett; Published by Broadfoot Publishing Co., Wilmington, NC. There are 33 Volumes – 3,000,000 names.



Connecticut/Rhode Island – 1 volume
Delaware/New Jersey – 1 volume
Pennsylvania/District of Columbia/Maryland – 4 volumes
Missouri/Florida/North Carolina/Georgia/Alabama/
Mississippi/Louisiana/Texas/Arkansas/Kansas – 2 Volumes
Illinois – 3 volumes
Indiana – 2 volumes
Iowa/Minnesota – 1 volume
Kentucky/Tennessee – 1 volume
Maine/New Hampshire – 1 volume
Massachusetts/Vermont – 2 volumes
Michigan – 1 volume
New York – 5 volumes
Ohio/West Virginia/Virginia – 4 volumes
Wisconsin – 1 volume
Regulars/Arizona/California/Colorado/Dakota/Nebraska/Nevada/
New Mexico/Oregon/Utah/Washington – 2 volumes
U.S. Colored Troops – 2 volumes
There is also “Roster of Union Soldiers 1861-1865” CD-ROM VERSION.

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:-D The printed volumes can be purchased from Broadfoot Publication at \$100 per volume....
do the math, that's \$3,300. Now if you don't want to spend that kind of money, the CD-ROM
Version which includes all 33 volumes, can be had for \$650. A real bargain, don't you think?

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I found the volume for New Jersey & Delaware at our Historical Society Library.

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If your soldier was Confederate, you need to check The Roster of Confederate Soldiers 1861 –
1865 Edited by Janet B. Hewett, Published by Broadfoot Publishing Co., Wilmington, NC.
There are 16 Volumes of rosters assembled in Surname Alphabetical order listing their
Regiment and Company

Basic Records

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR)

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Each volunteer soldier, Union and Confederate has a Compiled Military Service Record for
each regiment in which he served (Cost \$17). The CMSR contains basic information about the
soldier's military career. Form 86. Information that may be included in these records are
cards indicating whether a soldier was present or absent during a certain period of time, date
of the enlistment and discharge, amount of bounty paid him. Other information, wounds
received or hospitalization for an injury or illness, enlistment papers, papers indicating
capture and release if he was a POW, his place of birth (if foreign born, it would give only the
country) may also be included.

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There are NO compiled service records for Navy or Marine personnel. Contact:

Old Military and Civil War Records (CWCTB)
National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 10408-0001

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The CMSR were compiled from original muster rolls and other records obtained years later, to permit efficient checking of military and medical records in connection with claims for pensions and other veterans' benefits. The information included depended on the survival of Regimental records.

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When the forms arrive from NARA, I'm sure you'll want to get them sent off as soon as possible. When filling out the Form 86, you **MUST** provide the veteran's full name, the state from which he served, the war in which he served or dates between which he served. If in Civil War, you must specify Union or Confederate, and the kind of service (whether he was a volunteer or regular). There is other information asked for and the more you can provide the better off you will be in case there is another soldier with a like or very similar name.

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If you find your soldier was wounded or sick, you want to fill out another Form 86 and attach a note asking for the complete medical records. The same holds true for court-martial records. Unless you ask specifically for these two types of records, you will never even know they exist. When I send for any records, I've always used a credit card. The turnabout time is quicker. This way you don't wait for them to tell you they've found records. You, in turn then send them a check, and you wait some more until the check clears the bank before they send you what they've found.

Naval Information:

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U. S. Naval War Records office: "The War of the Rebellion: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies" – 30 volumes. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office 1880-1900. Reprint: Gettysburg, PA, National Historical Society 1971-1972. Includes battle reports and correspondence of Union and Confederate.

Pension Records

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Most Union Soldiers, their widows or their children applied for a pension. If there was a dependent parent, they may have also applied. NARA has indexed the pension file, by microfilm publication T288, General Index to Pension Files, 1861 – 1934. It is available online, for a fee, from Ancestry.com. (If you have a friend who subscribes, they might be willing to do a look up for you.)

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On **Form 85**, you must check whether you want the full pension application file for \$37.00 the Pension Documents Packet for \$14.75, or the Bounty-Land warrant Application for \$17.25. **NOTE: Any Confederate pensions were paid through the state from which the soldier served.**

Minimum information for the soldier MUST be completed: full name, branch of service, state from which he served, the war in which he served or dates between which he served and whether he was a Volunteer or Regular. Other information you should include if you can: Unit in which he served; if he was in the Army, specify Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery or "other": was he an officer or enlisted; the Pension/Bounty Land file number; dates of birth and death, plus places if known. It also asks for the name of the widow or other claimants – usually minor child or dependent parent.

The pension files contain more information about what the soldier did during the war than does the CMSR. There may be information about a wound he received and an affidavit from a comrade, stating he remembers what happened. In some of the files I've gotten, there have been letters from friends and neighbors describing how the veteran was affected from his time in the service... "he has a limp and isn't able to do his farm work." "He suffers from arthritis." and other such comments. Does this give you a clue that maybe you should ask for his medical records?

