

FOLLOWING THE ARMIES: RESEARCHING MILITARY MAPS

THE COLONIAL ERA TO VIETNAM WAR

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INTRODUCTION:

Military maps are an invaluable resource of to know where an ancestors may have served on the field of battle. Having knowledge of the military unit can help place their regiment, battalion, brigade, or division on the field to determine their footsteps.

Focus on those maps that contain valuable military information from the colonial period through the end of nineteenth century where the United States was in the conflict during the Spanish-American War and continues on through the Vietnam War.

MILITARY MAPS-BRIEF HISTORY:

No independent organization existed in the colonies during the colonial era. Military maps drawn in the colonies were authorized under the direction of the Royal Corps of Engineers in England.

On March 11, 1779 during the Revolutionary War the Continental Congress authorized the creation of the Army Corps of Engineers. This organization under the direction of George Washington was essential in their role to gain our independence at some of the most critical battles at locations including Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Yorktown, VA. After the war ended in 1783 the Corps was disbanded.

In 1794 the United States Congress created the Corps of Artillerist and Engineers to serve the same capacity as the late war. Later on March 16, 1802 by another Act of Congress the United States Corps of Engineers. The corps operated from the military academy located at West Point, NY.

On July 4, 1838 the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers-was authorized by

Act of Congress to perform both civil and military work. This included the exploration of the west, constructing public buildings, and monuments, the erection of lighthouses and piers for harbors. The two separate agencies operated each independent of the other. On Marcy 31, 1863 during the Civil War they merged together and were simply called the Corp of Engineers.

During the Civil War the Confederate States Government formed their own separate Corps of Engineers from 1861-1865 during the war duration. This elite organization had many talented engineers and surveyors (some former U.S. Officers), who then served the Confederacy faithfully.

Although not officially part of the U.S. Corps of Engineers the United States Coast Survey was initially formed on February 10, 1807 when President Thomas Jefferson signed an Act to provide surveying the coast of the United States. This would become critical during periods of war for the military. As a loose organization it was formally organized as the U.S. Coast Survey in 1878 then known as Coast and Geodetic Survey. Later to be known as NOAA or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration founded in 1970.

TYPES OF MILITARY MAPS:

Forts and Fortifications-Very popular form of military map showing forts and their areas surrounding fortifications. The maps often showed the defensive walls of the fort, used by the enemy to probe for weaknesses in another armies defensive positions.

Panoramic Maps-These maps became a very popular form of cartographic mapping depicting both towns and cities landscapes from across the United States from the latter

half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. They are also referred to as “Bird Eye” or “Aero” view maps. The maps were not photographs, but were renditions taken from drawings. The maps are generally not drawn to scale; and typically show streets and roads; individual public buildings, houses, churches, and businesses. During war periods some of these maps aided armies to navigate towns and villages.

Battlefield Maps-Countless battlefield maps were drawn and published by commercial firms and individual surveyors and engineers who fought in the armies. These maps cover the colonial era until more recent war periods.

Route Maps-One of the most drawn maps for use by the military were route maps that showed the routes taken by armies in the field. These maps cover multiple wars.

Newspaper Maps-Another source of military maps can be found in newspapers during the war periods. Usually published in larger metro areas like New York; the maps served to keep the published informed about the fighting front. During the Civil War the *New York Illustrated News*, and *New York Herald* published timely maps of the war areas.

Propaganda Maps-These maps were more widely used during World War I and later during World War II. Although they were used in earlier war periods. One of more well known propaganda maps was drawn by J.B. Elliott of Cincinnati titled “*Scott’s Great Snake*” in 1861 depicting the Union Army plan to strangle the commerce of the south.

Topographical Maps-Useful maps that give details about the topography of the land where armies would fight and rendezvous on the field. Typically showing land contours,

creeks, streams, locations of homes and properties. Drawn over decades.

Situation Maps-These maps are helpful in displaying the tactical situation of armies in the field covering a particular time. One of the largest collection of situation maps cover the period of World War II from 1944-1945 showing details of military campaigns, and locations of units on both sides.

Draft Registration Maps-Between 1917 and 1918 as the United States became actively engaged in World War approximately 24 million men (both aliens and native born residents) born between 1873 and 1900 were required to fill out draft registration cards. In larger cities and communities maps were needed to show WWI draft board registration information. The maps were an important part on organizing the boundaries of larger cities to find someone who had registered. Consult the National Archives in College Park, MD or in Washington, DC for access to the maps.

Railroad Maps-The most efficient way to transport soldiers, and supplies under the direction of the quartermaster was through the transport of railroads. During the Civil War both sides effectively used railroad to move supplies and reinforcements as needed in battles and campaigns. Many railroad maps exist that show designated routes.

City Plans-Maps of urban cities can also be used in military research. Larger cities in border areas around locations where armies would fight can offer another way to look at how our ancestors were affected by a given war. During the Civil War cities like that of Washington, DC had their own maps that showed both siege and defensive positions.

CARTOGRAPHERS:

Many talented civil engineers, surveyors, engravers, and other professional soldiers and civilians drew maps to aid armies.

