



WORKBOOK

Draft Records

BY SHELLEY K. BISHOP

➤ **US MILITARY DRAFT** records are potentially untapped sources of information on male ancestors and sometimes their female family members. Even men who didn't serve in the military may have had to register under one of the conscription acts for the Civil War, World War I, or World War II. Online resources make it easy for today's savvy researcher to find and use draft records as a springboard for family history discoveries. We'll give you an overview of registration records created between 1862 and 1945, identify where to find them, and explain how to expand on the information they provide. We'll also give your skills a boost with more resources to explore, a bit of practice interpreting these records, and a worksheet to chart your searches.

Clues in Draft Records

Local districts or boards conducted draft registrations to identify men eligible for service in times of war—specifically, the Civil War and World Wars. Many of the registration lists and cards these boards created survive, providing a deep well of data on several generations of American men. Those born as early as 1816 and as late as 1920 could've been eligible to be drafted for one or more of these three wars.

Questions the draft boards asked registrants varied from war to war, and even from one registration to the next. Typically, you'll find information about the registrant's name, residence, age, date and place of birth, race, US citizenship and occupation.

Depending on the registration, you also may discover details about your ancestor's previous or current military service, his marital status, the name and address of a relative or contact person, a physical description, and his signature.

These findings can move your research forward in many ways. Birth information can tell you about births that occurred long before a state began keeping vital records. A

woman named as a man's nearest relative might narrow your search for a marriage record. An immigrant's claim to be a US citizen could lead to naturalization papers.

Draft information is also useful in combination with other evidence. Residence and occupation details can distinguish your relative from others with the same name. If you're "missing" a person in census records, a draft registration can indicate where he lived. Descriptions of height, build, hair and eye color can help you visualize your ancestor.

Civil War

Prior to the Civil War, the federal and state governments relied on offering free public land to attract volunteer soldiers in wartime. These bounty land incentives were discontinued by 1855. The Civil War brought an unprecedented need for troops on both the Union and Confederate sides. Governors from Maine to Mississippi issued calls for volunteers beginning in 1861. As the war escalated, the need for men reached crucial heights. Without the promise of free land to spur recruits (an incentive in previous wars), how could this demand be met?

Although the idea of a national draft faced considerable opposition in the North, it seemed the only viable solution. The Enrollment Act of 1863 required all men age 20 to 45 to register within their Congressional District, which often covered several counties.

The first Union registration took place July 1, 1863. Three smaller enrollments followed. For eligibility purposes, men were divided into classes. Those age 20 to 35 years, plus unmarried men age 36 to 45, were designated Class I. Nearly everyone else was Class II. In addition to name and residence, Northern draft registers typically show:

- age on the registration date
- whether white or colored

- occupation or trade
- whether married
- state or country of birth

The registrations were assembled into consolidated lists, many of which survive. You can find digital images of existing consolidated lists on subscription site Ancestry.com (which you can use free at libraries offering Ancestry Library Edition). For more-focused results, search within the site's US Military Records collection, <ancestry.com/cs/us/militaryrecords>. As a starting point, enter your ancestor's name and where you think he lived in 1863.

The original consolidated lists are in Record Group 110 (Records of the Provost Marshal General) at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <archives.gov> in Washington, DC. The registration books from which they were compiled, which sometimes contain additional information, haven't been microfilmed or digitized. They're held at NARA's regional branches.

