

CIVIL WAR PENSION RECORDS
VCGS Wednesday Genealogy Class

Identifying a Soldier:

1. Military record indexes:
 - [NPS Soldiers & Sailors Database](#) (no image): index created in 1880s from muster rolls; no wildcards, try various spellings; links to regimental histories & battles.
 - [FamilySearch.org](#) (no image): better search engine.
 - Ancestry's [US Civil War Soldiers Records and Profiles](#): also draws on state rosters, pension records, regimental histories.
2. Pension indexes and cards:
 - [Ancestry.com](#) (includes images/T288), [Fold3.com](#) (includes images/T289; select "Civil War," then "Civil War and Later Veterans Pension Index").
 - For more info on "C" and "XC" certificate numbers, go to the [NA blog](#) for May 14, 2010.
3. Other sources for identifying soldiers:
 - Census records (1890 veterans' schedule, partial; 1910, col. 30): Search indexes (with images) at Heritage Quest (lib.), FamilySearch (free), or Ancestry.com (lib. or \$\$).
 - Obituaries: Search newspaper databases (see Judy's handout on same), and Ancestry.com. Also, cemetery databases like FindAGrave and Interment. Or look in the family Bible!
 - Family photos: Use resources like Maureen Taylor's *Finding the Civil War in Your Family Album* for clues in identifying your soldier photo.

Union Pension Files:

1. Housed at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. ("Archives I"). Website for online ordering or downloading and printing order form: [National Archives and Records Administration](#) (www.archives.gov). To order, click on:
 - 1) "Genealogists" (bottom left column)
 - 2) "Genealogy Research in Military Records"
 - 3) Scroll down to "Pension claim files..." Decide on whether you want to just download the form (click on "NATF Form 85") or order online ("Order online"). Click on your choice.
2. For online ordering, you will need to set up an account with the National Archives online:
 - 1) Select "Complete File" or "Pension Documents Packet" (second or fourth item).
 - 2) "Select a Delivery Format" (CD or paper), then "Add to Cart."
 - 3) Screen for creating a NARA account: Click on "New User?" and follow instructions for creating a User ID and Password. If a returning customer, then enter login information and click "Login."
 - 4) Complete form on next screen with information on soldier. Required information is noted with a red asterisk (*). Several fields have drop-down menus identifiable by down-arrow on right side of box – make your selections using the arrow. When finished, click on "Continue to Pay & Ship."
3. If you choose instead to print a form and mail it in, they will take you to a list of documents to order that is titled "Order Online." (*No, that's not a misprint!*) Notice that "Download the Form" is also an option for all forms listed.
 - a. Scroll down to "Military Pension...NATF Form 85" and click on "Download the Form."
 - b. Then be patient. It will take up to a minute to download the PDF (perhaps longer with a slower connection). When it does appear, print, complete the information required, write a check, send it in (following their instructions on pages 1 and 2).

Questions? Contact Lyn Gesch at geschm@hotmail.com.

Confederate Pension Records:

1. No federal pension; individual states provided for their veterans (terms vary)
2. Good sources for finding out what's available where:
 - National Archives website (Military Records>Civil War>Confederate Pension Records): [Confederate Pension Records](#)
 - or, [FamilySearch Research Wiki for info on each Confederate state](#) and live links to web pages with more info, indexes, or actual images.

Some suggested readings:

- (F) Prechtel-Kluskens, Claire. "["A Reasonable Degree of Promptitude': Civil War Pension Application Processing, 1861-1885.](#)" *Prologue*, Spring 2010, vol. 42, no. 1.
- (F) Prechtel-Kluskens, Claire. "[Anatomy of a Union Civil War Pension File.](#)" *NGS Magazine*, July-Sep 2008, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 42-47.
More at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/genealogy-notes.html#civwar>.
- (\$) Norris, David A. [Tracing Your Civil War Ancestors](#). (Moorshead Magazines Ltd., 2011; pub. *Family Chronicle & Internet Genealogy*). Good description of wide range of resources on Civil War era soldiers and civilians. (Link takes you to Amazon.com.)