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## IN-Genious

### INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY

by Ron Darrah

My Uncle Art, Dad's brother, served in the Army during World War II. We all knew that. He was also wounded at Normandy when he landed there on D-Day. None of us, not even his children, knew that until I discovered it during a records search.

Many veterans are reticent about their military service; they just don't talk about that stuff. And by now, many World War II veterans are gone and unable to talk, so it may be up to you to discover their military service for your family.

Actually, if you had an Indiana relative who served in World War II, you should hope that (a) they are still alive to interview, and (b) they retained lots of records and memorabilia. If not, you might be fighting an uphill battle yourself.

#### PRIVACY LAWS

The first obstacle you may run into is the privacy laws. The war ended only 64 years ago, well within the standard 72-year privacy guidelines established for records release. Some clerks and officials enforce this limit and some do not; some records fall into these limits and some do not. In the often bizarre world of government records, it is difficult to find any rhyme or reason as to why things are as they are.

The government, both state and national, has to strike a balance between the Freedom of Information Act (AKA the You-Can-Look-At-Anything Law) and the Privacy Act (AKA the No-You-Can't Law).

The National Archives website uses the statement, "Information will not be released if requested for unethical purposes." I was wondering if they get much of that. Do they have a block you can check? Ethical? Unethical?

But all is not lost; records are out there, you can access them, and hopefully you can find information on your family. Let's take a look at a few Indiana sources available to you.

#### NATIONAL ARCHIVES PERSONNEL RECORDS

World War II veterans' records were turned over to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) by the War Department or Department of Defense. It turned out not to be a good move.

In 1973, a huge fire at that St. Louis facility destroyed over eighty percent of the Army records of World Wars I and II, with between sixteen and eighteen *million* Army records going up in smoke. Cross your fingers and hope that your family went into the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard!

The losses affected by the eighty percent include the Army records of veterans discharged between November 1, 1912 and January 1, 1960, and Air Force people from 1947 to 1964. As the Archives themselves state, "No duplicate copies of the records were maintained, nor was a microfilm copy ever produced. There were no indexes created prior to the fire." Not a good situation.

## INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY (continued)

The NPRC staff says they will try to use some alternate sources to give you some information, but I have tried this twice and received nothing in return. They will look at some military pay vouchers and some medical-related records to see what is there. Ironically, they regularly contact the Indiana State Archives to tap into our Discharge Certificate file (see *State Archives Discharge Certificates* later in this article) and other data sets to answer queries.

So, you can try to see if your Indiana folks are Navy, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps, or in the twenty percent of surviving Army records. Maybe, if you're lucky, the NPRC can recreate some data.

Take an on-line look at this situation at <http://archives.gov>.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
ENLISTMENT RECORDS

The National Archives website (Archives.gov), in their *Access to Archival Databases* section, contains this searchable database of approximately nine million men and women, including Hoosiers, who enlisted in the U. S. Army between 1938 and 1946. It includes the Women's Army Corps. It does not include Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard personnel, nor does it include officers of any kind.

## Display Full Records

**File Unit:** Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, ca. 1938 - 1946 (*Enlistment Records*)  
**in the Series:** World War II Army Enlistment Records, created 6/1/2002 - 9/30/2002, documenting the period ca. 1938 - 1946. - *Record Group 64* ([info](#))

**Brief Scope:** This series contains records of approximately nine million men and women who enlisted in the United States Army, including the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

You may wish to [View the FAQs](#) for this series.

Field Title	Value	Meaning
ARMY SERIAL NUMBER	35957650	35957650
NAME	DARRAH#PETER#JR#####	DARRAH#PETER#JR#####
RESIDENCE: STATE	54	WEST VIRGINIA
RESIDENCE: COUNTY	069	OHIO
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT	5442	HUNTINGTON WEST VIRGINIA
DATE OF ENLISTMENT DAY	14	14
DATE OF ENLISTMENT MONTH	02	02
DATE OF ENLISTMENT YEAR	45	45

*National Archives Enlistment Record Sample*

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**INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY** (continued)

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The file is a reconstruction that involved a conversion of old data processing punch cards (remember those?), and is actually a third-hand project, as the Army microfilmed the punch cards (have you ever heard of an idea like that?), then destroyed the cards themselves. This data was keyed from reading microfilmed punch cards!

The twenty-six data fields in this database include name, serial number, state, dates, and various additional information. Some of the fields are blank due to card reading problems.

The database does not include everyone, but it's a good starting point. There is a smaller database that has about three hundred thousand members of the Reserve Corps. This collection is also at Ancestry.com.

The display looks like the illustration on the previous page. Several fields are always blank.