If your ancestor registered, does that mean he served in the war? Not necessarily. Those in Class II were rarely made to serve. Each community and state was responsible for filling a quota of men. If they could raise that number with volunteers, no one needed to be drafted, so volunteers were heavily encouraged. Some states, like Massachusetts and Ohio, never had to call up draftees. Even if they were drafted, men could be exempted from service if they were:

- physically or mentally impaired
- only sons of dependent widows or infirm parents
- widowers or orphans supporting young children

FAST FACTS

- **RECORD COVERAGE:** Civil War, World War I, World War II
- **KEY DETAILS IN DRAFT RECORDS:** name, address, age, date and/or place of birth, race, citizenship status, marital status, employment information, name of nearest relative, physical characteristics
- **FIND ORIGINAL RECORDS AT:** National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <archives.gov> in Washington, DC; Southeast Region Archives in Atlanta; other NARA branches, and National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis
- **RESEARCH ONLINE AT:** Ancestry.com <ancestry.com>, FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org>, Findmypast.com <www.findmypast.com>, Fold3.com <www.fold3.com>
- **SEARCH TERMS:** Civil War (or WWI or WWII) plus draft records; US draft registration records
- **ASSOCIATED/SUBSTITUTE RECORDS:** military enlistment rosters, service records, state adjutant general's records, military unit histories, military pension records, newspapers, and county histories

Men born as early as 1816 and as late as 1920 could've been eligible to be drafted for one—or more—wars.

- non-citizens who hadn't declared intent to naturalize
- convicted of a felony
- able to furnish a substitute or pay a \$300 fee

The South also instituted a draft. The Confederate Conscription Act of 1862 required all white males age 18 to 35 years to register. This was extended to ages 17 to 50 by early 1864. Ministers, teachers, civil officials, tradesmen, railroad workers and plantation owners were typically exempt. Initially, a man could hire a substitute and pay up to \$1,000 to avoid service, but that allowance was scrapped in late 1863 due to bitter opposition. Men already enlisted for one-year terms automatically saw their service extended to three years.

There are no consolidated lists of Confederate registrations. Each Southern state conducted its own drafts. Many times, troops raised by conscript were merged with existing units. Relatively few Confederate conscription registers survive today, and those that do can be difficult to find.

The best place to begin your search for any existing Southern conscription records is in the state adjutant general's records. Some states compiled and published adjutant general records after the war. Georgia, for instance, published six volumes of *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia*, which are available free on Google Books <books.google.com>.

If your ancestors lived in Tennessee, search the Civil War Sourcebook <www.tnsos.net/TSLA/cwsourcebook>, a digital collection of official records, diaries, letters and newspaper articles. South Carolina offers information about its Confederate Military Records at <archives.sc.gov/recordsheld/militaryrecords>. To learn more about Civil War records for individual states, North or South, see <www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Civil_War_1861_to_1865,_Part_1>.

World War I

The need for a national draft emerged again in 1917 when the United States entered the Great War. In response, Congress created the Selective Service System, consisting of local and state draft boards under the Office of the Provost Marshal. Three registrations took place in 1917 and 1918. In total, about 24 million men between the ages of 18 and 45, including noncitizens, were required to register. If your relative was born between September 1872 and September 1900, he was probably among them.

A draft board official asked questions of each man and recorded the answers on individual, two-sided cards. The questions varied by registration, but in general noted:

AT A GLANCE:

CIVIL WAR DRAFT LIST

SCHEDULE II.—CONSOLIDATED LIST of all persons of **CLASS II**, subject to do military duty in the 6th Montgomery and Lehigh State of Pennsylvania, enumerated John J. Broadley Provost Marshal.

RESIDENCE	NAME	DESCRIPTION			PLACE OF BIRTH (Naming the State, Territory, or Country.)	FORM
		AGE 1st July 1863	WHITE OR COLORED	PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE		
Shohocken	1 Egbert Frank	44	White	Blk Smith	Penna.	
"	2 Elliot Samuel	55	"	Laborer	Delaware	4
W. Norristown	3 Enderly Joseph	39	"	Restaurant	Germany	
"	4 Edler William	42	"	Grocer	"	
"	5 Espwright Rudolph	44	"	Shoemaker	Monty. Co	
Hulthenham	6 Engle Albert J.	36	"	Merchant	Penna	
"	7 Elliot William	44	"	Broker	Engl and	
"	8 Emory John	37	"	Farmer	Maryland	
"	9 Engle Eli	43	"	"	Penna.	

