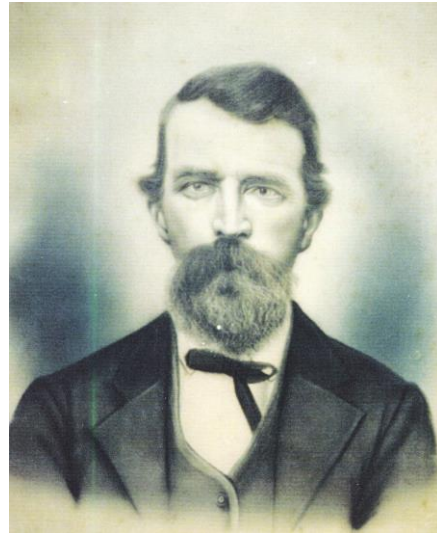




UNITED STATES MILITARY RECORDS: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

PRESENTED BY

ROBERT M. WILBANKS IV



TYPES OF MILITARY RECORDS

1. SERVICE RECORDS

- records generated at the time of service in the military
ie. enlistment, muster rolls, pay vouchers, etc.

2. BENEFITS RECORDS

- records generated at some time after the actual service
ie. Pensions and Bounty Land

3. MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS

- various other records
ie. Soldier's Homes, Burial and Headstones, and regarding Civilians

PERIODS IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY

1. COLONIAL PERIOD

Militia - Called out for Emergencies - Ready to fight any aggressor
Any male between the ages of 16 and 60 - Had to bring own gun
One Weekend a month meet for drilling practice
Usually community social gathering
About 100 men and commanded by a Captain

Note: This was continued throughout America after the
Revolutionary War and often became the foundation of
units formed for the Civil War

No National Records – Nothing at National Archives
Usually found at County or State level
Service Records - Consists of rolls or rosters
Great substitute when no census or tax lists
Benefits Records - Colonies/States offered Bounty Land
Often published

2. REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Actually was not a popular war - Only 1/3 of population fought for Liberty
1/3 remained Loyal - 1/3 tried to stay out of it

Period of transition in military record keeping
Records Availability – State Archives and National Archives
These are earliest records in existence at National Archives
There are Compiled Service Records and an Index
Benefits Records
Valuable genealogical source - Different periods of benefits
Early on individuals required congressional approval
A Little known resource - Final Payment Vouchers on Pensions

War of 1812 - British captured Washington – many Revolutionary War records destroyed

3. POST-REVOLUTIONARY WAR

During the early formation and development of new government
The military was primarily a Federal matter
State militias still in existence – called to Federal service during emergencies

Early United States opposed to large standing Military
America usually was never prepared for a war
Had to call up Militia Units to reinforce Military
Citizen Soldiers – Volunteers

Records become more uniform and reliable
One location of records - National Archives

Compiled Service Records and Indexes in Four “categories” or “titles”
Service from 1784 to 1811
War of 1812 (1812-1815)
Indian Wars (1815-1858)
Mexican War (1846-1848)

Benefits Records

Pensions

Separate series and indexes

Old Wars – service from 1783-1861
pensions given 1815-1926

War of 1812

Pensions acts of 1871 and 1878

Mexican War

Pensions act of 1887

Indian Wars

Pension act of 1892 for service 1832-1834

Later acts covered 1817-1898

Bounty Land

Numerous Congressional Acts

Last act in 1855

For service between 1790 to 1855

War of 1812 Pensions and Bounty Land Consolidated

4. CIVIL WAR

Truly all American War -- North/Blue vs. South/Gray
Confederate Records purposefully not destroyed by South for historical preservation
they were actually offered to the North by Confederate President
Officially “Housed” at National Archives as “captured records-of-war”

Service Records

Union and Confederate at National Archives

National Park Service Index Online

Possible additional Confederate Records at former Confederate States’ Archives

Benefits Records

Union at National Archives

Interfiled wars from Civil War up to World War I

One Significant index

Confederate at States of residence when state offered benefit

5. POST-CIVIL WAR

Reconstruction of the South
Indian Wars of the far western frontier
Domestic Disturbances related to Labor Disputes in the late 19th Century

Primarily Regular Army, Navy and Marines
Special research required – You will need to study other resources
In some cases refer to records mentioned in Civil War presentation

6. TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Modern Period
Change in Record Keeping System
Files kept on each soldier, following him as he transfers
Actually begins with Spanish-American War (1898)
Philippine Insurrection & Boxer Rebellion
These three have separate service records filings and indexes
Benefits interfiled with Civil War as mentioned earlier
World Wars I and II -- Korea and Vietnam
National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis

LOCATIONS OF VARIOUS RECORD TYPES

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- no Colonial Military Records
- Indexes, Service Records, and Benefit Records to various Wars
 - Revolutionary War
 - War of 1812
 - War with Mexico
 - Old Indian Wars
 - Civil War
 - Union and Confederate Service Records
 - Union Pension Records
 - Indian Wars in the West
 - Spanish-American War
 - Philippine Insurrection
- no Twentieth Century Military Records
 - National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis
 - except World War I Draft Records at Archive Branch, Atlanta
- Regular Army, Naval and Marine Records
- Records Regarding Civilians

STATE ARCHIVES

- Colonial Military Service Records
- Militia Lists, Colonial to Civil War
- some Union and Confederate Service Records
- post Civil War State Military units, later National Guard
- Possibly some Benefit Records from State
- Confederate Pension Records at original Confederate States

FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

(Resources available through local Family History Centers)

Same Military Records from National Archives

All Indexes Available on Microfilm - Service and Pension for all Wars

Confederate Service Records on Microfilm

Revolutionary War Pensions on Microfilm

Book: *Register of Federal United States Military Records*

compiled by the Family History Library

Mesa Family History Center, Reference Table, 973 M2de

4 brown books with American Flag and green strip with yellow dot

Volume 1 1775 - 1860

Volume 2 Civil War

Volume 3 1866 - WWII, and Misc.

Volume 4 Supplemental, mostly Civil War

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

- Library of Congress Classification System

- United States History E 178-

- Civil War E 456-655

- Civil War Unit Histories E 491-493, 495-537, 545-547, 551-582

- Registers, Memorials E 494

- Personal Narratives

- Union & Conf. E 464, 591, 601, 611-612

PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Dewey Decimal Classification System

- United States History 973 - 979

- Civil War 973.7

- Military Unit Histories 973.74

- Registers, Memorials 973.76

- Personal Narratives

- Union 973.781

- Confederate 973.782

INTERNET

- Many primary and secondary resources

- Cyndislist

- USGenWeb

- National Archives

- Library of Congress

- Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System

- various State Archives and Libraries

- FamilySearch

- Heritage Quest

- Ancestry

- Fold3

- Various Veterans' and Lineage Organizations

- Military Re-enactment Units

RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS / TIPS

SEARCHING THE LIBRARY CATALOG (or GOOGLE)

A matter of the right subject or keyword, or the right combination of keywords

General United States

U.S. -- Military -- War with Mexico

U.S. -- Military Records -- War with Mexico

Specific State

Alabama -- Military -- Civil War

Alabama -- Military Records -- Civil War

County

Virginia, Bedford County -- Military -- Revolutionary War

Virginia, Bedford County -- Military Records -- Revolutionary War

RESEARCH TIPS

Identify the State

Locate possible soldier, or his family, in census immediately previous to the War

Most likely that is the State that he served from

County Histories

Tend to have entire Chapters on Military History of County

Identifies Soldiers/Veterans in various Wars

Identifies units formed from that County

Bordering Counties or States

Ancestor may have crossed County or State lines to enlist

History of War

Study History of the War that the Ancestor Participated in

- at National and at Local levels

- get an old High School American History Textbook

- Internet – Google – Wikipedia

History of Unit

Research History of Unit

- Battle Participation

- Leaders

- Comrades, other members of ancestor's unit

- neighbors and friends

- community leaders, fellow church members

- potential family members

- fathers, uncles, brothers, cousins

- in-laws

Same resources as mentioned previously

UNITED STATES MILITARY RECORDS

The United States National Archives

<http://www.archives.gov>

Records available and services provided at NARA are extensive and thorough. It is important to study the website in detail. Forms can be requested by mail or e-mail, or downloaded. Records can also be ordered directly through the website.

