

Researching Civil War Ancestors

Class 1: Service Records

David Allen Lambert, NEHGS Chief Genealogist, dalambert@nehgs.org

How the Civil War may have affected your ancestor

1. Economy
2. Employment
3. Divided the allegiance of their family
4. Destroyed their livelihoods
5. Loss of family members and friends

Step #1 – Determine if he fought

1. 1860 U.S. Census
2. Does your ancestor “fit the description”?
 - Male, in good health
 - Draft registration
 - How old was he in 1861?
 - Average age 18-30
 - Most soldiers born 1790 to 1850
 - Good teeth for the infantry?
 - If on the young side, did his father enlist?
4. Treasures in the attic
5. Graveside hints – G.A.R. or Confederate flags; veteran plots; military gravestones
6. Probate and Deeds for your veteran
7. City Directories
8. Local State sources
 - State Archives holdings
 - Published compilations of veterans
 - Adjutant General reports
 - G.A.R. Membership lists
9. Census Clues

FEDERAL CENSUS	STATE CENSUS (depends on state)
– 1890: special schedule	– Three enumerated in 1865
– 1910: veteran question	– Loss/absence of fighting age men
– 1930: veteran question	– Special veteran status questions

Step #2 – Learn about your Ancestor’s service

1. Using the National Parks Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database:
<http://nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
2. Ordering original service records: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records#nwctb-list>
3. Original records and indexes overview: Fold3.com; Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org
4. Other resources
 - Town histories
 - County histories
 - College year books or alumni registers
 - Statewide compilations of veterans

TIP: Consider family members who served (brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins, etc.)

What to Learn

- What battles did your ancestor’s regiment participate in?
- Who were the commanding officers?
- Adopt the company for deeper research

Step #3 – Determine whether your ancestor was killed or wounded

- Published sources.
- Newspapers
- Death registers
- Discharge papers
- Pension files
- Gravestone inscriptions
- 1890 U.S. Census Special Schedule

Bibliography of Websites

Federal Census of 1890, 1910, 1930 www.ancestry.com

NPS Civil War Soldiers System <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>

Order Union Service records (NARA)

<https://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records#nwctb-list>

Fold3.com – Confederate Army Service Records and Indexes

[https://www.fold3.com/browse?military.conflict=Civil+War+\(Confederate\)](https://www.fold3.com/browse?military.conflict=Civil+War+(Confederate))

Fold3.com – Union Army Service Records and Indexes

[https://www.fold3.com/browse?military.conflict=Civil+War+\(Union\)](https://www.fold3.com/browse?military.conflict=Civil+War+(Union))

Ancestry.com – U.S., Army Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1198/>

FamilySearch.org – United States Naval Enlistment Rendezvous, 1855-1891

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1825347>

Ancestry.com – U.S., Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1958

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1089/>

FamilySearch.org – Confederate Naval and Marine personnel records

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/103087>

Archive.org – To search for Union and Confederate Regimental Histories

Ancestry.com - U.S., Civil War Roll of Honor, 1861-1865

<https://search.ancestry.com/search/collections/61388>

Findagrave.com – Search for Union and Confederate gravestones in National Cemeteries

<https://www.findagrave.com/>