1 This list (which is shown split into halves for larger viewing) was compiled in Pennsylvania's Montgomery and Lehigh counties in June 1863. Registrants' names are grouped by township.

2 Class II lists named primarily married men between ages 35 and 45. Younger and unmarried men were in Class I.

3 Occupation can help identify ancestors. Compare this listing of Samuel Elliot, laborer, to 1860 and other census records.

4 Place of birth offers clues to where men came from. Samuel Elliot may appear in Delaware records.

5 Union Civil War draftees could pay a \$300 commutation fee or send a substitute in their place, as William Elliot did.

military duty in the 6th Congressional District, consisting of the Counties of Pennsylvania, enumerated during the month of June, 1863, under direction of

PROFESSION, TRADE	PLACE OF BIRTH (Naming the State, Territory, or Country.)	FORMER MILITARY SERVICE	REMARKS
Smith	Penna.		1
Laborer	Delaware		2
Restaurant	Germany		3
Grocer	"		4
Shoemaker	Monty. Co		5
Merchant	Penna		6
Broker	Engl and	Drafted	7 Sent a substitute.
Farmer	Maryland		8
"	Penna.		9

CITATION FOR THIS RECORD: "U.S. Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865," digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 10 March 2015), entry for Samuel Elliot in list for 6th Congressional District, Class II: Montgomery and Lehigh, Pennsylvania (June 1863).

AT A GLANCE:

WWI DRAFT CARDS

REGISTRATION CARD

SERIAL NUMBER *311* ORDER NUMBER *209*

1 *Gilman Stanton Sanborn*
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

2 PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS: *Cody Park Wyo*
(No.) (Street or R. F. D. No.) (City or town) (County) (State)

Age in Years *45* Date of Birth *Sep 29 1872*
3 (Month) 4 (Day) (Year)

1 RACE **2**

White	Negro	Oriental	Indian	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Citizen	Non-citizen
5	6	7	8	9

U. S. CITIZEN **3** ALIEN

Native Born	Naturalized	Citizen by Father's Naturalization Before Registrant's Majority	Declarant	Non-declarant
10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	12	13	14

15 If not a citizen of the U. S., of what nation are you a citizen or subject?

16 PRESENT OCCUPATION *Farmer* EMPLOYER'S NAME *J. B. Goff*

18 PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: *Cody Park Wyo*
(No.) (Street or R. F. D. No.) (City or town) (County) (State)

4

NEAREST RELATIVE Name *Gertrude D Sanborn* Address *Cody Park Wyo*
19 (No.) (Street or R. F. D. No.) (City or town) (County) (State)
20

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE

P. M. G. O. *G. D. Sanborn*
Form No. 1 (Rev. 1917) (Registrant's signature or mark) (OVER)

1 At 45 years old, Gilman Stanton Sanborn was at the upper end of the draft range. The Selective Service Act required men age 18 to 45 to register.

2 Draft cards can substitute for early birth records. Gilman was born in 1872. Like many states, Wyoming didn't begin keeping birth records until the early 1900s.

3 WWI draft cards indicate whether immigrants were naturalized or if not, whether they had declared intention for citizenship.

4 Who was Gertrude D. Sanborn, Gilman's nearest relative? Draft records often provide evidence of wives, parents or siblings.

5 Each card has two sides. The reverse notes the man's physical description, with a stamp showing where he registered.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT *PARK-C*

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

HEIGHT			BUILD			COLOR OF EYES	COLOR OF HAIR
Tall	Medium	Short	Slender	Medium	Stock		
21	22 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	23	24	25 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26	27 <i>Light Blue</i>	28 <i>Dark Brown</i>

29 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, eye, or is he obviously physically disqualified? (Specify.) *no*

5

Local Board for the County of _____ State of Wyoming. _____ Cody, Wyoming (STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the area in which the registrant has his permanent home shall be placed in this box.)

