Civilians at War:
Records of Participation in U.S. Military Conflicts

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Since 1934, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has held in trust for the American people the permanently valuable records of the United States federal government.

This presentation discusses ways in which civilians supported a war or were directly affected by it, with a focus on the American Revolution to World War I. These wars provided opportunities for employment by civilian or military agencies to provide goods, services, or loans. Other individuals sought reimbursement after suffering property loss. We'll show examples of online records that document these relationships with the federal government (ca. 1776–1918) and Confederate States government (1861–1865).

This handout lists a selection of online records, related videos, and informational articles. "NAID" is the National Archives Identifier for the record in NARA's online Catalog.

Revolutionary War

Numbered Records
  STEP 1 – Search the Index:
  - NARA Microfilm Publication M847, *Special Index to Numbered Records in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1775–1783* (39 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/573203.

  STEP 2 – Find the records mentioned in the index:
  - References to "books" lead to NARA Microfilm Publication M853, *Numbered Books Concerning Military Operations and Service, Pay, and Settlement of Accounts, and Supplies in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records* (41 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/573203.
  - References to "manuscript number" lead to NARA Microfilm Publication M859, *Miscellaneous Numbered Records (the Manuscript File) in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, 1775–1790s* (125 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/573203.

Papers of the Continental Congress

STEP 1 – Search the Index:

John P. Butler, et al., comps., *Index: Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (5 vols., National Archives, 1978), online at catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000255716.

- *Search by personal name* for a quick focus on particular persons of interest.
- *Search by geographic location* to learn more about specific places affected by the war, even if your ancestor's name is not listed.
- *Search by military unit name* or by regimental or company commander's name.

STEP 2 – Find the record mentioned in the index:

Use the information given: (1) Microfilm Publication Number (M247, M332, M40, M61, M866); (2) roll number; (3) volume number; and (4) item number to get to the item of interest to you.

- NARA Microfilm Publication M247, *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (204 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/256300 and partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/1938489.
- NARA Microfilm Publication M332, *Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (10 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/573131 and partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/301686.
- NARA Microfilm Publication M40, *Domestic Letters of the Department of State, 1784–1906* (171 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/588868 and partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/568025.
- NARA Microfilm Publication M61, *Foreign Letters of the Continental Congress and the Department of State, 1785–1790* (1 roll), images partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/593313.
- NARA Microfilm Publication M866, *Records of the Constitutional Convention of 1787* (1 roll), images partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/301679.

War of 1812

Record Book of Joseph Edwards, Justice of the Peace, Niagara, Upper Canada, April 1812–January 1813 [and] Receipt Book of Major William Johnson, Inspector General's Office Headquarters, Fort George, Upper Canada, July–September 1813), online at archives.gov/id/158587783. Read more about it in the blog post at text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2020/03/24/some-americans-in-canada-the-record-book-of-joseph-edwards-niagara-upper-canada-april-1812-january-1813/.

Civil War (Union)

Civilian Inquiries

Requests for Information Relating to Missing Soldiers Which Were Received by Quartermaster James Moore, 1863–1867, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/606207, includes a small number of letters from Northern civilians seeking to learn the final burial place of a son or husband at Andersonville prison or elsewhere.

Claims

- Name Index to List of Claims Filed with the Office of U.S. Military Railroads, ca. 1864–1865, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/94417949.
- List of Claims Filed with the Office of U.S. Military Railroads, 1864–1866, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/148959243.
- Proceedings of the Claims Board Meeting at Cairo, Illinois, June–July 1862, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/66383424.

Provost Marshals

- Memoranda of Daily Transactions of Provost Marshals for the Second Congressional District, New Haven, Connecticut, 1863–1865, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/120149149.
- Register of Applicants for Provost Marshals, Surgeons, and Members of Boards of Enrollment, ca. 1863–1865, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/81114571.
- Register of Accounts Forwarded for Payment, October 1864–February 1866, Fifth District of Maine, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/74860188.

Surplus Government Property

List of Horses Sold, February 1864, at Frederick, Maryland, and Reading, Pennsylvania, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/68141923. Horses too worn out to continue in military service were sold to farmers and other buyers.

Presentation: *Teamsters, Laundresses, Nurses, Sutlers, and More* by Claire Kluskens

- Video at youtube.com/watch?v=wNHVipE5EqM
- Slides at archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2021-06-08-kluskens-presentation.pdf
- Handout at archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2021-06-08-kluskens-handout.pdf

Civil War (Confederate)

- Confederate Slave Payrolls, 1861–1865, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/719477. Partially indexed by name and location. Includes names of enslaved persons who worked on Confederate fortifications and at other military facilities and the names of the persons (usually owners) who provided them. State and county of residence is usually indicated.
- Record Books of Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Offices of the Confederate Government, 1861–1865 (informally known as the "Confederate Chapter Books"), images partially online at catalog.archives.gov/id/596501. Use search terms like employee, loan, and passport. Relatively few names are indexed.

- List of Subscribers to the Produce Loan Who Offered to Sell Cotton as Recorded by the Confederate Treasury Office in Jackson, Mississippi, September 1862, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/235113675. Five entries were made on index pages D, O, S, and W that indicate the person's name, post office, date of offer, and details concerning the offer, such as quantity, price, grade, location, and other information like William S. Ogilvie's comment that "the cotton is in danger."
- Register of Captured and Abandoned Property Relating Mostly to Cotton, June 1863–August 1865, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/12061383. Cotton bales and other property formerly belonging to Confederate sympathizers that were seized and sold by Union authorities.

Indian Wars

Register of Contracts with Civilian Surgeons, 1871–1885, online at catalog.archives.gov/id/143509448, lists civilian medical doctors working at U.S. military forts and posts.

World War I

NARA Microfilm Publication M1490, *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906–March 31, 1925* (2,740 rolls), online at familysearch.org/search/catalog/500311. Find more information at archives.gov/research/passport and catalog.archives.gov/id/583830. Includes form applications, supporting materials, and photographs (beginning Dec. 21, 1914). U.S. citizens who traveled to Europe during World War I to volunteer as ambulance drivers, and in other ways, can be found in these records.