

W O M E N

Recent scholarship has started to explore in greater detail women who served as men in various armed conflicts. For example, in the compiled service record of Cpl. Samuel Gay, who served in the First Massachusetts Regiment during the Revolutionary War, there is a card noting that he was “discharged, being a woman, dressed in Mens cloths Aug. 1777.” There are several hundred women who reportedly served as men during the Civil War for both the Union and Confederacy. Compiled military service records for these individuals are filed under the male aliases that the women took on while they served. For example, the Civil War compiled military service record for Sarah Edmonds Seelye is filed with the Second Michigan Volunteer Infantry under the name Franklin Thompson. You need to know the woman’s alias that she used while serving as a soldier to search these records. In some cases the compiled military service records and pension files identify soldiers as women serving as men but in many cases they do not.

In some cases, the National Archives also has records relating to women hired as civilians by the War Department or Army Quartermaster Department. There are also several Civil War–era series relating to Union and Confederate regimental and hospital laundresses, nurses, and spies. Post-Civil War records include various series on nurses, Quartermaster Department employees, and regimental and fort laundresses.

There are several series related to women who served as contract nurses during the Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, and later in the Nurse Corps. The Nurse Corps was formed in the Regular Army in 1901. Prior to 1901, nurses in the Spanish-American War and Philippine

Insurrection worked under contract with the U.S. Army. Personal Data Cards of Spanish-American War Contract Nurses, 1898–1939, RG 112, Records of the Office of the Surgeon General (Army), entry 149, include contract nurses who served during the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection. The personal data cards provide information such as full name, address, education, hospital experience, age, date, and place of birth, and marital status. The files also include a brief history of service with the Army and in many cases cross-references to files found in the Surgeon General's general correspondence file found in RG 112, entry 26. For additional records in the general correspondence file consult the name and subject index (RG 112, entry 23) under "contract nurses." Other records related to nurses in the Army Nurse Corps during the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection can be found in RG 112, entries 104 and 105, case files of candidates seeking appointments as Army nurses and the register of military service of members of the Army Nurse Corps, 1901–02.

Additional Sources of Information

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