CS-6171 (OVER)

CITATION FOR THIS RECORD: "U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 7 March 2015), card for Gilman Stanton Sanborn, serial no. 311, Cody, Park County, Wyoming.



TIP: If a WWI registrant was African-American, the registrar was to tear off the lower left corner of his draft card.

TOOLKIT

- name and age
- address
- date and place of birth
- citizenship status
- occupation and employer
- race and physical description

Some registrations also asked marital status, the name and address of the man's nearest relative, his father's birthplace, or information about dependants. Unless he was illiterate, the registrant signed his card to verify accuracy. Draft boards used the cards to determine which men to call up for service. They kept docket books listing the names and actions taken. Only a small percentage of those who registered were actually drafted.

Because they cover nearly 98 percent of the male population between 18 and 45 years old, WWI draft cards represent a tremendous resource for genealogists. Even if your ancestor didn't have to register, he or she might've had a brother who did. The cards can reveal unknown birth dates and places, the names of wives and/or parents, and clues to marriages and naturalization.

Digital images of WWI draft registration cards are online at Ancestry.com, Findmypast <www.findmypast.com> and the free FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org>. When searching these sites, start by entering your ancestor's name and likely residence at the time of registration. If you get too many results, filter them by adding a probable birth year and/or state. If you get too few, try variant name spellings (you can use the asterisk wildcard to substitute for zero or more letters). Each record consists of two images, the front and back of the card—be sure to view both.

The original registration cards are in Record Group 163 at the National Archives Southeast Region in Atlanta. Local docket books, classification lists, and miscellaneous papers relating to draft records may be found in state archives or National Archives regional locations.

World War II

When the Great War ended, so did military registration. There was no ongoing US draft in the 1920s and 1930s. Then escalating world conflict led to the first-ever peacetime registration in October 1940. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, thousands of men voluntarily enlisted in the service. But with war raging on multiple fronts, the need for soldiers, airmen, and sailors was far greater. Congress passed a new Selective Service Act requiring all males between ages 18 and 45 to register.

For the most part, WWII registrations of young men (born from February 1897 to July 1927) haven't been publicly released due to privacy concerns. But some restrictions are lifting. Full-color digital images of North Carolina draft registrations are now online in the WWII collection at Fold3 <www.fold3.com>. Ancestry.com has a collection of US WWII

Websites

- **Ancestry.com: Draft, Enlistment and Service records**
<search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=126>
- **Cyndi's List: US Military Records**
<cyndislist.com/us/military/records>
- **FamilySearch Wiki: US Military Draft Records**
<www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Draft_Records>
- **FamilySearch.org**
<www.familysearch.org>
- **Findmypast.com**
<www.findmypast.com>
- **Fold3** <www.fold3.com>
- **Linkpendium** <www.linkpendium.com>:
Click links for the place you're interested in, then look for a military records section.
- **Military Classifications for Draftees**
<www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/conscientiousobjection/MilitaryClassifications.htm>
- **Mocavo: Military Draft Records**
<www.mocavo.com/records/Military-Draft-Records>
- **National Archives: Military Records**
<archives.gov/research/military>
- **National Archives Regional Record Centers**
<archives.gov/locations>
- **National Personnel Records Center**
<archives.gov/st-louis>
- **Online Military Indexes & Records**
<www.militaryindexes.com>
- **Selective Service Records**
<archives.gov/st-louis/archival-programs/other-records/selective-service.html>

Publications and Resources

- *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States*, 3rd Edition, by Anne Bruner Eales and Robert M. Kvasnicka (NARA)
- *One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North* by Eugene Murdock (State Historical Society of Wisconsin)
- *Uncle, We Are Ready! Registering America's Men, 1917-1918* by John J. Newman (Heritage Quest)
- *US Military Records* by James C. Neagles (Ancestry)

