

CHECK IT OUT: CIVIL WAR CHECKLIST

The American Civil War was well documented due to its duration (48 months) and the extensive involvement of the population. Over 11% of the population was under arms. Although each investigation into the Civil War era will differ, your search should include most of the following:

- ☐ **The History Detectives site.** Investigate “More Leads” in the Military History section for additional sources of information and records links.

Service Records

- ☐ **Compiled Military Service Records (CMSRs)** Highly reliable service records created from muster rolls, pay lists, hospital records, and record books. Yield: may contain detailed information, such as birthplace, medical history, and “personal papers.”
- ☐ **State Service Records** Only 2% of combatants were “regulars” in the military. All others were part of local militia units and volunteer regiments raised by individual states. Their military service records were maintained by their home states. (Note: Many soldiers reenlisted, creating records in more than one regiment or state.)
- ☐ **Compiled Sources and Indices.** There are several multi-volume works about Civil War Service records. These large publications are generally found at libraries. Yield: may include correspondence, battle reports, prisoner information, pension, political prisoners, and muster rolls.
- ☐ **Pension Records** Claims based on death or disability after July 1862. After 1892 women employed as government nurses were also eligible for pensions. Yield: name, unit or branch of service, certificate number, law under which pensioned, rate of pension, pension date, date of certificate, place of residence, death date, former roll number, and widow’s name; may provide death information.
- ☐ **Prisoner of War Records** Almost 347,000 combatants were imprisoned, and 49,000 died in prison camps. Yield: 30,000 departure records; prison hospital admissions; prisoner deaths and burials, monthly reports of prisoners.

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- ☐ **Draft Records.** In 1863 the federal government began to draft men (age 20 to 45) into the Army. Yield: name; place of residence; age as of July 1, 1863; occupation; marital status; and military service (if any), physical description, birthplace, and whether accepted or rejected for service.
- ☐ **Unit/Regimental Histories.** Many state volunteer regiments had contemporary published histories. Yield: biographical data on officers, unit rosters of members, may clarify reason for creating a unit (e.g., Irish descent).
- ☐ **1890 Census Records.** A special enumeration of Union veterans and widows. Yield: name, rank, company, regiment or vessel, dates of enlistment and discharge, length of service, residence, disability, and remarks.
- ☐ **Cemetery Records.** Nearly 359,000 soldiers in the Union forces lost their lives during the war. Yield: name, rank, company, regiment, and death date, cemetery name and location of cemetery, grave number, date of death.
- ☐ **Published Military Biographies.** Rarely available for persons other than officers or others of military significance. However, there were over 1,000 generals in the war. **Yield:** variable.