



National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Selected Records Pertaining to Union Civil War Service in Organizations from the District of Columbia

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when military forces of the Confederate States of America—comprising the former states of the Deep and Upper South—fired on the U.S. military garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. The war was fought over the divisive issue of States rights—whether individual states could voluntarily dissolve their relationship with the federal Union—and centered specifically on the right of Southern states to perpetuate the institution of slavery. The Northern states waged the war initially to preserve the Union, assert the preeminence of a strong, centralized federal government, and eventually to abolish slavery. After four years of bloody warfare, Confederate forces under Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865.

Compiled Military Service Records (CMSRs)

In the 1890s, the Department of War used numerous sources, such as muster rolls, descriptive rolls, and pay rolls, to create compiled military service records. CMSRs generally show when a soldier joined a unit and if he was present when the unit was mustered.

Index

___M538, *Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the District of Columbia*. 3 rolls. Arranged alphabetically by the soldier's name.

Records

CMSRs for volunteer soldiers from the District of Columbia are in the process of being microfilmed. In order to request a CMSR for a volunteer soldier from a D.C. unit you should first examine the index found on M538, above, to find the soldier's unit. Then you should speak to a staff member in the Finding Aids Room for further assistance.

Pensions

A veteran's pension file can include his rank, place of residence, age or date of birth, and time of service. A widow's application can also include her place of residence, her maiden name, the date and place of marriage, the date and place of her husband's death, and the names of children under 16. A child's or heir's file contains information about both the veteran and the widow, as well as the child's place of residence, date of birth, and the date and place of the widow's death.

___T288, *General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934*. 544 rolls. Arranged alphabetically by soldier's surname.

___T289, *Organization Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*. 765 rolls. Arranged alphabetically by state or territory, then by type of unit (cavalry, artillery, or infantry), followed by militia, reserves, sharpshooters, and other organizations, and finally alphabetical by name. Civil War units from the District of Columbia are on rolls 23 and 24.

___A1158, *Numerical Index to Pensions, 1860–1934*. 359 rolls. Arranged numerically; this index is useful when trying to decipher unclear numbers on T288 or T289. The cards give the name of the veteran or dependant who had the number as an application number or as a certificate number. Each number could be used four times for four different people. For application or original numbers, the card also shows the certificate number.

Pension Payment Cards

___M850, *Veterans Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907–1933*. 2,539 rolls. DP. Arranged alphabetically by the soldier's or widow's surname. This series records payments to pensioners from 1907 to 1933, except for World War I veterans. Each card includes the pension certificate number.

Record of Events

The records contain card abstracts with information relating to the stations, movements, or activities of each unit, and sometimes their organization, strength and losses, and disbandment.

___M594, *Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations*. 225 rolls. DP. Arranged alphabetically by state or territory, then by type of unit (cavalry, artillery, or infantry), followed by militia, reserves, sharpshooters, and other organizations. Civil War units from the District of Columbia are on roll 10. This information is also available in book form; see the next entry for more information.

___*Supplement to the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies. Part II—Records of Events*. Volume 5 contains information pertaining to Civil War units from the District of Columbia. This published volume includes the same information as that on microfilm publication M594, shown above. It is available in the Archives Library Information Center (ALIC) in the National Archives Building.

Rev. December 2010