Put It Into Practice

1. True or False: Only men who were US citizens were required to register for the draft.

2. The first draft registrations in the United States occurred during the:

- War of 1812
- Civil War
- World War I

3. WWI draft registrations covered nearly what percent of males between 18 and 45 years old?

EXERCISE A: Go to the United States WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1942 collection on FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1861144>. Enter the name *Roy Eberhard* in the name search box. Select the first result, Roy David Eberhard of Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio. View the document and answer the following:

1. Where and when was Roy born?

2. What company did he work for?

3. Who was named as the person who would always know his whereabouts?

4. How tall was Roy? (Hint: click the Image arrow button to advance to the next image.)

EXERCISE B: Choose an ancestor who was of age to be registered for the draft during the Civil War, World War I or World War II. Search for him in the databases on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Findmypast.com, or Fold3, as discussed in this article. What did you find?

Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, which includes cards from Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina. In time, cards from other states will likely become available.

The fourth registration, conducted April 27, 1942, required men born between April 28, 1877, and Feb. 16, 1897, to register. These men were 45 to 64 years old at the time. Nicknamed the “Old Man’s Draft,” this registration included many who’d already served—or at least registered—for World War I. Its intent was to gather information about older men’s skills and occupations that could be utilized in manufacturing, transportation and other aspects of the war effort.

As for the First World War, registrants’ answers to several questions were recorded on two-sided cards:

- name and age
- date and place of birth
- residence address
- telephone number
- place of employment or business
- employer’s name and address
- name and address of a contact person
- race and physical characteristics

The “Old Man’s” registration cards for most states have been microfilmed and digitized. You’ll find collections on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and Fold3. On any of these sites, start with a general name and place search, being aware of possible spelling variations. Narrow your search with additional fields, such as birthplace and year, if necessary.

Keep in mind that you should find two images for a single registrant. The cards for Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin were microfilmed in such a way that the front of one man’s card appears with the reverse of the previous man’s card, so take particular care to get the right match when working with the records of those states.

These collections aren’t complete, however, as registration cards for some states were destroyed before being microfilmed. No Fourth Registration records survive for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina or Tennessee. For New York, only those from the boroughs of New York City survive. Other states or parts of a state may be missing from a particular database. If you don’t find the results you expect, read the notes that accompany the database to learn about its coverage.

The original cards for all six WWII draft registrations are at NARA’s National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis. They’re divided into two groups: one for the Old Man’s Draft, and one for the other five drafts of younger men. You can request a copy of an individual’s card using the Selective Service Record Request form, available at <archives.gov/st-louis/archival-programs/other-records/na-13172.pdf>.

Using Draft Records

Once you’ve found a draft record, you’ll want to get all the information you can from it. What does it tell you about your

MORE ONLINE

Free Web Content

- Military research guide
<familytreemagazine.com/article/At-Your-Service-Military-Research-Guide>
- Military records resources
<familytreemagazine.com/article/Military-Records-Toolkit>
- WWI genealogy resources
<familytreemagazine.com/article/World-War-I-Genealogy-Resources>

For Plus Members

- 10 Best Civil War Websites
<familytreemagazine.com/article/10-best-civil-war-websites>
- Document Detective: WWI Draft Registration Cards
<familytreemagazine.com/article/Document-Detective-WWI-Draft-Registrations>
- Websites for finding WWI records
<familytreemagazine.com/article/ww1-genealogy-websites>

ShopFamilyTree.com

- Civil War Research video course
<shopfamilytree.com/civil-war-research-independent-study-course-1>
- *The Genealogist's US History Pocket Reference* <shopfamilytree.com/genealogists-us-history-pocket-reference-u0774>
- US Military Records video course
<shopfamilytree.com/us-military-records-download>

ancestor? Is this consistent with what you already know about him? There might've been many men with similar names in any given state. Analyzing the information is crucial to making sure you've found the right one.

Compare facts such as birth date and place with information from census records and death records. The name of a specific town or township of birth is an important detail, giving you a place to dig for other family records. If the draft registration database reveals other men with the same surname born in the same place, you'll want to investigate a possible kinship between them. Could they be brothers?

