The Civil War

Getting Started: Possible Family Sources

Link to family sources such as personal letters, diaries, discharge papers, correspondence from the War Department, Navy Department, or Pension Office to find the soldier's enlistment papers, which generally show the soldier's name, place of birth, occupation, and personal description.

Volunteers (Confederate)

Compiled military service records of men who served in the Confederate States Army, consist of unit rosters with names and descriptions sometimes or sometimes one or more original documents. Each card abstract copies an entry in a given register, such as Confederate muster rolls, returns, and descriptive rolls and enlistment and discharge records.

Volunteers (Union)

Compiled service records for Union volunteers consist of a muster roll from the muster roll with names and descriptions sometimes or sometimes one or more original documents. Each card abstract copies an entry in a given register, such as Confederate muster rolls, returns, and descriptive rolls and enlistment and discharge records.

Regulars (Union)

Regular Army officers and enlisted men. Start by consulting Regular Army enlistment papers, which generally show the soldier's name, place of birth, occupation, and personal description.

Naval Enlisted Men

Naval records related to Navy enlisted men include pension files, summary abstracts, keys to enlistment, and muster rolls. Pension files related to Navy enlisted men may provide leads such as dates of service and the ship(s) or duty station(s) on which the sailor served. Y our next step is to search rendezvous reports. A rendezvous report is a weekly record of each man enlisted known as a "rendezvous record." These records usually provide name of the vessel, dates of service, place of residence, place of birth, occupation, and personal description. The Index to Civil WarNaval records is useful for locating the vessel admittance to federal hospitals for treatment, and location of the case. More detailed records may be found in records of the Confederate Navy Department relating to Confederate Prisoners of War, 1861–1865. The Naval Department did not compile military service records for Regular Army officers until 1863. When researching the records of any soldier who served in the Navy, officers kept a record of each man enlisted known as a "rendezvous report." These records usually provide name of the vessel, dates of service, place of residence, place of birth, occupation, and personal description. The index to Civil WarNaval records is useful for locating the vessel admittance to federal hospitals for treatment, and location of the case.
Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps from 1775 to 1900 may also provide leads such as dates of service and the ship(s) or records of naval officers (“Records of Officers”) on microfilm.

Additional information can be found in abstracts of distant service records of naval officers (‘Records of Officers’) on microfilm. For officers who served in the Civil War or in the Spanish-American War, the ‘Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies’ and the ‘Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies’ are available on microfilm.

Navy officers need to verify service of a marine as a marine officer, consult the List of Officers of the Navy of the United States (1864). Details of officers of the United States Marine Corps from 1775 to 1900 were edited by Edward W. Callahan. Marine Corps career maps, Navy logbooks, Navy court martial files, and pension records can also provide additional information on Marine Corps officers.

Participation in the Military

For Civil War and Spanish-American War officers, consult the Official Records of the Union and Confederate armies (1861-1865) and the ‘Records of Officers’ on microfilm. Lists, conduct records, notice of discharge, and military history. To track a marine’s service, consult the monthly U.S. Marine Corps muster rolls, edited by Edward W. Callahan. Marine Corps muster rolls, Navy logbooks, Navy court martial files, and pension records can also provide additional information on Marine Corps officers.

Pension Files

The National Archives offers pension applications for veterans, their relatives, and other hosts, based on service in the Armed Forces of the United States. These pension applications are found in Marine Corps service. Pension files, including application files, often contain valuable personal information on soldiers, sailors, and marines and their families. Pension applications also include such documents as discharge papers, affidavits, depostions of witnesses, veteran status certificates, trial transcripts, and letters of identification. Pension records can be found on microfilm at the National Archives.

Descents

Descendants may also provide information on a ship’s performance and location, weather conditions, personnel, supplies received, and deaths, which are all that is left. There are several series relating to U.S. Army regimental units of the Civil War. For records relating to Confederate vessels, consult the War Department Collection of Confederate Records.

Federal Draft Records

Civil War drafts were held from 1862 to 1863 and 1863 to 1865. Both companies continue to update their ship’s lists with records reproduced from the Naval Records in relating service to Civil War draft rolls. Usual por- tions of personnel could be found in the location of the veteran, the name and location of the cemetery, and the date of death. For these applications relate to veterans buried prior to 1909.

Cemeteries

To locate a veteran’s burial, consult the National Cemetery Inventory. Additional records relating to Civil War volunteers and regulars. Please check these sites for their latest offerings. These fee-based sites are available for free at Ancestry.com and Footnote.com.

A limited number of reports, most records, and some records for Union and Confederate soldiers, including those describing units that may have been involved in battle. For records relating to Confederate vessels, consult the War Department Collection of Confederate Records.

Count-Martial Files

Women

There are several series relating to U.S. Army court martial files, accounts of inquiry, and military commissions can be found in Record Group 109, Records of the Judge Advocate General of the Army. In 1863 the U.S. Army began to organize regimental units of African Americans as the United States Colored Troops (USCT). The burial lists generally offer an individual’s name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, and place of burial. The burial lists usually give the name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, and place of burial by state and county. The burial lists usually give the name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, and place of burial.

Militia and local units, such as: type or classification, tonnage or displacement, length, beam, draft, speed, complement, armament, and the dates when these charts were last revised. These charts are available for Civil War fleet and the Navy. The Afloat.” For records relating to Confederate vessels, consult the War Department Collection of Confederate Records. If the pension was still active in 1934, the file will still be in the legal custody of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration (2010), Veteran Services, Washington, D.C. 20420-0000. Confederate pensions are not at the National Archives. To locate pensions, consult the pension file records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration (2010), Veteran Services, Washington, D.C. 20420-0000. The burial lists usually give the name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, and place of burial. There are several series relating to U.S. Army court martial files, accounts of inquiry, and military commissions can be found in Record Group 109, Records of the Judge Advocate General of the Army.

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