



Sailors in the United States Navy, 1798–1885

Except for men who served in the American Revolution, there are no compiled service records for sailors in the U.S. Navy. It is, however, often possible to piece together a sailor's service by looking at a variety of sources.

Revolutionary War, 1776–1783

There are compiled military service records (CMSRs) for sailors who served during the American Revolution. However, due to the War Department Fire of 1800, these CMSRs were created from records in the possession of agencies outside the War Department. Instead of reflecting muster rolls and other military records, the information for these CMSRs are transcribed from records showing payment of sailors for their service, lists of prisoners, or other types of documentation.

___M880, *Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel and Members of the Departments of the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General of Military Stores who Served During the Revolutionary War*. 4 rolls. DP. Arranged into three parts (Quartermaster General, Commissary General, and Naval personnel). Naval personnel are on rolls 3 and 4, arranged alphabetically by sailor's surname.

Early Republic, ca. 1803–ca. 1846

Muster rolls usually include name, rate or rank, date person came on board and date left the ship. Muster-Pay rolls generally include name, rate or rank, and what the sailor was paid for that cruise.

___T829, *Miscellaneous Records of the Office of Naval Records and Library*. 461 rolls. Although this is a difficult series of records to use, there is a detailed list describing the contents of this microfilm publication in greater detail available in the National Archives Research Center. You should consult that list before beginning your research. See for example,

Rolls 1-12 for Muster rolls of ships, 1813–1859.

Rolls 13-140 for Muster-Pay rolls of ships, ca. 1800–ca. 1839.

Rolls 142-164 for lists of personnel at U.S. Naval Stations, ca. 1803–ca. 1839.

Rolls 175-206 for lists of personnel at Navy yards, ca. 1805–ca. 1840.

Unfortunately, there are no indexes for these records.

Mexican War (1846) to 1884

To find sailors who served during this time period, please consult the following records.

Rendezvous Reports, 1846–1884

Rendezvous reports are to sailors as enlistment registers are to Regular Army soldiers. These reports list the name, rate, rendezvous (recruitment station or vessel), dates of enlistment, where born, age at time of enlistment, and a physical description.

___T1098, *Index to Rendezvous Reports Before and After the Civil War (1846–1861, 1865–1884)*. 32 rolls. Arranged alphabetical by sailor's name.

___T1099, *Index to Rendezvous Reports during the Civil War (1861–1865)*. 31 rolls. Arranged alphabetical by sailor's name.

___M1953, *Weekly Returns of Enlistments at Naval Rendezvous ("Enlistment Rendezvous") Jan. 6, 1855–Aug. 8, 1891*. 71 Rolls. Arranged by date and then by first letter of the sailors surname.

Below are helpful explanations of some abbreviations found in these indexes.

D or Dis	Discharged	Ship Art	Shipping articles
DD	Died	EOV	Enlistment on vessels
R or Ran	Deserted	MK	Miscellaneous keys to enlistments
RS	Receiving ship (station ship)		

Muster Rolls, 1846–1859

___T829, *Miscellaneous Records of the Office of Naval Records and Library*. 461 rolls. The records are arranged alphabetically by the name of the vessel. The indexes to the Rendezvous Reports often provide you with the name of the ship on which your ancestor served. Muster rolls for the years 1846–1859 are available on rolls 1–12.

Related Records

___M273, *Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867*. 198 rolls. D.P. The files are arranged by case number (chronologically). The first two rolls of the series are alphabetical indexes to cases June 1799–March 1861 and April 1861–1867, respectively. Information may include name of sailor charged; his rating, ship or station; the alleged offense; place and date of trial; and the sentence.

Naval Service Records Post–1885

The following publications reproduce finding aids to records that are in the custody of the National Personnel Records Center.

___T1100, *Index to Rendezvous Reports, Naval Auxiliary Service, 1917–1918*. 1 roll. Arranged alphabetically, this index provides date of enlistment and the name of the vessel on which the individual served.

___T1101, *Index to Rendezvous Reports, Armed Guard Personnel, 1917–1920*. 3 rolls. Arranged alphabetically, this index shows the name of the vessel on which the person served, dates of service, and the place where the records and accounts were held.

For the service records of enlisted sailors serving after 1885, you should direct your inquiry to the National Military Personnel Record Center in St. Louis, MO. Please ask a member of our staff for a Form 180 for requesting a search for this kind of record.

Rev. December 2010