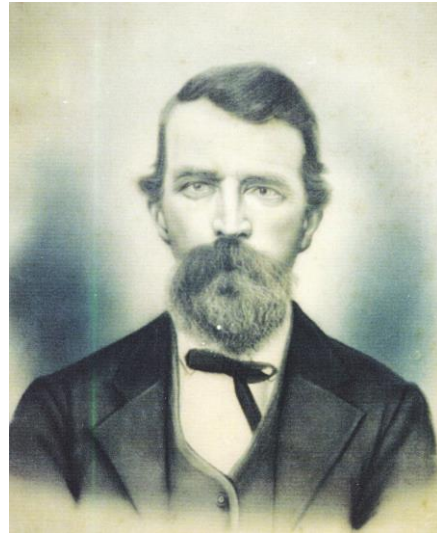




# ***UNITED STATES MILITARY RECORDS: A GENERAL OVERVIEW***

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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

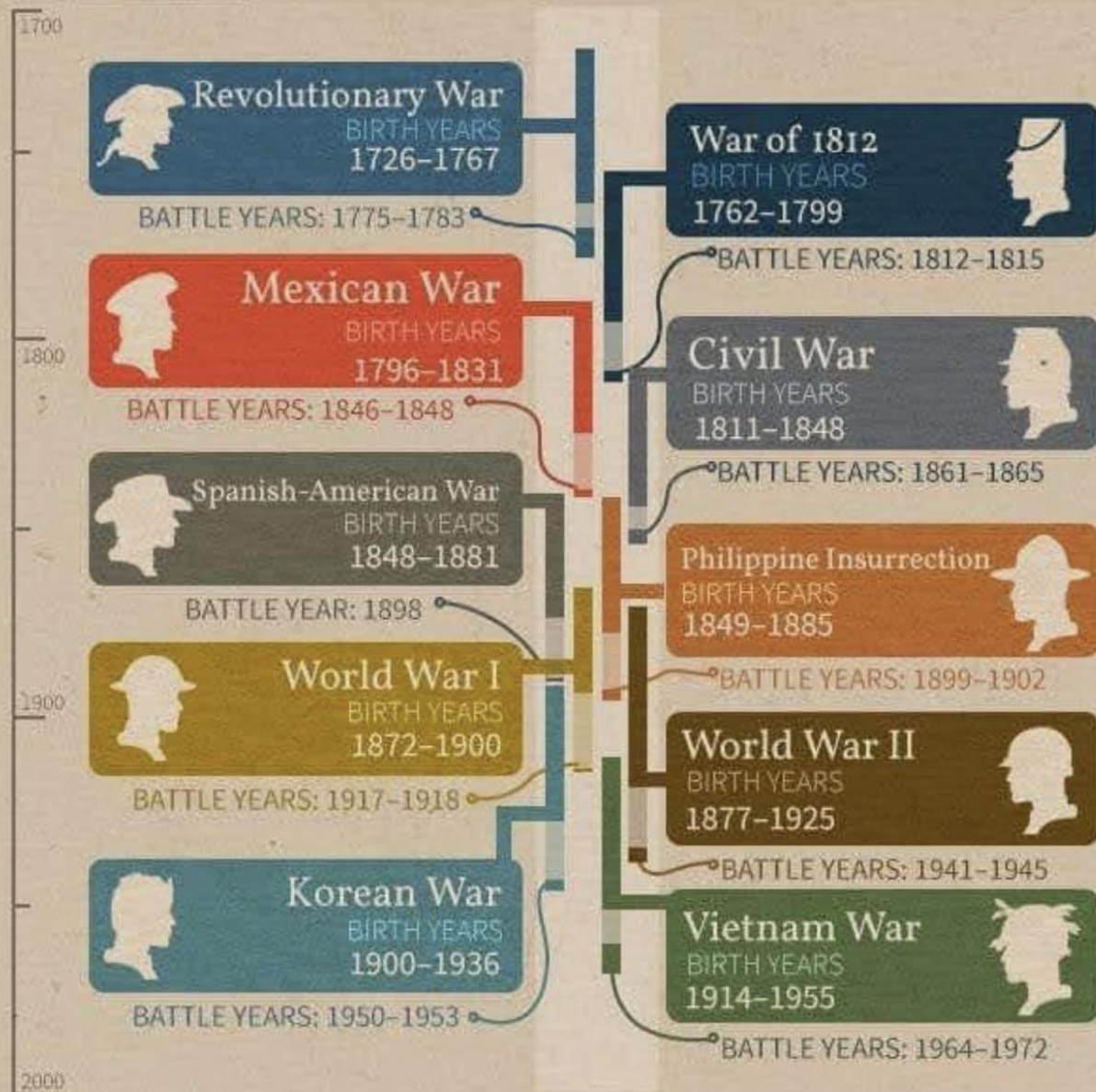
By Robert M. Wilbanks IV, B.A.

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)

# BIRTH YEARS of VETERANS



# 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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, by Val D. Greenwood, Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001

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

*The Source*, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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