



Houston Public Library
**Clayton Library Center
for Genealogical Research**
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Modern Military Research, or how to find your 20th century military relative

All genealogy is questions???? Start with the Basics

Is the person you are researching, alive or dead?

Which branch of the military were they in?

Army, Army Air Corps, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard, Coast Guard Reserve, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Merchant Marine

When did they separate from service?

If separation date is more than 62 years ago their records are at the National Archives (NARA) if less than 62 years ago their records are at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO.

What time period were they in the military?

Corollary is when did the person live?

What wars/military actions took place during this time period that your relatives may have been involved with?

1898: Spanish-American War (Cuba, Philippine Islands)
1899-1902: Philippine Insurrection (Philippine Islands)
1900: Boxer Rebellion (China)
1914, April: Tampico and Vera Cruz Incidents (Mexico)
1916-1917: Mexican Punitive Expedition (Mexico)
1914-1918: World War I (Europe)
1939-1945: World War II (Europe, Asia, the Pacific, Africa)
1950-1953: Korean War (Korea)
1954-1975: Vietnam War (Vietnam)
1990-1991: Desert Shield/Desert Storm (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait)
2001- : Afghan War
2003- : Iraq War

What type of service person were they?

Were they in the regular service? Were they a volunteer? Draftee? Alternate service? What rank did the person hold? Officer? Warrant officer? Enlisted personnel?

What official sources of information can you use?

- National Personnel Records Center – holder of service records less than 62 years old
- National Archives – holder of service records more than 62 years old
- Branch of the service –
- Veteran’s Administration
- State offices and archives
- County offices
- Other local agencies/offices

Begin library searching with the basics: Searching a library catalog for these materials.

- **War specific subject headings**
 - Spanish-American War, 1898 (War of 1898 is used with geographic locations)
 - Philippines -- History -- Philippine American War, 1899-1902
 - Boxer Rebellion, 1899-1901
 - Punitive Expedition into Mexico, 1916
 - World War, 1914-1918
 - World War, 1939-1945
 - Korean War, 1950-1953
 - Vietnam War, 1961-1975
 - Operation Desert Shield, 1990-1991
 - Persian Gulf War, 1991
 - Afghan War, 2001-
 - Iraq War, 2003-
- **Branch of “service” specific subject headings**
 - United States. Army
 - United States. Army Air Forces
 - United States. Air Force
 - United States. Marine Corps
 - United States. Navy
 - United States. Coast Guard
 - United States -- National Guard (use if looking for stuff about the Guard)
 - United States -- National Guard Bureau
 - United States. National Guard Bureau (use if looking for stuff written by the Guard)
 - United States -- Armed Forces -- Reserves
 - Merchant marine -- United States
 - Merchant mariners -- United States
- **Additional subject headings that can be helpful for military research.**
 - Military
 - Regimental histories
 - Prisoners and prisons, American or Prisoners and prisons, German, etc.
 - Prisoners of war -- United States. (substitute other geographic locations for United States)
 - Soldiers
 - Veterans

- Camp Hearne -- History. (substitute other camp or fort names as needed)
- **Using other library resources such as databases**
 - Ancestry Library edition
 - Fold3 database
- **Newspaper Databases**
 - Newspapers published many things about the military; draft notices, movement of soldiers from place to place, letters from soldiers, vital records (i.e. deaths or marriages) of soldiers.

Using the Internet to search

National Archives - <http://www.archives.gov>

- Archival Resources Catalog (ARC) Access to Archival Databases (AAD)

Online Military Indexes and Records: A Genealogy Guide

- <http://www.militaryindexes.com/index.html>

National Museum of the United States Army – Soldier’s Registry

- <https://armyhistory.org/> Click on History Center then search soldier registry

National World War II Museum

- <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/>

National World War II Memorial

- <http://www.wwiimemorial.com>

The American War Library – <http://www.amervets.com>

- What they say about themselves: “The World's Largest On-line Military, Veteran, and Military Family Registry. Over 101 million Military Listings from Pre-Revolutionary War to the Present”
- You need to download some software from their site to search their database. (some dead links)

National Women’s history Museum – search “War” on the site

- <https://www.womenshistory.org>

W.A.S.P. on the Web

- <http://www.wingsacrossamerica.us/wasp/>

Women of World War 2

- <https://www.womenofwwii.com>

World War 2 Database

- <http://ww2db.com/>

Family Search

- <http://www.familysearch.org>
- multiple database files such as, United States Veterans Administration Master Index 1917-1940

Military abbreviations you may see

DNB Died non-battle causes

DOI Died of injuries

DOW Died of wounds

FOD Finding of death

KIA Killed in action

MIA Missing in action

W.A.C. and W.A.A.C. Women's (Auxiliary) Army Corps, women's branch of the United States Army

W.A.S.P.’s Women Airforce Service Pilots, paramilitary aviation organization under United States Army Air Forces

W.A.V.E.S. Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, WW II women's branch of the United States Naval Reserve

W.A.F. Women in the Air Force, post WW II

SPARS or SPARs the nickname for the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve

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Searching for Military Records

1. If the soldier/veteran is alive, start with they.
2. Check home sources for discharge papers, paperwork for awards, pictures, etc.
3. Continue by searching official sources.
 - a. Send a Form 180 for a copy of the veteran's military record.
 - b. If it is unavailable, try the Veterans Affairs, local, state, & national.
 - c. Then check the county courthouse for a copy of the discharge papers.
4. Check for a military tombstone.
 - a. This gives you the branch of service and possible religion. May give a unit.
5. Check databases in Ancestry such as:
 - a. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010?
 - b. U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946
 - c. U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1949
 - d. The various casualty lists
 - e. The various national cemetery lists
 - f. The various prisoner of war lists
6. Check in the Fold3 database.
7. Check newspapers and newspaper databases for information about the soldier.
8. Check Clayton Library and other libraries for books or microfilm that will help.
9. Check local historical societies for information about local troops.
10. Check for unit histories or reunion groups on the web.