Consider his occupation as well. Draft records generally provide more details about employment than census records. You may find the name and address of the company or landowner your ancestor worked for. Exploring this further can provide a lot of interesting material for your family history.

Many draft records asked questions about birthplace and US citizenship. If your ancestor wasn't born in America, his draft registration might indicate if he'd started or completed the naturalization process. Based on this, you can search for a passenger list, declaration of intention, and/or final papers. Non-citizens who agreed to fight for the United States often received expedited naturalization after the war.

Both WWI and WWII draft records list the name and address of the nearest relative or "person who will always know your address." Who did your ancestor put down for this? Married men typically named their wives. Unmarried or widowed men might've named a parent, sibling, friend or employer. If you don't recognize the person your ancestor named, try to determine who he or she was. You could discover a relationship you didn't know about.

It's particularly interesting to compare the cards of those who registered as young men for World War I and again in the Old Man's Draft for World War II. These records give you snapshots of your ancestor at two points in time, about 25 years apart. Note the differences in address, employment, nearest relative or contact person and physical traits.

Finding a draft record naturally leads to the question of whether or not an individual actually served in the war he registered for. To determine this, you'll want to learn more

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE ANSWERS

- 1 False 2 b 3 98 percent **EXERCISE A** 1 Allentown, Pa., March 9, 1894
2 Pennsylvania Railroad 3 Mrs. Roy D. Eberhard 4 5 feet, 5 inches

about the records created for that particular war. Enlistment records, service records, discharge papers, state adjutant generals' reports, and published unit histories are among the places you might look. Many of these resources are now available online. For an overview, see the United States Military Records wiki on FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Records>.

You might also find accounts of men who served in a county history book or local newspapers. During the Civil War, newspapers often published notices of enlistments and events. They sometimes published lists of those attending GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) events in later years, or noted an old soldier's service unit in his obituary. Also search for your potential Civil War ancestor in the 1890 veterans' census, soldiers' home records and pension files. Because they usually contain a good deal of documentation, pension records are particularly worth seeking out. Our Military Pension Records Workbook <shopfamilytree.com/workbook-military-pension-records> can help you get started.

Cemetery records are another way to confirm service, as many veterans' gravestones bear military inscriptions or markers. Gravestone photographs and memorials on Find A Grave <www.findagrave.com> and Billion Graves <billiongraves.com> often indicate military service. Some towns and counties have constructed veterans' memorials or published lists of those who served in various conflicts.

Military draft registrations served a specific government purpose in times of war. Knowing how and why draft records were created can help you use the information to better understand your ancestors. Draft registrations can provide evidence of birth dates and places, marriages, names of parents or other relatives, addresses, employment, physical appearance, and more. Used in conjunction with other evidence, these details allow you to develop a fuller picture of your ancestor's life, and pave the way to future discoveries. ■

MILITARY DRAFT RECORDS WORKSHEET

Use this form to organize information that can help you in your search for an ancestor's military draft registration. If you're not sure of a detail, leave it blank or provide your best guess(es) based on research you've done. Update the information as you discover more.

ANCESTOR INFORMATION

Name _____

Birth date/approximate year _____

Birthplace _____

State(s) and county(ies) where he resided before and during the war _____

Occupation(s) _____

Names of parents _____

Name of first/only wife _____

Marriage date and place _____

Name of second wife, if any _____

Marriage date and place _____

MILITARY DRAFT ELIGIBILITY

For which war(s) was ancestor eligible to be registered for the draft?

Civil War (men born about 1811-1848) World War I (men born about 1872-1900) World War II (men born about 1877-1925)

If Civil War, Union or Confederate side? _____

How old was person when war began or US entered war? _____

(Civil War began 1861; US entered World War I in 1917; US entered World War II in 1941)

Have you found any indication that this person served in the war? _____

If so, what and where found? _____

DRAFT RECORDS SEARCH TRACKER

Source/Database Searched	Website or Repository	Date Searched