

IN-GENious!

CHASING MILITARY RECORDS

by RON DARRAH

These United States of America started with a shooting war, and there has not been a day since that we have not had a military force defending this nation.

This military force was and is comprised of our fellow citizens—almost all American soldiers have been amateurs like you and me—and, even if you personally or your immediate family does not have military members, a significant portion of our national population has served in uniform.

These citizen-soldiers generated huge quantities of records about themselves and their families; you overlook them at your peril!

Fortunately, even for a researcher unfamiliar with military ways, American military organization and structure has changed remarkably little over the last 230+ years of our republic. To genealogists this means that, if you can research one group in one war, you have the basic tools to research all groups in all wars.

The other thing to keep in mind is that there has always been a deep and abiding interest in all things military throughout our national existence. Every war, every battle, every skirmish, no matter now small, has been researched, examined, and written about in

minute detail by historians, both professional and amateur.

These two features can simplify military research for genealogists, so remember the pattern and don't try to reinvent the wheel.



Much of what we know of my great-uncle Paul comes from his WWI records

FEDERAL VS. LOCAL RECORDS

Starting with the American Revolution and continuing into the Iraq war, our military was composed of both a national/federal and a local/state component. In 1776 this was the Continental Line and the militia; in 1862 it was the Regular Army and the Volunteer Regiments; today it's the Regular Army and the National Guard.

The federal military records for the most part are in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.; the militia/

Volunteer/National Guard records are mainly in the specific state archives, state libraries, and/or state historical societies. It is important that genealogists not overlook either option—do a complete search.

Another mistake many researchers make is to ignore the "little" wars, all of which

CHASING MILITARY RECORDS (continued)

DORRAH, HENRY		Inactive Duty Militia	
YORK		Rank	7111
Lieutenancy	CAPT. ANDREW FORMAN	County	Battalion
Company	(1780-83)	Class	
Remarks:	berwick Twp.		
Authority:	COMPANY RETURN		
Date	N.D.	Muster Fines \$	Published
"Military Accounts: Militia," Records of the Comptroller General, RG-4			
THE BASIC RECORD DOES NOT PROVE ACTIVE DUTY.			

Pennsylvania Militia Cards like this one are online at the
Pennsylvania State Archives website

included our ancestors. Remember the Barbary War? The War of 1812 and the Mexican War? The Indian Wars and the Spanish-American War? Tons of records exist on these soldiers, and some of your folks might be in them!

Pension records are a consistent feature of military service—the earliest pensions in America are to veterans. This means, in addition to researching the military record piece, you also have to research the pension piece. Starting with the Revolution, pensions were primarily a Federal jurisdiction; few states granted pensions. It follows that nearly all pension records are in the National Archives, and most are accessible to genealogists—for an Uncle Sam-sized fee, of course.

The only state-level equivalent to fed-

eral pension payments is the bounty land program that we had early in our national life. States had little cash but did have large amounts of unassigned land, so they cut the land into small parcels and gave it to veterans in compensation. Once all the land was taken, these programs were phased out.

A third, and highly unique, feature related to military service is the follow-on organizations, both social and genealogical. Veterans usually banded together in organizations after their service, for social reasons (such as revisiting shared memories), or for economic and political reasons (such as lobbying for benefits or for sharing support efforts).

These organizations created records that often survive and which are of great value to family historians. Some of these groups

CHASING MILITARY RECORDS (continued)

MRS. MABEL A. McCRORY WELTY. 164270
Born in Auburn, Ind.
Wife of A. B. Welty.
Descendant of George Steel, as follows:
1. John McCrory (b. 1850) m. 1878 Mary Alice Shaffer (b. 1856).
2. Christopher Shaffer (1832-1903) m. 1854 Martha Ciphers (1836-94).
3. David Ciphers (1797-1878) m. 1820 Catherine Steel (1801-62).
4. Jacob Steel (1772-1837) m. 1797 Mary Elizabeth Smith (1778-1837).
5. George Steel m. 1760 Margarite Dalman (1740-1823).
George Steel (1730-1802) served as private under Capt. Charles Maclay in the 1st battalion, Cumberland County militia. He was born in Rhine, Provance of France; died in Bedford County, Pa.

The DAR Lineage Books have thousands of already-proven lines going back to the Revolution. Could one of them be yours?

include: the Grand Army of the Republic (post-Civil War); United Spanish War Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars (post-Spanish-American War); American Legion and Disabled American Veterans (post-World War I).