### **ANCESTRY DRAFT REGISTRATION CARDS**

On Ancestry.com you will find a searchable database of the Fourth Registration draft held in 1942. This registration is commonly known as the "Old Man's Draft," since it was for older men, those born between April 28, 1877, and February 16, 1897. These men were between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four at the time. The government in 1942 felt that we were going to need to scrape the bottom of the barrel and wanted to know where that bottom was.

Indiana is one of seventeen states in the database, but it is listed as "incomplete." Ancestry does not have all the cards for Indiana yet, so do not be surprised if you don't find your subject.

We are more fortunate than eight Southern states, whose cards were trashed before microfilming. They are gone forever.

The original draft cards for Indiana, the complete set, are in the National Archives Great Lakes Region in Chicago, so you may have to go there to find your guy. The other World War II draft records for the U. S. have not yet been released.

About ten data fields and sometimes a few more are on the cards, which are very similar to the World War I version. If you don't have Ancestry at home, you can use it at the State Library, the Allen County Public Library, and numerous other libraries throughout the state. The State Library also has a microfilm version on the second floor. Ancestry also has several smaller World War II databases in their collection.

The card on the next page is for my grandfather. I'm glad he didn't have to go!

### **STATE ARCHIVES INDIANA WORLD WAR II BONUS MICROFILM**

In March 1949, the State Legislature of Indiana, after the citizens approved a referendum, awarded a bonus to any Hoosier military veteran who served at least thirty days in the military between December 7, 1941, and November 2, 1945.

Veterans received \$10 for each month of service in the U.S. and \$15 for each month overseas with a minimum of \$30 and a maximum of \$600. The next of kin of veterans who died while in the service received the maximum of \$600. Disabled veterans also received the maximum.

Veterans had to fill out an application form, which was later destroyed, and present a copy of their Discharge form (see *State Archives Discharge Certificates* later in this article) to claim the bonus. About the only thing to survive from



## INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY (continued)

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)				#10
SERIAL NUMBER U 1548	1. NAME (Print) Peter Boone Darrah (First) (Middle) (Last)		ORDER NUMBER	
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) General Delivery (Washington Pike) Wellsburg, W. Va. (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)				
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]				
3. MAILING ADDRESS General Delivery, Wellsburg, Brooke, West Virginia (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)				
4. TELEPHONE None	5. AGE IN YEARS 58 DATE OF BIRTH February 18, 1884 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)		6. PLACE OF BIRTH Marshall County (Town or county) (State or country)	
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Arthur Darrah, Washington Pike, Wellsburg, W. Va. (Son)				
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Employed by self - Farmer				
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)				
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.				
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)	(over)		10-21630-2 Peter Boone Darrah (Registrant's signature)	

Draft Registration Card

this process are some microfilmed index cards in the State Archives.

The Archives has sixty-three rolls of 16 mm film, titled "Alphabetical Index to WW2 Bonus Applications," evidently prepared by the Auditor of the State. These cards, since destroyed, and the film contain names, addresses, bonus application numbers, military serial numbers, and county of enlistment. A few cards have handwritten address updates. A warning: the filming is terrible and many cards are so fuzzy that they are nearly illegible.

A second small series of eight films contain information on deceased veterans. Three rolls have an alphabetical index by veteran, three rolls have an alphabetical index by next of kin, and two rolls have a numerical index by bonus

number. Most of these are also fuzzy, except for the numerical index. (Someone wore their new glasses that day!) I would advise finding the bonus number on the fuzzy film and then using the numerical set to make copies.

These cards do not contain a great amount of information, but sometimes a little is better than nothing. Much more information would be available if the state had not trashed the applications themselves. (Don't cha love Indiana!)

All the versions are essentially like this one.

ALPHABETICAL CARD FILE	BONUS NUMBER
DECEASED VETERAN	
ALEXANDER GRINER R	705047
NAME OF APPLICANT	
ALEXANDER GRICE	
901 NORTH COURT ST	
SULLIVAN IND	3536552
	SERVICE OR SERIAL NUMBER

INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY (continued)

