

Researching Your Civil War Ancestors

*War of Secession, War of North Aggression,
War Between the States, War for Southern Independence*

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Knowledge of History, Military History, and Military Operations

To successfully research an ancestor who provided military service to this country, it is important to understand the historical and political context of the military action, how the military operates in general as well as how it operated specifically during the time period being researched, and what is the potential pool of records and record types. This is particularly true for anyone researching War Between the States Ancestors.

Basic Types of "War Between the States" Military Records

- Service Records
- Pension Records
- Military Histories
- Claim Records
- Letters and Diaries
- Government Documents
- Military Organization Records and Reunion Annuals & Publications

Sources for Gathering Military Data

- Home Sources
- Obituaries
- Tombstones
- Federal Enumerations
 - 1910, column 30: "Whether a Survivor of the Union or Confederate Army or Navy"
 - 1890 Special Enumeration of Union Veterans & Their Widows. Only schedules from 2nd alpha half of KY counties through WY exist.
- State and Local Enumerations
 - Some states, counties, and townships took enumerations of veterans living in their respective jurisdictions.
- County Histories from the late 1800s to early 1900s & beyond
- Graves Registration Cards
- Rosters and Muster Rolls
- Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System <www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss>

Information Gathering Sources/Strategies

- Local Public Libraries
- Local Historical Societies and Local Genealogical Societies
- State Libraries
- State Historical Societies and State Genealogical Societies

- ☛ State Archives
- ☛ National Archives
- ☛ Major National Libraries: Library of Congress, Family History Library, Allen County Public Library, NSDAR Library, Mid-Continent Public Library (MO), Clayton Library (TX), etc.

Organizations for Descendants of the War Between the States

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War—<www.suvcw.org>

Largest GAR and SUV source on the Internet.

SUVCW Graves Registration Database—<www.suvcwdb.org>

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the U.S.—<www.suvcw.org/mollus/mollus.htm>

Daughters of Union Veterans—<www.duvcw.org>

Recently updated list of links and resources

Sons of Confederate Veterans—<www.scv.org>

SCV Graves Registration Database—<cgr.scv.org>

United Daughters of the Confederacy—<www.hqudc.org>

Society of Civil War Surgeons—<www.civilwarsurgeons.org>

Selected Bibliography—Legacy Works of Consequence

Beers, Henry Putney. *The Confederacy: A Guide to the Archives of the Confederate States of America*. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 198-. 536p. Appendix. Index.

A very descriptive listing of major Confederate documents. It is one of the best guides to the official archives of the government of the Confederate States of America. The majority of materials in this work cover records and sources held by the National Archives, although mention of important works in other repositories and institutions is made.

Beers, Henry Putney and Kenneth W. Munden. *The Union: A Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War*. Washington DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986. 721p. Appendix. Index.

A fairly extensive work listing official United States federal government records, with rather extensive commentary, as they pertain to the Civil War. The included works are arranged by issuing federal agency. The appendix, which is a list of record groups containing materials relating to the Civil War, and the index provide the user with quicker access to the text of this work.

Broadfoot, Tom and Marianne Pair. *Civil War Books: A Priced Checklist*. Wendell, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1983. 2nd ed. 338p.

While this book appears to have an antiquarian slant, it is useful for the researcher who is looking to broaden the list of publications available for filling out the details, the military-life narrative, of a potential ancestor. The materials included are arranged by the following categories: (1) general books, (2) U. S. government publications, (3) regimental and state interest, (4) official confederate imprints, and (5) unofficial confederate imprints. Many varying aspects of life during the Civil War are covered.

Civil War Unit Histories -- The Confederate State of America and Border States: Regimental Histories and Personal Narratives. Bethesda, MD: University Pubs. of America, 1990-94.

The materials included in this microfiche publication have been collected from a large number of institutions, and whenever possible the original edition of each publication was filmed for this work. The works range from roster and official lists to personal recollections and reminiscences. They are essential resources to not only local one's ancestor but also to fill in the pages of the family history that recount what life was like as a member of a given unit.

Confederate POWs Soldiers and Sailors Who Died in Federal Prisons & Military Hospitals in the North. St. Louis, MO: Ingmire Publications, 1984. 525p.

The name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, and the locality of the grave are provided in this work.

Dornbusch, C. E. *Military Bibliography of the Civil War*. New York: The New York Public Library, 1961-1972. Vol. 1-3. Dayton, OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1987. Vol. 4.

This four volume compilation is the definitive work of military writing on the Civil War. Its arrangement mirrors a traditional library and card catalog--its comprehensiveness makes it a "must consult" source when endeavoring to find materials about a particular Civil War regiment or veteran. Volume one contains listings for the northern states; volume two covers the southern, border, and western states and territories; volume three lists general references including campaign and battle accounts; and volume four focuses on union and confederate biographies, personal narratives, and materials not listed in the first three volumes.

Dyer, Frederick H. *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959. 3 vols.