Most every early war also has a corresponding lineage group in genealogy, i.e. Daughters/Sons of the American Revolution, and so on. These organizations have created massive record groups that researchers should utilize—don't reinvent the wheel, remember?

IDENTIFY THE UNIT

Now, let us look at some specifics, and start with the military records themselves. The earliest and most important item that genealogists need to identify in these is the military unit their ancestor belonged to.

In most Army cases this is the Regiment and Company—nearly every military record follows from this. Regiments, which are normally composed of around 1,000 men, are numbered (e.g. "23rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry"). Each regiment had ten companies,

which bear letters, such as "A Company." In the Revolution, which was less organized, these units often went by an officer's name, such as "Gist's Regiment" and "Chapman's Company." In modern jargon this is often spoken phonetically, such as "Easy Company" for "E Company."

The Navy equivalent is Ship and Function or Department, such as "USS Indiana" and "Gunnery"; for the Air Force it might be Wing and Squadron, i.e. "3rd Bomb Wing" and "3rd Field Maintenance Squadron." Group sizes will vary somewhat.

You really need to find this identification first, especially for men with common names—there were over 5,000 men named John Smith in the Union Army!

Some of the basic records generated are the enlistment forms (all-era military), muster rolls/cards (up to Civil War), draft records (Civil War, World War I, and World War II), and the discharge record (the modern version is Form DD-214). If you are lucky, you will find other forms and lists. Military historians have compiled much of the data

CHASING MILITARY RECORDS (continued)

from these records, and a wide variety of it has been published in books. Look especially for unit histories—these are treasure troves of personal data!

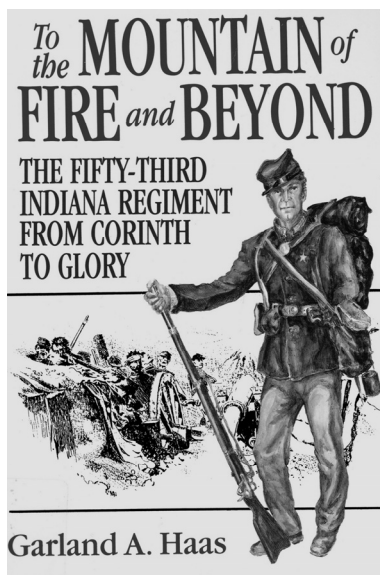
Pay attention to the names of the officers. Officers (who were commissioned by Congress to lead the military) were considered more important than the enlisted men and women who are mostly OUR ancestors. Books and articles are written most often about the officers, so you should use the officers to follow the track of your ordinary soldier. Haven't you heard that "Rank has its privileges"!

Rank, by the way, is the level of military importance of a person. The military services consider it very important, so, if you find your soldier's rank listed as "Sergeant," it is another clue to his identity and position and a good way to tell individuals apart. Don't be intimidated by the all the military jargon; there is a ton of it but the Internet can provide you with good explanations of it all.

Pension records, which for the most part are generated after the specific war is over, have a great advantage—they were filled out by our ancestors and their families. If anyone should know about these folks, they

10	25	Ohio.
Joseph Wilson		
, Co. V, 25 Reg't Ohio Infantry.		
Appears on		
Company Descriptive Book		
of the organization named above.		
DESCRIPTION.		
Age 23 years; height 5 feet 2 1/2 inches.		
Complexion Fair		
Eyes Blue; hair Light		
Where born Ohio		
Occupation Chair maker		
ENLISTMENT.		
When June 20, 1861		
Where Springfield Ohio		
By whom Sgt. Moseley; term 3 y'rs.		
Remarks:		

This muster card has birth and descriptive information.



This Civil War history has extensive material on the unit's members.

CHASING MILITARY RECORDS (continued)

No. 5. Have you any children living? If so, please state their names and the dates of their birth. Answer: 10 Hilda J. Darrah 16th Oct 1866
Lona A. Darrah Jan 28th 1872 Alexander Darrah
May 7th 1874, Helen V. Darrah Jan 7th 1876,
Ida J. Darrah Oct 3rd 1878, Bertha C. Darrah
May 20th 1880 Jacob B. Darrah Feb 26th 1882
Russel W. Darrah November 11th 1884, Anna Darrah
June 8th 1886, Glen J. Darrah Feb 7th 1888,
Date of reply, July 8, 1895.
0-2 Jacob B. Darrah (Signature)

This page from a pension file tells all about the veteran's children.

should themselves! [Based on my own mountaineer ancestors, though, this is not an infallible rule!]