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION HONORABLE DISCHARGE											
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>DARRAH PETER JR</b>			2. ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>35 957 650</b>		3. GRADE <b>TEC5</b>		4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>ENGR</b>		5. COMPONENT <b>AUS</b>		
6. ORGANIZATION <b>110TH COMBAT ENG BN CO B</b>			7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>3 AUG 46</b>		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>SEPARATION CENTER FT BRAGG NC</b>						
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>RT 3 WELLSBURG W VA BROOK CO</b>			10. DATE OF BIRTH <b>14 FEB 19</b>		11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>WELLSBURG W VA</b>						
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>SEE 9</b>			13. COLOR EYES <b>BROWN</b>		14. COLOR HAIR <b>BROWN</b>		15. HEIGHT <b>5-9</b>		16. WEIGHT <b>168</b>		
17. NO. DEPEND. <b>3</b>			18. RACE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WHITE		19. MARITAL STATUS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SINGLE		20. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>(15-73-210) GASOLINE POWER SHOVEL OPR</b>		
MILITARY HISTORY											
22. DATE OF INDUCTION <b>14 FEB 45</b>			23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>14 FEB 45</b>			24. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>HUNTINGTON W VA</b>					
25. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES			26. REGISTERED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES			27. LOCAL W.F. BOARD NO. <b>1</b>			28. COUNTY AND STATE <b>BROOK W VA</b>		
29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>SEE 9</b>			30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. <b>CONSTRUCTION MACHINE OPR (359)</b>								
31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., Infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>EXP 30 CAL RIFLE M1; EXP CAL 45 SMG M3</b>			32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS <b>NONE</b>								
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS <b>ASIATIC PACIFIC SERVICE MEDAL; GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL; WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL; OCCUPATION MEDAL</b>											
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION <b>NONE</b>											
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES											
SMALLPOX <b>9 JUL 46</b>		TYPHOID <b>9 MAR 46</b>		TETANUS <b>7 APR 45</b>		OTHER (specify) <b>TY 24 APR 46</b>					
36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN			37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE								
DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>14 AUG 45</b>			DESTINATION <b>APT USA</b>			DATE OF ARRIVAL <b>8 SEP 45</b>					
38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD <b>TEC 5</b>			39. PRIOR SERVICE <b>NONE</b>								
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>CONVN OF GOVT RR 1-1 DEMOBILIZATION AR 615-365 15 DEC 44</b>											
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED <b>NONE</b>											
42. EDUCATION (Years) Grammar <b>8</b> High <b>9</b> College <b>0</b>											
PAY DATA											
43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEAR <b>1</b> MONTH <b>5</b> DAY <b>20</b>			44. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL <b>300</b> TIME PAYMENT <b>100</b>			45. SOLDIER DEPOSIT <b>NONE</b>		46. TRAVEL PAY <b>34.15</b>		47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER <b>204.15 H N ELKINS JR MAJ FP</b>	
INSURANCE NOTICE											
IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL Lapse. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.											
48. KIND OF INSURANCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nat. Serv. <input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Govt. <input type="checkbox"/> None			49. HOW PAID <input type="checkbox"/> Allotment <input type="checkbox"/> Direct to V. A.			50. Effective Date of allotment discontinuance		51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50)		52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH	
53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO			54. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) <b>LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED ASR SCORE 32 2 SEPT 45 * DATE OF RANK 12 NOV 45</b>								
55. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Peter Darrah Jr.</i>			56. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>L E EMERSON CAPT WAC</b> <i>L E Emerson</i> NK								

WD AGO FORM 83-89  
1 November 1944

This form superseded all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 83 and 85 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.

Discharge



INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY (continued)

STATE ARCHIVES DISCHARGE  
CERTIFICATES

For the benefit of the non-veterans among us, a military member receives a Separation Document when he/she is discharged from military service. Today this is a DD-214 form; in World War II it was a WD AGO Form 53 and 55. (War Department and Adjutant General's Office)

The face of the AGO form was a certificate of Honorable Discharge and a thank you for faithful service. The back of the form was a detailed short history of the veteran's military service. It contained fifty-seven data fields with a tremendous quantity of information. (See previous page.) If you have a military member in your family, ask to see their WD or DD form.

Now for the bad part. When Indiana passed the World War II Bonus Act, veterans had to provide a copy of their AGO certificate to the Adjutant General's Office in order to claim the bonus. These copies were later turned over to the Indiana State Archives, where they reside today, about four hundred thousand of them. Access to these AGO records is extremely limited, thanks to Indiana's House Enrolled Act 1546, effective on May 14, 2007. This law restricts access to the veteran, next-of-kin, and certain other persons. Since it has no time limit, evidently the restriction lasts forever. (Don't cha really love Indiana!)

So, like I said originally, ask around and hope your Grandpa still has his certificate somewhere.

I found my Dad's certificate (see the previous page) in a courthouse in West Virginia.

STATE ARCHIVES  
CASUALTIES FILE

This is an alphabetical card file of Indiana Army and Navy casualties that includes name, rank, next of kin, date of wounds, and theater of military action.