A widow, to obtain a pension, had to provide proof of marriage. This could have been a copy kept by county officials or there may be an affidavit written by the minister or another person. In the case of my own ancestor, according to a letter written by a Joseph Lippincott, Justice of the Peace, Burlington Co., New Jersey on behalf of Rev. Miller Jones, former Pastor of the Baptist Church in Bridgeport in Montgomery Co., PA states *"that on or about the Seventh day of February in the year 1862 while officiating as Pastor of the said Baptist Church in Bridgeport, at his residence in Bridgeport aforesaid, he joined in marriage Mr. Eugene Griffith of said County of Montgomery, Penna and Miss Josephine Carr of Chester County, PA.. that no record of said marriage was made or kept by him in or for said Bridgeport Baptist Church, nor does he know of any record whatever of said marriage being made or kept, he having no private record thereof.. but he distinctly recollects the marriage by him and in his presence of the said Eugene Griffith and Josephine his wife, on or about the day aforementioned."*

I've often wondered how after several years, he could remember the date.

For the application of the soldier's minor child, proof of marriage and proof of the child's birth had to be provided.

Substitutions:

The Union established a draft with the 1863 Enrolment Act. Section 13 allowed draftees to avoid service by paying a \$300 commutation fee or by hiring a substitute. The commutation rule was abandoned the following year, but substitutions continued for the duration of the war.

Civil War Principals and Substitutes Index

http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17445_19273_19313-125416--,00.html

Exemptions, Substitutes and Enrollments

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1994/winter/civil-war-draft-records.html>

Regimental Histories:

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Now that you know what regiment your soldiers was in, you will want to know the history of the regiment/regiments he was in. However, just because it says the Regiment was involved in a certain battle, does not mean your ancestor was in that battle.

Union:

Compendium of the War of the Rebellion by Frederick H. Dyer, 3 Volumes with a complete set of Regimental Histories in Volume III, available online at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~mruddy/dyer.htm>

Confederate:

Compendium of the Confederate Armies by Stewart Sifakis @1992 Published by Maple-Vail Book Manufacturing Group. There are 10 volumes each featuring different states or groups of states as follows:

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Virginia
Tennessee
Alabama
Florida and Arkansas
North Carolina
Louisiana
Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Indian Units
Mississippi
South Carolina and Georgia
Texas

Other helpful sources

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U. S. Army Military History Institute
ATTN: Historical Services Division
23 Ashburn Drive
Carlisle Barracks
Carlisle, PA 17013-5008
<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/>

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Photo search: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/PhotoDB.html>

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The following site has MANY Civil War links – Rosters, Histories, Battlefields, etc
The American Civil War Homepage
<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>

Civil War Links

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~mruddy/clayton2.htm>

includes links to The Civil War Center, Civil War Mail Members websites, Civil War Rosters, John Henderson Freeman Diary, Dyer's Compendium, Confederate Military History: What is CMH? Official Records: What is the OR? Substitutes and Conscripts, Civil War List Success: Julie Bright, Smith Family Letters, 32nd TN CSA, The Civil War Homepage, Civil War Ancestry Genealogy Help Page, Cyndi Howell's Civil War Research Links, The Fenian Brotherhood, Search Texas Pensioners List, People interested in specific units, soc.history.war.us-civil-war, Civil War Reenactors Homepage, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and Sons of Union Veterans

Cemetery Index - US Civil War Center

<http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/projects/cemindex.htm>

Many of the following cemeteries have searchable databases.

Barrancas National Cemetery (FL)
Bay Pines Cemetery (FL)
Camp Butler National Cemetery (IL)
Camp Chase National Cemetery (OH)
Chalmette National Cemetery (LA)
Chattanooga National Cemetery (TN)
City Point National Cemetery (VA)
Cold Harbor National Cemetery (VA)
Confederate Stockade Cemetery at Johnson's Island (OH)
Cornet Cemetery, Cass County (TX)
Cypress Hills (NY)
Danville National Cemetery (KY)
Fairhaven Memorial Park and Mortuary (CA)
Fayetteville National Cemetery (AR)
Finn's Point (NJ)
Fort Harrison National Cemetery (VA)
Fort Snelling National Cemetery (MN)
Glendale National Cemetery (VA)
Grafton National Cemetery (WV)
Lexington National Cemetery (KY)
Mill Springs National Cemetery (KY)
Mobile National Cemetery (AL)
Mount Olivet Cemetery (LA) (currently incomplete)
Philadelphia National Cemetery (PA)
Richmond National Cemetery (VA)
Santa Ana National Cemetery (CA)
Seven Pines National Cemetery (VA)
St. Augustine National Cemetery (FL)
Union Mound Cemetery (MD)
Generals' Burial Listings

They are updating all the time so be sure to go back often.

NARA – Genealogists/Family Historians – Civil War Records
<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/military/civil-war/index.html#mail>

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Making of America

No serious study of the American Civil War is complete without consulting the **Official Records**. Affectionately known as the "OR" ...

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Author: United States. War Department

Title: "The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

Other Title: Official records of the Union and Confederate armies,

Publisher: Government Printing Office.

Place of Publication: Washington

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Two different ways to access the OR:

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http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html

<http://ehistory.osu.edu/USCW/library/or/list3.cfm>

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JUST REMEMBER. THE MORE ACCURATE AND COMPLETE THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE, THE BETTER CHANCE YOU HAVE OF RECEIVING THE FILES. As you all know in your research, there may be more than one person with a like or similar name

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Thank you for being here and listening..

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<http://www.pacivilwar.com/2ndinvasion.html>