

Navigating our Nation's Federal Records

Military and Pension Files

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The military records at the National Archives detail service given between 1775 and 1912.

Revolutionary War

Service Records and Muster Rolls

Revolutionary War Service Records:

<https://www.fold3.com/publication/470/revolutionary-war-service-records>

Revolutionary War Muster Rolls: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/469/revolutionary-war-rolls>

Going from Published Accounts to Muster Rolls

Revolutionary War Service Records (Navy):

<https://www.fold3.com/publication/789/revolutionary-war-service-records-navy>

Pensions

Pension Timeline 1776-1906

Revolutionary War Pensions: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/467/revolutionary-war-pensions>

Index for Final Payment Vouchers 1818-1864: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/654/final-payment-vouchers-index-for-military-pensions-1818-1864>

War of 1812

Service Records

War of 1812 Compiled Military Service Records are contained in NARA M602 part of Record Group (RG 94) Records of the Adjutant's General's Office. These are available from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

- Compiled primarily from Federal and State Muster Rolls.
- Pay orders and pay vouchers.
- Misc. Federal & State military documents.
- Contains the name, rank and unit for the veteran.

United States War of 1812 Index to Service Records, 1812-1815:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1916219>

Tip: *Check for multiple enlistments for your veterans*

U.S. Navy NARA RG 45: Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1775-1910.

- Muster Rolls and Payrolls of Vessels 1779-1885.
- Muster Rolls and Payrolls of Shore Establishments of the U.S. Navy, 1800-1842.

Logbooks of the U.S. Navy at the National Archives. These logbooks can vary from having very simple entries for the Navy veteran. The details for individuals will vary in each logbook.

- Documentation of Disciplinary hearings
- Sick lists
- Occasional injuries
- Use of daily rations, etc.

For a complete description of available logbooks by vessel:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/logbooks/navy>

U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1958: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1089/>

Pensions

War of 1812 Pensions were authorized by Acts of Congress in 1871 and 1878

- A veteran could qualify with service of 14 days or service in any engagement or battle
- Hiram Cronk was the last soldier to receive a pension until 1905
- Lydia Ann (Kimble) Graham was the last widow to receive a pension until 1936

War of 1812 Pensions NARA M313 at the National Archives and on Fold3.com for Free:

<https://www.fold3.com/publication/761/war-of-1812-pension-files>

- Application of veteran or widow
- Proof of service
- Affidavits relating to claim
- Correspondence from veteran
- Receipts and often death certificates

Tip: *Look for pensions of fellow soldiers of your ancestors*

Civil War

Union Service Records

A free database of Union and Confederate Soldiers and Sailors can be accessed from the National Parks Service online at: <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>

Union Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) are available partially online from Fold3.com for some states. Otherwise ordering these records from the National Archives using the NATF-86 Form: <https://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records.html>

You can also request a form be mailed to you by emailing NARA at: inquire@arch2.nara.gov

Pensions

The National Archives has two different indexes which are available online for Civil War Pensions.

T288: The alphabetical index by name of the soldier on Ancestry:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4654/>

T289: The organizational index by unit the soldier served in on Fold3:

<https://www.fold3.com/publication/57/civil-war-pensions-index>

Civil War pensions are available under the following types:

- Invalid Pension
- Widows Pension
- Remarried Widow's Pension
- Mother or Father's Pension
- Minor Child or Sibling

Union Civil War Pensions are available partially online from Fold3.com for some of the earliest pensions and for widows ca. 1861-1862 on Fold3.com currently. Otherwise ordering these records from the National Archives using the NATF-85 Form:

<https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe>

A Union Civil War pension file generally will consist of the following papers and documents:

- Declaration for pension and pension application
- Certificate of disability
- Surgeon's certificate with disability description (form and sketch)
- Questionnaires (Form 3-447 used before 1902; Form 3-389; widow questionnaire)
- Affidavits (for and against the pensioner)
- Correspondence
- Bills and receipts

Tips When visiting the National Archives in Washington, D.C. to view original pensions:

- Copy all application and certificate numbers carefully on your slips.
- Turn in slips on a regular basis if you have many requests.
- COPY THE ENTIRE FILE!! – sort later
- Don't forget the wrappers sheets

Making sense of the paperwork you copied or receive from NARA:

- Sort copies out in chronological order
- Make sure front and back is together
- Make another set of your copies and work with the original set only when needed

U.S. Navy Survivors Certificates: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/120/navy-survivors-certificates>

U.S. Navy Widows Certificates: <https://www.fold3.com/publication/120/navy-widows-certificates>

Confederate Service Records: The index to military service records for the Confederate States can be search on the National Parks Civil War Soldiers System and by state from FamilySearch.org.

Confederate Service records are currently online from both Ancestry and Fold3.com

Confederate Pension Records are not located at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The records are maintained and preserved at various state archives. A comprehensive list of all locations of Confederate Pensions can be found online at: www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/confederate/pension.html Some states have digitized these pensions which are available online.

WWI (World War I)

WWI Draft Registration

Many individuals attribute the service of their ancestor in WWI by the fact they registered for one of the drafts registrations which occurred between 1917 and 1918. Using the Federal U.S. Census of 1930 will indicate whether your ancestor served in WWI by examining questions # 30 and # 31. They asked "Whether a veteran of the U.S. military or naval forces mobilized for any war or expedition" [Yes/No] and "What war or expedition" they served.

WWI Draft Registrations between June 5, 1917 and September 12, 1918:

- **First Registration** - June 5, 1917: For men aged 21 to 31 (born between June 6, 1886 and June 5, 1896).

