

Civil War Research: Tracing Union & Confederate Ancestors

Class 2: Confederate Ancestors: Essential Resources for Tracing their Service

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Step # 1 – Determine if he fought for the Confederacy

- Search the 1860 U.S. Census on Ancestry.com to determine where your ancestors were living the year before the Civil War started.
- 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?
- Treasures in the attic
 - Personal letters from the soldier or from family members to the soldier.
 - Photographs
 - War Diary
 - Military ephemera from the battlefield
 - Does this family treasure help verify oral tradition?
- Cemetery Hints to a veteran
 - C.S.A. (Confederate States of America) veteran flag marker or military headstone
 - Veteran plots on a national or local level
 - Search for gravestones of Confederate Civil War veterans on websites Findagrave.com and BillionGraves.com
- Search Probate and Deed Records for your Civil War soldier and his spouse.
- City Directories
 - Listing the veteran at a residence in 1860, and not present 1861-1865 may indicate service.
 - Veterans are occasionally listed in a separate appendix in the city directory.
 - Abbreviations denoting service in the Army or Navy.

- The date of death of the veteran listed in the directory occasionally.
- Local State Sources
 - State Archives holdings
 - Published compilations of veterans
 - State Adjutant General reports
 - G.A.R. Membership list
- Using the Census
 - U.S. Federal census
 - 1890: special schedule
 - 1910: veteran question
 - 1930: veteran question

Step # 2 – Learn about your ancestor’s service in the Confederacy

- Search the **National Park Service “Soldiers and Sailors Database”** online:
 - <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
 - The NPS database also allows you to search for small regimental histories of the unit, battles the regiment was involved in as well as some federal cemeteries.
- What details does the database contain for Confederate veterans?
 - Regiment or battalion
 - Whether Confederate or Union
 - Company (Letter of his company example: Co. A, Co. F.)
 - Soldier’s rank in and rank out
 - Alternate name(s)
 - National Archives source microfilm number
- Ordering Confederate CMSR (Compiled Military Service Records) from the National Archives
 - To order Military Compiled Military Service Records go the NARA website:
 - <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline>
- Typical details on a CMSR
 - Soldier’s name
 - Age
 - Rank
 - Military unit(s) served in
 - If he was imprisoned, where and when captured
 - If he deserted, when received and when discharged and by whom one was discharged
 - If died where and when death occurred

Confederate Service Records Online

- Confederate Compiled Military Service Records on Fold3.com
 - <https://www.fold3.com/publication/29>
- Confederate Compiled Military Service Records on Ancestry.com
 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1106>
- Confederate Naval and Marine Personnel Records on FamilySearch.org
 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/103087>
- Other Resources to consider for obtaining details on your Confederate veteran
 - Town histories
 - County histories
 - College year books or alumni registers
- **Statewide Online Resources for Confederate Service Records**
 - Alabama: <https://archives.alabama.gov/research/CivilWarService.aspx>
 - Georgia: <https://vault.georgiaarchives.org/digital/collection/confed/search>
 - Virginia: <https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/confederate-rosters>
- **Tip:** Consider other family members who served (*brothers, fathers, uncles, cousins, etc.*)

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

- Sources to examine in order to determine whether your ancestor was killed or wounded
 - Published sources
 - Regimental histories. Search Archive.org or HathiTrust.org to locate regimental histories for Confederate service.
 - Search for published regimental histories on Archive.org or Hathitrust.org.
 - Use **Newspapers** to locate death notices, an obituary, or an article reporting that your veteran was wounded during the Civil War. Examine newspaper databases that have coverage for the communities your ancestor resided in. [Example: Newspapers.com, GenealogyBank.com].
 - **Death Registers.** Some town, city and county clerks would record the deaths of veterans who died during the Civil War in their annual records.
 - CMSR (Compiled Military Service Records).

Publications

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Joe Henry Segars, *In search of your Confederate ancestors* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 2008).