The government passed the pension laws and sometimes printed the forms, but each veteran had to apply for himself. He (or his friends and relatives) had to prove his military service, his financial need, and his disability.

The net result was pages and pages of vital family data, years before this

information was available elsewhere. These files are in the National Archives, ready for you to use. The Revolutionary War files are even online at Heritage Quest. Many printed indexes and abstracts have been done on pen-

sion records; use them!

Back to this "not reinventing the wheel" idea: librarians and archivists have worked diligently to compile lists of military resources, and these lists are available as free handouts to you. Ask these professionals how

they can help. They love that sort of thing.

Many guides have been published on specific wars and specific

record groups, so don't waste time doing your own. There are endless bibliographic lists already prepared on military records and military methodology; find the ones you need and work your way down the page.

Indiana Legion (Civil War State Militia)

The Indiana General Assembly in its special session of 1861 passed legislation creating the Indiana Legion, revamping the moribund Indiana state militia for service in defense of the state. Legion companies were raised throughout Indiana, but those located along Indiana's Ohio River border were the only units (with the exception of companies called out to repel Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan's invasion of Indiana) to see active service in the war. Similar to the volunteer soldiers, the W.P.A. created a card file for Legion soldiers based on the Legion muster rolls. However, this card file is incomplete. The cards themselves generally list only the name of the soldier and the Legion unit in which he served. The card file has been microfilmed.

This is only one of several items included on military handouts created by the Indiana State Archives.

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213	INDIANA	Daugherty, Daniel S. 10th Inf. Co.I
Darby, Caleb C. (or Calab) 34th Inf. Co.K	Darling, William 135th Inf. Co.C	Darrah, William 29th Inf. Co.D
Darby, Daniel O. 5th Cav. Co.C	Darling, William 139th Inf. Co.B	Darrah, William 60th Inf. Co.B
Darby, David 99th Inf. Co.I Cpl.	Darling, William A. (or William) 147th Inf. Co.H	Darraugh, Lewis 11th Inf. Co.I
Darby, David M. Lt.Arty. 12th Btty.	Darlington, Meredith A. (or M.A.) 1st Cav. Co.D	Darraugh, Whitfield 55th Inf. Co.C,I Sgt.
Darby, Henry 134th Inf. Co.I	Darlington, Wilson M. (or Wilson) Lt.Arty. 5th Btty.	Darringer, James 75th Inf. Co.C
Darby, James H. 8th Cav. Co.C	Darlington, Ziba 16th Inf. Co.A	Darroch, Austin M. 99th Inf. Co.E Sgt.
Darby, James H. 89th Inf. Co.G Wag.	Darman, Elias 145th Inf.	Darroch, Daniel C. 51st Inf. Co.B
Darby, James K. 8th Inf. Co.I Sgt.	Darmer, John C. 51st Inf. Co.F	Darroch, Johnson R. 115th Inf. Co.I
Darby, James K. 69th Inf. Co.E Sgt.	Darmody, Philip 6th Inf. (3 mo. '61) Co.C	Darrock, Johnson R. 1st Hvy.Arty. Co.H
Darby, John (or John H.) 25th Inf. Co.H	Darnall, Alvarian 67th Inf. Co.A	Darrough, James 47th Inf. Co.D
Darby, John H. (or John) 25th Inf. Co.H Capt.	Darnell, Andrew L. (or A.L.) 43rd Inf. Sgt. Maj.	Darrough, James A. 86th Inf. Co.I
Darby, John M. 89th Inf. Co.C Capt.		Darrough, Joseph 47th Inf. Co.D

This multi-volume set *Roster of Union Soldiers, 1861-65*, edited by Janet Hewett, is an alphabetical listing of every Yankee soldier.

Millions of our ancestors served in America's military forces during the last 25+ decades; hundreds of millions of pages of data exist about them. These pages are an invaluable source of family history for you. Go get it!

STARKE COUNTY BUSINESSES, 1902
Submitted by PEG BRETTIN


from *McCormick's Guide to Starke County: Or A Past and A Present View of Our Territory* by Chester A. McCormick (self-published, 1902).

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