

Researching your American Civil War Ancestors

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Resources

Have you checked your attic lately?? You or your family may have an old box or trunk full of letters, diaries, scrap books, photographs, the family bible, an old will or other family documents – any of which could pertain to a Civil War veteran or his family.

Books and Periodicals of Note:

- ***Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kentucky: Union and Confederate***
A “First Choice” reference for researching your KY Civil War Ancestor!! Four Volumes. First published in 1866. Remember to check the indexes of both Union and Confederate soldiers!
- ***War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.***
156 volume set comprising official correspondence, battle reports, military records, supplements and addendums for both sides of the conflict. Note: Volumes 1 – 70 can be searched online (Google: “*Making of America and War of the Rebellion*”)
- ***Roll of honor: names of soldiers who died in defense of the American Union***, Published in 1868, this seven volume set. Includes prisoner listings, internments, etc. Available in full-text via books.google.com
- **Confederate Veteran Magazine.** This bound 40 volume set is indexed via HeritageQuest >> *PERSI*.

- **Index of Confederate Pension Applications**, Commonwealth of KY. Available online via KDLA e-archives page.
- The **Compiled Service Records** of Kentucky veterans of the Civil War (Union and Confederate). Available on microfilm at KDLA, KHS (Ancestry.com?)

Military Records of Civil War Veterans:

Military Service Pension laws changed greatly over time ~ and as they changed they tended to become more liberal. Thus a veteran may have been denied a claim but a few years later, his widow may have been granted a pension. For an excruciatingly detailed discussion of the Civil War pension Laws, visit:

<http://drbronsontours.com/pensionsunderstandingcivilwarpensions.html>

Military records for the **Union Soldiers** are on file with the *Textual Archives Services Division* of the National Archives Washington, DC 20408 and consist of:

Pension Records (NATF- 85): Including pension applications for widows and for minor children. These are most useful to those who are doing genealogical research and contain the most complete information regarding a soldier's military career. They are often very lengthy! It will often include:

- A statement of service prepared by the Adjutant General's Office
- Medical information if the soldier lived for a number of years after the war.
- Affidavits attesting to date / place of birth, names of parents, spouse and children, etc.

To obtain a **widow's pension**, the widow had to provide proof of marriage, such as a copy of the record kept by county or local officials, or by affidavit from the minister or some other person.

Applications on behalf of the soldier's minor children had to supply both proof of the soldier's marriage and proof of the children's birth.

Service Records for Union or Confederate Kentucky soldiers are available on microfilm at some public libraries, KDLA and KHS. For other states submit Form NATF – 86 to the National Archives.

Both NATF forms can be downloaded or submitted online. Go to Google >> “NATF – 85” or “NATF – 86”

Again, *pension records* for **Confederate** veterans from KY are on file at the Kentucky Department for Libraries & Archives, Kentucky State Archives, 300 Coffee Tree Road, Frankfort, KY 40601.

Internet Links:

- 1) Soldier and Sailors Database: hosted by the National Parks Service – and excellent source for regimental histories.
- 2) www.militaryindexes.com/civilwar/index.html This HUGE website with links to all kinds of online military indexes and records. Civil War genealogy research is broken down by State. Note: some links take you to a paid site!
- 3) Search the web for helpful information regarding other Civil War lineage societies. i.e., the *United Daughters of the Confederacy*, *The Grand Army of the Republic*, *Sons Confederate Veterans*, *Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War*, etc. Many of these organizations have research libraries and searchable online databases.

Remember a few fundamentals!

- **Fully** cite your sources.
- **Be exhaustive!**
- **Be critical of the information you consult.**
- **Have a researcher plan**
- **Consider joining and becoming an active member in a genealogical, historical or lineage society.**
- **When you hit a “brick wall”**