This is one of the most valuable and authoritative encyclopedic works on the Union involvement in the Civil War. For the researcher looking for basic unit and regimental data upon which to base subsequent research, these volumes are essential. Volume one details the number and organizations of the armies involved in the War between the States. Volume two provides a chronology of the campaigns, battle, engagements, actions, etc. in the United States during the war. Volume three contains a complete, capsulated history of every unit and regiment. Parts of Dyer's can be found online at the United States Military History Institute at <carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/DL/chron.htm#ACivilWar18611865>.

Estes, Claud. *List of Field Officers, Regiments and Battalions in the Confederate States Army, 1861-1865*. 213p.

The alphabetical list of confederate field officers in the first section provides the researcher with the appropriate regiment affiliation while the second section of the work provides one with a listing of Confederate regiments and battalions by state.

Evans, Clement A., ed. *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate State History, in Seventeen Volumes, Written by Distinguished Men of the South*. Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1987. 17 vols.

An outstanding compilation of records, these volumes contain detailed information on military engagements, maps, showing battlefields in the various southern states, and significant biographical sections. The index volumes provide battle synonyms and military organizations by local designations as well as personal name and subject references.

Neagles, James C. *Confederate Research Sources: A Guide to Archive Collection*. Salt Lake City,

UT: Ancestry Publishing Company, 1986. 286p. Bibliography. Index.

Finding date on Confederate veterans can present a challenge with a significant amount of materials not being located in a central repository such as the Union veteran data in the National Archives. This book presents a clear approach to locating Confederate records in federal, state, and local archives.

Neagles, James C. *U. S. Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources, Colonial America to the Present*. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, Inc., 1994. 441p.

This monographic work is an excellent source for any researcher conducting an investigation in a military records and sources. Arranged by general section and then by state, this publication is filled with document descriptions, outstanding bibliographies, and addresses with telephone numbers of national and state record repositories. A must use for the Civil War researcher.

Nevins, Allan, James I. Robertson, Jr., and Bell I. Wiley, eds. *Civil War Books: A Critical Bibliography*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967. 2 vols. Index.

The contents of the first volume are broken into: (1) the military aspects of the war, (2) prisons and prisoners of war, (3) the Negro, (4) the navies, and (5) the aspects of diplomacy. Volume Two covers the following: (1) general works, (2) biographies, memoirs, and collected works, (3) the Union, and (4) the Confederacy. The very brief annotations provide the researcher with some assistance in determining which source might be the appropriate one to use.

North & South: The Official Magazine of the Civil War Society. Tollhouse, CA: North and South Magazine, Inc., 1997-.

Official magazine of the Civil War Society. Contains much information on the individuals, battles, campaign, strategies and activities of the Civil War. Many contributions to the publication are founded on current historical work.

Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force of the United States Army for the Years 1861, '62, '63, '64, '65. Washington, DC: Adjutant General's Office, 1865-1867. 8 vols.

This compilation provides one with a list of officers involved in the volunteer forces of the Union Army. The arrangement is by state, and within each state by unit. As is typical of adjutant general's reports, the information provided includes a brief historical note on each unit, list of officers, muster date, casualties, resignations, discharges, promotions, and deaths. Notes are typically given for those who died briefly indicating circumstances.

Sellers, John R. ***Civil War Manuscripts: A Guide to Collections in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.*** Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1986. 391p. Index.

This is an important work because it provides the researcher with access to unpublished materials that are among the holdings of our nation's most significant historical repositories. To get the true flavor of any historical event, particularly ones as consequential as the Civil War, it is necessary to look at actual documents and photographs produced at the time the events were happening.

United Daughters of the Confederacy Magazine. Richmond, VA: United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1937-.

This publication is akin in format to the Daughters of the American Revolution Monthly Magazine. There are a wide range of articles from editorials on current and historical events to lists of programs and feature presentations. It can be a valuable source for gathering leads to other materials and Confederate resources.

War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1900. 128 vols. [See online version below.]

This massive set contains the official military reports and communiqués for the Civil War. A significant percentage of the material deals with officer commands, troop movements, and official reports of battles and engagements. In 1901, an index to the set was published by the Government Printing Office. There are a number of folios of colored maps showing the troop strengths and movements for the major battles of the war provided as supplements. A companion set, though much smaller, was compiled for the Union and Confederate Navies. Some texts of these volumes are also available online without cost at: <www.ehistory.com/uscw/library/or/index.cfm>. The online search feature is most useful for quickly identifying individuals and units.

Wright, John H. ***Compendium of the Confederacy: An Annotated Bibliography.*** Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1989. 2 vols.

This work represents one of the most definitive bibliographies on Confederate writings. It covers not only monographs but pamphlets and serials as well. This compendium has not limitations as to subject area and, hence, will include civilian related topics, politics, as well as the fiction and literature of the Confederate States of America. Materials in this work are arranged by author with a rather extensive subject index in the back of the work to enhance access to the information.

