

Researching Your Ancestors in Military Records

From the Revolutionary War through the Civil War

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This session will focus on both finding military records and discovering what is in the record. The focus will be on the conflicts within the United States beginning with the Revolutionary War and building through the Civil War. Participants will gain an understanding of the wealth of information that is found in these records.

Basic Questions to Consider

- Did military conflicts occur during the period when your ancestor was between the age of 16 and 60?
 - Search indexes
 - Could have served in more than one war
- Did your ancestor serve at the local level, the state level, the federal level or even with more than one unit?
- Which side of the conflict did they serve? (Loyalist or Tory; Union or Confederate) – will help to determine where the records might be.
- What was the type of service? Volunteer, regular, sailor or marine?

Learning To Fish!

- DAR database: <https://www.dar.org>
 - Ancestor Database
 - Descendants Database
 - Records are available to order
- SAR Patriot Databases: <https://www.sar.org/patriot-research-system/>
- DAR Library: <https://www.dar.org/library>
 - Research Guides (how-to)
 - Collections
- National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military>
 - By Branch
 - By Conflict
 - By Topic (Personnel Records and Historical Military Records)
- US Army Center of Military History: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military>
- Fold3 (\$\$): <https://www.fold3.com>
 - Browse by Conflict
 - Browse by people, location, dates
- Ancestry (\$\$): <https://www.ancestry.com>

- Card Catalog
- Search for name of conflict (Revolutionary War) and also by State
- FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org>
 - WIKI – search by Conflict or general topics
- Books
 - Google Books
 - Amazon Books
 - Fold3 has Pennsylvania Archive Series Books (browsable)

Conflicts

Revolutionary War (1750-1783)

- Compiled Service Records (CMSR's)
 - Rank
 - Military unit
 - State where soldier served
 - Date his name appears
- Only complete for Continental Army
 - Check states for state militia
- Fold3 has continental army CMSR's microfilmed
- NARA will have CMSR for Continental Army; will also have state must rolls
- Bounty Land
- 1840 Census
- Consider:
 - Often difficult to "prove" your ancestor is the one that served. Since there are no "personal information" on the records – how do we know one John Smith from another?
 - Look at taxes, pensions, state records, and other related materials to try to distinguish yours from someone else's "John Smith."
 - Compiled records don't give complete service in a given war. Many served in more than one unit, during different time periods.
 - If served in a militia unit that was not called into federal service, will need to look at state archives

War of 1812

- Also will find CMSR's at NARA
- Fold3 has CMSR's but also has pensions
- Remember the land!!

Indian-Mexican War (1846-1848)

- CMSR's at NARA
- Fold3 information
- Grave registration Cards (Ancestry)
- LOVE: Online Military Indexes & Records
 - <https://www.militaryindexes.com/mexicanwar/index.thml>

Civil War (1861-1865)

- Soldiers and Sailors Database (National Park Service)
 - <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
 - Search by soldier, by regiment, by battle
- Nara Records
 - CMSR's but only for Union Army
 - Pension Records
 - Prisoner Records
- 1890 Census of Civil War Union Veterans and Widows
- Fold 3
 - Pension Records for Union Soldiers
 - Widows Pensions (only about 21+ complete)
- Confederacy
 - Check fold 3 – they have some of the service records – more each day
 - Look at state records
 - Confederate Officers Card Index at FamilySearch