MAILING ADDRESSES

For Military Records prior to 1912:

**General Reference Branch (NNRG-P)
National Archives and Records Administration
7th and Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20408**

For Military Records since 1912:

**National Personnel Records Center (Military Records), NARA
9700 Page Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132**

Forms and Fees Required to Order Military Records pre-1912:

Form NATF 86: Military Service Records prior to 1912 -- \$25.00

Form NATF 85D: Federal Military Pension Application – Civil War and Later, prior to 1912, Complete File (up to 100 pages) -- \$75.00

Form NATF 85A: Federal Military Pension Application – Pre-Civil War, Complete File -- \$50.00

Form NATF 85B: Federal Military Pension Application – Pension Documents Packet (a limit of 8 documents only) -- \$25.00

Form NATF 85C: Military Bounty-Land Warrant Application File -- \$25.00

Forms and Fees Required Military Records for service after 1912:

Form SF-180: Military Service Records – Free to proven descendants

CHRONOLOGY OF AMERICAN CONFLICTS AND WARS

By Robert M. Wilbanks IV, B.A.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1622 | Indian Massacre of Virginia colonists; over 300 colonists killed |
| 1644 | Indian Massacre of Virginia colonists; over 500 colonists killed |
| 1635 - 1645 | Claybourne's Rebellion in Maryland |
| 1636 - 1637 | Pequot War in New England |
| 1640 - 1645 | Dutch Trouble with Indians in New York |
| 1655 | Conquest of New Sweden - Delaware |
| 1655 | Civil War in Maryland |
| 1675 - 1678 | King Philip's War in New England |
| 1676 - 1678 | Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia |
| 1688 - 1697 | King William's War; known in Europe as the War of the League of Augsburg |
| 1701 - 1713 | Queen Anne's War and the War of Jenkins Ear; in Europe this was the War of the Spanish Succession |
| 1743 - 1748 | King George's War; in Europe this was the War of the Austrian Succession |
| 1755 - 1763 | The French and Indian War; in Europe this was the Seven Years War |
| 1775 - 1783 | Revolutionary War |
| 1786 | Shay's Rebellion |
| 1790 - 1795 | Miami Indian War |
| 1794 | Whiskey Rebellion |
| 1798 - 1800 | John Adams War |
| 1801 - 1806 | War with Tripoli |
| 1811 | Tippecanoe |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 1812 - 1815 | War of 1812 and the Shawnee and Creek Wars |
| 1831 - 1857 | Mormon Engagements |
| 1832 | Black Hawk War |
| 1835 - 1842 | Second Seminole War |
| 1836 | Texas Independence |
| 1837 | Patriots War |
| 1846 - 1848 | Mexican War |
| 1861 - 1865 | Civil War |
| 1872 - 1873 | Madoc War |
| 1876 | Sioux Indian War |
| 1898 | The Spanish-American War |
| 1899 | Philippine Insurrection |
| 1900 | Boxer Rebellion |
| 1917 - 1918 | World War I |
| 1941 - 1945 | World War II |
| 1950 - 1953 | Korean Conflict |
| 1961 - 1975 | Vietnam War |
| 1983 | Lebanon |
| 1983 | Grenada |
| 1986 | Libya |
| 1989 | Panama |
| 1990 - 1991 | Desert Shield / Desert Storm |
| 2001 – present | War on Terror (Afghanistan and War in Iraq) |

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING ON MILITARY RECORDS

United States Military Records: A Guide to Federal and State Sources, Colonial America to the Present, by James C. Neagles, Ancestry Publishing, 1994

Revolutionary War Genealogy, by George K. Schweitzer, Ph.D., Sc.D., 1987

War of 1812 Genealogy, by George K. Schweitzer, Ph.D., Sc.D., 1988

Civil War Genealogy, by George K. Schweitzer, Ph.D., Sc.D., 1988

The Great War: A Guide to the Service Records of All the World's Fighting Men and Volunteers, by Christina K. Schaefer, Genealogical Publishing Company, 1998

World War II Military Records: A Family Historian's Guide, by Debra Johnson Knox, Mie Publishing, 2003

The National Archives of the United States, by Herman J. Viola & David McCullough, Abrams Publishing, 1984

Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives, 3rd Edition, by U.S. National Archives, National Archives Trust Fund Board, 2000

Military Service Records: A Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1985

The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy, 3rd Edition, by Val D. Greenwood, Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001

Shaking Your Family Tree: A Basic Guide to Tracing Your Family's Genealogy, 2nd Edition, by Ralph J. Crandall, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2001

The Source, 3rd Edition, edited by Loretto Dennis Szucs & Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, Ancestry Publishing, 2006

Printed Sources: A Guide to Published Genealogical Records, edited by Kory L. Meyerink, Ancestry Publishing, 1998