



National Archives and Records Administration

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U.S. Military Post Returns, 1800–1916

The Adjutant General's Office (AGO) required commanding officers of every post, department, division, brigade, regiment, or detachment to submit a monthly return. The records date from the early 1800s to 1916, and include a small number of 1917 returns. The returns generally cover the period of the post's official existence. There are gaps if the records did not survive or if the post was ungarrisoned. Along with forts in the continental United States, there are also records for Alaska, the Canal Zone, Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippine Islands, and Puerto Rico.

___M617, *Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800–1916*. 1,550 rolls. DP. The Record and Pension Office of the War Department used the returns when it compiled service records of Civil War veterans. After the clerks abstracted the information from the returns, they stamped the return "carded." If no information was used from a return, it was stamped "not carded."

Information in the Returns

The officers submitted form reports that usually listed the following information:

- The units stationed at a post
- The strength of the units
- The names and duties of the officers
- The number of officers present and absent
- Official communications
- Records of events at the post

The returns may also include morning reports, field returns, rosters of officers, and related papers that the AGO added as supplementary information or as a substitution for missing post returns. The related papers describe wars and skirmishes with Native Americans; provide historical information about the post, including details about the establishment and abandonment of the post; and lists of the officers and commanders.

Arrangement of the Reports

On rolls 1–1,491, the records are arranged alphabetically by the name of the post and then in chronological order. There was no standard practice for dealing with names such as D.A. Russell or George A. Meade; the post returns may be filed by the first name, last name, or initial. In cases where the post returns totaled less than 20 pages, the National Archives filed the records in a second alphabetical sequence that begins with roll 1,492.

When the name of a post changed, the AGO usually consolidated the files under the new name. In some cases, the AGO filed earlier returns under the old name and later returns under the new name. Returns for some posts, such as the multiple installations at Manila, were filed under the name of the city. For a list of cross-referenced names, consult the descriptive pamphlet (pages 3–10).

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