
I Have a Civil War Ancestor . . . Now What?

Civil War records at the National Archives and online

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Although there is a wealth of information available at the National Archives, four main records exist to get a good overview of Civil War service:

The pension tends to be a large file (usually between 50-100 pages). They usually have information about his service, any injuries he suffered, medical reports, statements from other friends and families, etc. It's not unusual to have genealogical information in these files. These are only available for Union soldiers at the National Archives. Confederate pensions exist, but are kept at the state archives, not the National Archives.

Compiled military service records will tell if a soldier was transferred, promoted, deserted, killed, captured etc. They tell where the soldier was and any remarks about him. If he was taken as prisoner of war, there is usually information contained in the service records. If his enlistment papers still exist, they'd be in there too. These exist only for state army regiments, not regular army soldiers or Navy sailors.

The carded medical records are often overlooked records, and are similar to the service records. They tell if the soldier was sick, injured or hospitalized. They're a good addition to get the complete picture of your ancestor during the war. Some soldiers have one card in their file, some have five or more, some have none at all.

The company's record of events will tell where each company was during the war. You can often tell if they were engaged in a specific battle, where they were stationed at different points during the war, and what was going on each month.

Online resources:

Confederate pensions:

- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Confederate_Pension_Records (links to some of the files that are online)
- <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/confederate/pension> (addresses and phone numbers of various state archives that have the Confederate pensions)

Union pensions:

Fold3.com has the widow/dependent pensions for army soldiers up through #148,100. Many of these are soldiers who died during the war or shortly after. If your ancestors lived well past the end of the war, their pensions are most likely not on Fold3.

Most of the Union Navy pensions are on Fold3.com.

Compiled Military Service Records:

Fold3.com has Union Army service records for the following states online:

Alabama	Missouri
Arkansas	Nebraska
California	Nevada
Colorado	New Mexico
Dakota Territory	North Carolina
Delaware	Oregon
District of Columbia	Tennessee
Florida	Texas
Georgia	Utah
Kentucky	Vermont
Louisiana	Virginia
Maryland	West Virginia
Massachusetts	
Mississippi	All of the US Colored Troops

Fold3.com also has all of the Confederate service records online, for all states.