- **Second Registration** - June 5, 1918: For men who had turned 21 since the previous registration (born between June 6, 1896 and June 5, 1897).
- **August 1918** - An additional registration was done for men who turned 21 that year.
- **Third Registration** - September 12, 1918: For men aged 18 to 21 and 31 to 45 (born between Sept 11, 1872 and Sept 12, 1900).

These WWI draft cards are available online from FamilySearch.org:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1968530>

Service Records

Due to the fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri many WWI personnel records were destroyed. Do inquire with St. Louis about the possibility of fragmentary "burnt files" that may exist for your ancestor.

The following records were destroyed at the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center:

- **U.S. Army** compiled personnel files for Enlisted men 1912-1960 and Officers 1917-1960: Compiled service folders
- **U.S. Air Force** compiled service folders 1947-1964

Tip: *Contact your local Adjutant General's Office for WWI discharge and partial service records.*

The following did survive the National Personnel Records Center fire in 1973:

- **U.S. Navy** Officers after 1902 and enlisted men after 1885
- **U.S. Marine** Officers after 1895 and enlisted men after 1904

To learn more about U.S. Naval fighting ships since the Revolutionary War era to present:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs.html>

U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1958: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1089/>

U.S. Merchant Marines Records – NARA RG 41. This series at the National Archives includes:

- Merchant seaman lost in WWI, 1914-19
- Recruit enrollment & application 1918-1921
- Applications to serve on Merchants Ships 1918-19
- Seamen's Protection Certificates, 1918-1919
- Merchant Marine Logbooks (RG 26 – Coast Guard)

U.S. Merchant Marine Applications for License of Offices, 1914-1949:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60629/>

U.S. Coast Guard Records – NARA RG 26. This series at the National Archives includes:

- Muster Rolls, 1833-1932

- Honorable Discharges, 1917-1919
- Personnel and Pay cards, 1917-1921
- Officer personnel files, 1915-1929
- Vessel logbooks, 1915-1947
- Casualty and wreck reports, 1913-1936

WWII (World War II)

WWII Draft Registration

WWII Draft Registrations between October 16, 1940 and December 31, 1943:

- **1st Draft** – Oct. 16, 1940: Men born between Oct. 17, 1904 and Oct. 16, 1919.
- **2nd Draft** – July 1, 1941: Men born between Oct. 17, 1919 and July 12, 1920. Including those who forgot to register in 1940.
- **3rd Draft** – Feb. 16, 1942: Men born between Feb. 17, 1897 and Dec. 31, 1921.
This is available on FamilySearch: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1339071>
- **4th Draft** – Apr. 27, 1942: Men born between Apr. 28, 1877 and Feb. 16, 1897.
- **5th Draft** – June 30, 1942: Men born between Jan. 1, 1922 and June 30, 1924.
- **6th Draft** – Dec. 11-31, 1942: Men born between July 1, 1924 and Dec. 31, 1924. And those reaching an 18th birthday on or after Jan. 1, 1943.
- **Special Draft** – Nov. 16 to Dec. 31 1943. Men born after Dec. 31, 1898 and before Jan. 1, 1926.

The U.S. World War II Draft Cards “Young Men” 1940-1947 is available from Ancestry.com:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2238/>

Service Records

For **U.S. Army** records due to the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center contact your local Adjutant General’s Office for WWII discharge and partial service records. Note that some “burnt files” exist for fragments of personnel files from the fire.

U.S. Army World War II Enlistment records, 1938-1946 can be viewed on Ancestry.com:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8939/>

U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798-1958: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1089/>

U.S. Navy World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1946:

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1143/>

U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard and **Merchant Marine** Logbooks are at the National Archives in two different repositories. For Pre-1940 logbooks they are located at Archives I at 700 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. For Post-1941 logbooks they are located at Archives II at 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland.

S.F. 180 – Request Military Records for World War I and World War II

BRANCH	CURRENT STATUS OF SERVICE MEMBER	ADDRESS CODE	
		Personnel Record	Medical or Service Treatment Record
AIR FORCE	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 5/1/1994	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 – 9/30/2004	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 10/1/2004	1	11
	Active (including National Guard on active duty in the Air Force), TDRL, or general officers retired with pay	1	
	Reserve, retired reserve in nonpay status, current National Guard officers not on active duty in the Air Force, or National Guard released from active duty in the Air Force	2	
	Current National Guard enlisted not on active duty in the Air Force	13	
COAST GUARD	Discharge, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1898	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1898 – 3/31/1998	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 4/1/1998	14	11
	Active, reserve, or TDRL	3	
MARINE CORPS	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1905	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1905 – 4/30/1994	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 5/1/1994 – 12/31/1998	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/1999	4	11
	Individual Ready Reserve	5	
	Active, Selected Marine Corps Reserve, TDRL	4	
ARMY	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 11/1/1912 (enlisted) or before 7/1/1917 (officer)	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 11/1/1912 – 10/15/1992 (enlisted) or 7/1/1917 – 10/15/1992 (officer)	14	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired after 10/16/1992	14	11
	Active enlisted, officers	7	
	Former National Guard/USAR personnel	14	
NAVY	Discharged, deceased, or retired before 1/1/1886 (enlisted) or before 1/1/1903 (officer)	6	
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/1/1886 – 1/30/1994 (enlisted) or 1/1/1903 – 1/30/1994 (officer)	14	14
	Discharged, deceased, or retired 1/31/1994 – 12/31/1994	14	11
	Discharged, deceased, or retired on or after 1/1/1995	10	11
	Active, reserve, or TDRL	10	

You are also able to make request for Military Records from Vetrec service from the National Archives:
<https://vetrecs.archives.gov/VeteranRequest/home.html>