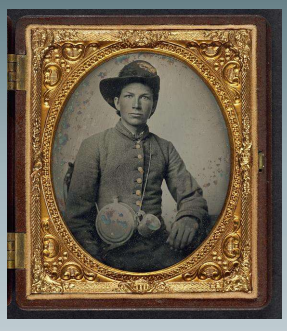


Researching Your Civil War Soldier

MID-CONTINENT PUBLIC LIBRARY | MIDWEST GENEALOGY CENTER

Civil War: 1861-1865

Preliminary Research

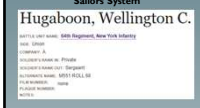
- Ancestor's age
- Residence and relatives in 1860 US Federal Census
- Death date/place

Beginning Your Research

- Service Information
- Regimental histories/timelines
- Battle descriptions
- POW Records
- Cemetery Records

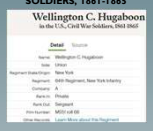
Another alternative for searching indexes:
militaryindexes.com/civilwar

NPS Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System



MyHeritage LE: US CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS, 1861-1865

Ancestry LE: US CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS, 1861-1865



FamilySearch: UNITED STATES CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS INDEX 1861-1865

Clues in Old Photographs

- Officially, Union Blue & Confederate Gray, but this was inconsistently followed
- Look for:
  - Trouser color – Volunteers issued lighter trousers
  - Stripes on trousers – red/artillery, yellow/cavalry
  - Trim & style of kepi (hats) and jackets – Artillerymen (both sides) wore red kepi and shell jackets; cavalry trim was yellow
  - Insignia indicating division or rank – ex. chevrons/sergeant – on kepi and jackets

Uniforms of the Civil War: An Illustrated Guide for Historians, Collectors, and Reenactors by Robin Smith & Ron Field

Naming Conventions

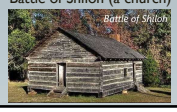
Unit Names

- Union – numbered
  - 2nd Illinois Infantry, Company B
- Confederate – numbered or named
  - 1st Texas Infantry - Company L - The Lone Star Rifles
- State Militia – numbered or named
  - 1st MO State Guard, Benton County State Guards, The Missouri Tigers

Battles

- Union – natural objects
- Battle of Pittsburg Landing (nature)

Confederate – town, man-made
Battle of Shiloh (a church)

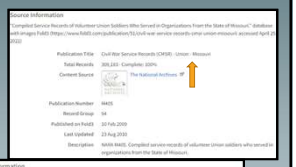


Fold3

- Compiled Service Records for Union & Confederate Soldiers – original papers, rolls, prison registers, etc.
- Veterans' and Widows' Pension documents
- DC Emancipation and Court Slave Records
- Battle Information and Regimental Histories

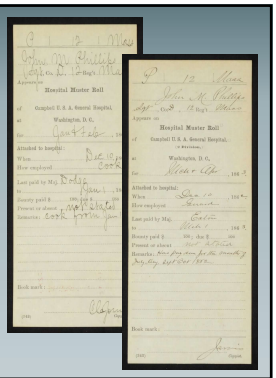
Search for records by name or select CIVIL WAR → "More about the Civil War" → "Soldier Service Records" to search a specific record set

Noteworthy Information



Compiled Military Service Records

- **Volunteer** soldiers only
- Envelope/jacket containing cards and documents detailing the soldier's military career
- Cards may include enlistment & discharge dates, payroll, injuries, hospitalizations, POW info
- Index on NPS Soldiers & Sailors System, MyHeritage LE, Ancestry LE, and FamilySearch
- Some records on Fold3, request others from NARA



Union Soldiers

- Most Union Army soldiers were volunteers
  - Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR)
  - Pension Files
  - M594, *Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations*
- Regular Army - Enlisted men
  - M233, *Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798 – 1914* (Fold3, Ancestry, FamilySearch)
- Published resources!

Confederate Soldiers

- Three major record sets
  - Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR)
  - M861, *Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Confederate Organizations*
  - M258, *Compiled Service Records of the Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations Raised Directly by the Confederate Government*
- Ancestry and MyHeritage – *Confederate Service Records, 1861 – 1865*
- Published resources!

U.S. Colored Troops (USCT)

- Approx. 186,000 African Americans served in the Civil War
- State militia units preceded the USCT (1863)
- Ancestry - "U.S. Colored Troops Military Service Records 1863 - 1865"
- Check NARA, FamilySearch Research Wiki "U.S. Colored Troops in the Civil War" for microfilmed CSMP availability

Native American and Foreign-Born Soldiers

UNION	
NATIVE AMERICANS	Delaware, Creek, Cherokee, Seminole, Kickapoo, Seneca, Osage, Choctaw +
FOREIGN-BORN	Germans, Irish, Canadians, English +

CONFEDERACY	
NATIVE AMERICANS	Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, Catawba, and Creek
FOREIGN-BORN	Irish, Germans, British, French, Poles, Canadian, Mexican

Pension Records

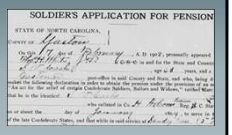
Confederate veterans – *state pensions only*

- Held by state archives, historical societies, record centers
- See NARA list of state holdings/repositories

Union applications

- Veteran – personal info, details of service
- Widow – personal info, spouse's service/death, children
- Heir – personal info, parents' deaths

- Indexes available online, some Widow's Pension records on Fold3 (incomplete), request files from NARA/VA


SOLDIER'S APPLICATION FOR PENSION

Garfield, James A.