Finding Cataloged & Online Materials

WorldCat

<www.WorldCat.org>

Largest national bibliographic database in the world—more than 1.5 billion items in more than 12,000 institutions worldwide. Best source for quickly finding cataloged resources in libraries and other institutions around the world.

National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections

<www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>

Good source for finding Civil War era manuscript such as letters, diaries, family papers, GAR records, military reunion records, etc.

Catalog of U.S. Government Publications

<catalog.gpo.gov>

The United States federal government is the largest publisher in the world. A sizeable number of its publications relate to military activities, particularly the War Between the States. Though challenging to use, it is worth a researcher's time to explore the online catalog to government publications.

Links to State Archives & State Libraries

<www.statearchivists.org/states.htm>

<lists.webjunction.org/libweb/usa-state.html>

State Archives and State Libraries maintain homepages that are increasingly important to genealogists in their research. Each may contain significant searchable data files as well as research tips and guides. The researcher seeking information and searchable data files for the War Between the States will frequent these sites often. The Library of Virginia and the Illinois State Archives pages are two fine examples.

Link to State Historical Societies

<www.stenseth.org/us/statehs.html>

Many state historical societies have impressive collections of Civil War letter, diaries, writings, photographs, pamphlets, and other unique publications. They also typically have good finding aids and research guides.

American Memory (Library of Congress)

<memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html>

This Library of Congress website contains an extraordinary amount of digitized data for the War Between the States. Included among its collections are Civil War Images from the New York Historical Society, Civil War Maps (containing circa 2200 maps and charts, and 76 atlases and sketchbooks held in the Library's Geography and Maps Division), Horatio Nelson Taft Diary (about the Civil War in the Washington, DC area), and the Civil War photographs of Matthew B. Brady (circa 1200 photographs). One can also portal to the Library of Congress online catalog containing descriptions of materials in its internationally recognized history divisions.

Documenting the American South

<docsouth.unc.edu>

Documenting the American South is a digitized collection of primary materials that offer Southern perspectives on American history and culture. A major component of this collection is "The Southern Homefront" during the war years.

U.S. Army Military History Institute

<www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec>

A great and growing collection of photographs and original documents as well as published materials relating to our country's military history. One can find consequential amounts of Civil War materials in looking through their various catalogs: research, finding aids, manuscripts, photographs, etc.

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System

<www.civilwar.nps.gov/cwss>

The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System is a computerized database containing very basic facts about servicemen who served on both sides during the Civil War; a list of regiments in both the Union & Confederate Armies; identifications & descriptions of 384 significant battles of the war; references that identify the sources of the information in the database; & suggestions for where to find additional information. Additional information about the men, regiments, cemeteries, medal of honor recipients & battles, as well as prisoner-of-war records & cemetery records, will be added over time.

The American Civil War Homepage

<sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war>

The American Civil War Homepage gathers together in one place hypertext links to the most useful identified electronic files about the American Civil War (1861-1865). The page opens a gateway to the Internet's multi-formatted resources about what is arguably the seminal event in American history.

CivilWar.com

A popular website with numerous Civil War links including battles, resources, and weapons as well as a discussion board, an interactive map, and other records.

Shotgun's Home of the American Civil War

<www.civilwarhome.com>

An extensive collection of links to Civil War sites and online materials. Main part of the site divided into battles, biographies, medicine, compiled works, letters, naval activities, discussions, etc.

The United States Civil War Center (Louisiana State University)

<www.cwc.lsu.edu/>

An example of a great university site that provides a tremendous amount of data about the War Between the States as well as a significant number of links to other relevant sites. Many sites of tremendous detail are linked from the site. Of particular note is the list of manuscript resources for the Civil War.

USGenWeb Archives Civil War Pensions Project

<usgwarchives.net/pensions/civilwar/index.htm>

This is an ongoing project to provide online transcriptions of Civil War pension files or access to such works. The current results are modest compared to the number of individuals who actually filed for and received pensions.

The Civil War Message Board Portal

<history-sites.com/>

The site to visit to find the largest, organized collection of messages relative to Civil War activities and Civil War veterans.

The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion for Union and Confederation Armies & Navies

The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. <digital.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/waro.html>

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion.

<digital.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/ofre.html>

ACPL Genealogy Center's Our Military Heritage—Civil War Section

<www.genealogycenter.info/military/civilwar/index.php>

Growing collection of databases and digitized images relating to the War Between the States.

Internet Archive's Growing Collection of Digital Works—Civil War Materials

<www.archive.org>

Through its many library partners, the Internet Archive is digitizing and presenting on the web for free fully searchable and downloadable works. The digitized works can be downloaded in a number of formats or read online. Currently more than 5200 works are available.

Google It!

Cyndi's List: U. S. Civil War/War for Southern Independence

<www.CyndisList.com/cw.htm>

Cyndi's List can be a "jumping off point" for War Between the States web sites. Many of the links currently found in Cyndi's List are not valid links—they have not been updated in a number of years. To find the updated link, simply paste the title of the link found in Cyndi's List into Google and search for it there.