This collection is eleven boxes of 3" x 5" cards, each box twelve inches long. The cards are a mixture of typed and handwritten copy and were evidently prepared by the Indiana Historical Bureau. The data was extracted from a variety of newspaper and military sources.

There is a separate two-box index for Marion County residents. (I do not know why Marion County has a separate index.) This collection looks like a highly usable source.

There are lots of handwritten updates on these cards.

Fischer, Wilbur G.	Dillsboro	Dearborn	GS
Army; pfc.			
Age 20. Killed in action, Germany, Mar. 24.			
Grad. Dillsboro H. S. 1942			
Par: Mr. & Mrs. Gus <sup>a</sup> Fischer, Dillsboro, <i>Ret. 1</i>			
Lawrenceburg Press 5/3/45			
<i>Body ret'd to father, above address</i>			
<i>Return of war dead 11/17/48 (Vulber)</i>			

INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY (continued)

<b>Indiana State Library</b>	
<b>WWII Servicemen Database</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Bowen, Richard
<b>Date</b>	12-05-1942
<b>Paper</b>	News
<b>Page Column Location</b>	pt. 2, p. 10, c. 5
<b>Remarks</b>	casualty
<b>Branch</b>	Army
<b>Hometown</b>	Hendricks County

STATE LIBRARY WW II  
SERVICEMEN DATABASE

From 1942 to 1946 the Indiana State Library librarians indexed the three Indianapolis newspapers, *Star*, *News*, and *Times*, for notices of casualties, MIA's, prisoners, and decorations. They created a card file index, and this online version was developed from that.

The search screen only gives you the newspaper reference, not the actual article. For that you have to go to the newspaper microfilm and look it up. You can also write to the Library and they will copy it for you. Oddly enough, when I extracted a sample to use for this article, it turned out to be wrong!

The database displays the result screen above.

The sample I looked up had Bower instead of Bowen! Beware of indexes!!

**Former Hoosier Killed.**  
**CRAWFORDSVILLE, Ind., Dec. 5 (Spl.)**—Mrs. Carl M. Pinkerton, this city, has received word that her nephew, Pilot Officer Richard Bower, combat flyer in Egypt with the Royal Canadian Air Force, was killed in action November 23. He was born at Clayton (Hendricks county) and during his boyhood lived in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. His only brother also is with the Canadian air forces somewhere in England.

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**INDIANA WORLD WAR II GENEALOGY CAN BE TRICKY** (continued)
 

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**ADDITIONAL WORLD  
WAR II RESEARCH**

**1. Veterans Service Organizations:** Up until recently, World War II veterans comprised the bulk of the membership of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, and other such groups. All of these required a membership application that you may be able to access. Response to your queries may be spotty, so be prepared for that.

**2. Veterans History Project:** This program by the Library of Congress collects audio, video, and print media from veterans of all kinds. Your guy might have submitted something, so check it out on their website at <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>.

**3. Veterans Administration:** The VA might have something that is still in their hands and not with the National Archives. They also operate the National Cemetery system with a search program that can locate burials all over the country. Visit them at <http://www.va.gov/>.

**4. American Battle Monuments Commission:** This group operates American

military cemeteries outside the U.S., and they also have a worldwide grave site locator.

**5. Military History Institute:** This U. S. Army facility in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is a good source for Army materials, and I have had very good results from them.

**6. Local Newspapers:** As you can imagine, the war earned major coverage in Hoosier newspapers, and local servicemen and women were featured prominently. After you pin down some service dates, check the hometown papers for articles. This is the only place where privates and corporals rated coverage equal to General Patton. (And wouldn't he have hated that!)

**7. Historians and Biographers:** As you are well aware, World War II was heavily documented, and there are vast numbers of books, films, documents, reports, photographs, manuscript collections, and other materials available on that conflict.

Use your family resources and the above collections to narrow your search to an individual, serial number, theater of operation, and military unit. After that, locate specialized items that pertain to those specific areas. Go find your members of **The Greatest Generation!**

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**SOUTHWEST DISTRICT**
**VERSAILLES PIONEER IS DEAD**

Submitted by Meredith Thompson

*Indianapolis Star*, Wednesday, February 26, 1919—page 13, column 3

EVANSVILLE, Ind., Feb. 25—Mrs. Ernestina Beer, 90 years old, widow of Robert F. Beer, died here today at the home of her daughter, Mrs. John Bushing. She was a native of Saxony, Germany. She and her husband came to Versailles in 1857.

The surviving children are Otto C. Bushing of Sunman, Ind.; A.H. Beer, Versailles; R.J. Beer, Osgood, Ind.; Edward Beer, Rushville, Ind.; Mrs. John Bushing, Versailles, and Mrs. Anna Avery, Covington, Ky.