Sailors

Union Navy

- Service – Dates of service, ship/vessel
- Pension – Records that document service and relationships
- "Navy Survivors' Certificates" (M1469) and "Navy Widows' Certificates" (M1279) – on Fold3

Confederate Navy

- Service – Few surviving records, generally poor condition
- Pension – State issued, no federal records
- Research tips – "Civil War and Later Navy Personnel Records at the National Archives, 1861 – 1924" by Lee Bacon

1890 Veterans Schedule

Special Schedule.—Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows, etc.

- 1890 special census of Union veterans and their widows
- Intended for Union veterans, but Confederate veterans often included (sometimes crossed out)
- Information gathered included:
  - Names of surviving soldiers, sailors, marines, and widows
  - Rank, name of regiment/vessel
  - Dates of enlistment, discharge, and/or length of service
  - Miscellaneous - post office address, disability incurred, etc.

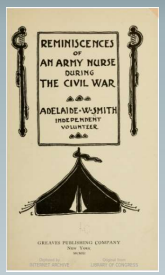
Other Military Records

- Provost Marshal reports
- U.S. & State Adjutant General reports
- Regimental/unit histories
- Veterans' Services
  - Homes for Disabled Vol. Soldiers
  - Veterans' or Old Soldiers' Homes

Related Records

- Cemeteries/burials
  - VA's National Gravesite Locator
  - Cyndi's List – Cemeteries/Military
  - NARA M1845, *Card Records of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans*
- Veterans' Organizations & Lineage Societies
- Structure of the Civil War Army
  - North Carolina Museum of History's Organization and Rank (article)

Traditional Genealogy Gems



- County Histories
  - Digital State Archives & Internet Archive
- Other Published Resources
  - Diaries and Memoirs
  - *War of the Rebellion - A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*
- Newspapers – *ChroniclingAmerica*
  - Library of Congress online database

Online Essentials for Civil War Research

- Family Tree Magazine Civil War Genealogy Toolkit
- Joe Beine's Military Indexes for the Civil War
- Civil War pages on NARA, Cyndi's List, and the FamilySearch Research Wiki
- MGC's Military Records on Microform →

CIVIL WAR

Official Records of the **Union and Confederate** Armies, 1861-1865 (Index is on roll #128)
*Also on AncestryLE

Film Cabinets 30- 31
M262

(Virtual) Road Trip?

- State and Local Historical & Genealogical Societies
- Battlefield and Heritage Sites
  - American Battlefield Trust Links + "LEARN" resources
- Museums, Monuments, & Memorials
  - Wikipedia - State Civil War Museums
- On-site and Online Collections

Civil War Research & "The Fab 4"

DATABASE	FEATURED RECORD SET
Ancestry*	"U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861 – 1934"
FindMyPast*	"Civil War Soldiers, 1861 – 1865"
MyHeritage*	"U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861 – 1865"
FamilySearch	"NARA to FHL film conversion"
* Library editions or paid/subscription editions	

U.S. History Databases at MGC

MidwestGenealogyCenter.org

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RESOURCES (navigation bar)

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"Browse Resources"

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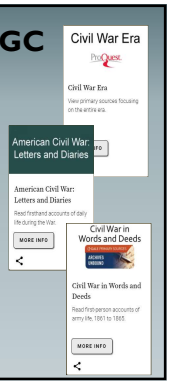
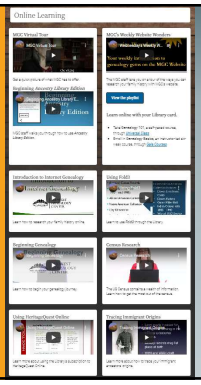
U.S. History Databases



MIDWESTGENEALOGYCENTER.ORG

GET STARTED → ONLINE LEARNING



MGC Online Classes

- Beginning Ancestry Library Edition
- Beginning Genealogy
- Census Records Research
- Introduction to Internet Genealogy
- Tracing Immigrant Origins
- Using Fold3
- Using HeritageQuest Online
- Weekly Website Wonders

MID-CONTINENT PUBLIC LIBRARY | MIDWEST GENEALOGY CENTER

www.midwestgenealogycenter.org

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