George Washington (1732-1799)-As a Lt. Colonel of Virginia militia during the French and Indian War; he had a decisive involvement in the war because of his map making skills and knowledge of the area having done work as a surveyor prior.

Lt. Thomas Hyde Page (1746-1821)-Page was appointed a 2nd Lt. in the Corps of Royal Engineers in the Revolutionary War. Several of his maps show the British Army's tactical positions in 1775 near Boston, MA. At the end of the war in 1783 he was Knighted and died in England.

John Conrad (1776-1851)-His best known maps was "A Correct Map of the Seat of War" published during the War of 1812. Not only does the map detail cities, towns, and communities it lists mileage between locations. Soldiers were paid money owed for travel between duty stations served.

Arsene L Latour (1778-1837)-Born Frances and worked as a civil engineer. He spent most of his career in the United State during the War of 1812. Most noted for his drawings of the Battle of New Orleans.

Robert K. Sneden (1832-1918)- He was a prolific illustrator and landscape painter who had talent in mapmaking. A native of Nova Scotia, Canada he moved to New York in 1851 being educated. At the start of the Civil War he joined the 40th NY Infantry and later transferred to the topographical engineers. Being captured in 1863 he was sent to Andersonville, GA prison until his exchange in 1864. Most noted for his maps and drawing of the prison system he also contributed largely to the "Battle and Leaders of the Civil War" series between 1884 and 1887. He retired and later died in 1918

William H. Wilcox (1832-1929)-Worked as a Topographical and later architectural engineer who served in Company D. 95th NY where he served on the Field & Staff

of General Abner Doubleday (of baseball fame), and drew campaign maps.

Edward G. Arnold (1834-1898)-Civil engineer and surveyor by occupation; he published a topographical map of Washington DC in 1862 showing the city during the Civil War. Not only did the map lists all roads leading into/out the city, but the locations of all the forts surrounding and protecting Washington, DC from attack.

John Bartholomew-(1831-1893) A Well known Scottish cartographer who would establish a business in Edinburg, Scotland he along with George W. Bacon drew maps detailing the Civil War in the United States. He retired from active business in '888 and died several years later in 1893.

Blanton H. Duncan (1827-1902)-Native of Kentucky he served in the 1st Kentucky Infantry (CSA) with the rank of Lt. During the war he moved to Colombia, SC where he drew several drawings. One was titled "*Map of the seat of war in Virginia on December 1, 1862*" which detailed up to that date cities, towns, and villages where the armies ad fought.

Jedediah Hotchkiss (1828-1899)-He was the most famous cartographer during the Civil War. Raised in New York, but at the star of the war joined the Confederates in 1861 serving under General Jackson until his death in 1863. His campaign maps were widely used by the Army of Northern Virginia. After the war he did civil engineering until his retirement and with his death in 1890.

Albert H. Campbell (1826-1899)-Captain and later Major who was appointed on June 6, 1862 to head the Topographical Department of the Army of Northern Virginia for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Campbell drew a number of maps for the Army including forts and fortifications. He worked for Gilmer.

Jeremy F. Gilmer (1818-1883)-Was both a professional soldier, mapmaker, and civil engineer. Born in North Carolina and graduate of West Point in 1847 with a commission in the Corp of Engineers. At the start of the Civil War he fought for the Confederate Army being appointed the Chief Engineer for the Bureau of the Confederacy where he aided in defensive drawing the remainder of the war. Gilmer retired from active business in 1883.

George W. Blunt (1802-1878)-Born in Massachusetts he was the son of Edmund M. Blunt (1770-1862), who worked as a publisher and drew hydrographic maps . George acquired his fathers business skills with the son doing work for the Coast Survey Service and active mapmaker to his death in 1878.

Gustavus A. Aschbach (1826-1875)-One of the best civil engineers in Allentown, PA. He fled Germany during the fighting in the Revolution of 1848 coming to the United States and Pennsylvania. Drawing a number of maps and atlases during his long career before his death in 1875.

MILITARY MAP PUBLISHERS:

Over the decades numerous publishers and companies have developed maps for use from either the military or general public. Some publishers include:

E. Sachse & Company- Lithographers with offices located at 104 S. Charles St. in Baltimore MD. Father and son Edward Sachse (1804-1873) and son Theodore Sachse (1846-1923) drew many military related cartographic maps.

Bacon & Company-also operated under *G.W. Bacon & Co* by George W. Bacon (1830-1922)-was an American born mapmaker who successfully produced maps of England. With offices in London he along

with other English map publisher along with others had a keen interest in the Civil War happening in the United States. Bacon and Company by 1862 had published a series of 6 maps known as the "*Shilling War Maps*" detailing railways, road, forts, and designating the southern states from the northern states and border areas. Their most well known civilian map detailed the Whitechapel murders in 1888 who would become known as "*Jack the Ripper*".

Duval & Company-Operated by French native Peter S. Duval (1804-1886 and his son Stephen C. Duval (1833-1907) both men being lithographers who operated their business from 22 & 24 S. 5th Street in Philadelphia, PA. Their maps were ornate in design and detailed both surveys and panoramic maps.

G.W. Tomlinson-The large publishing firm of George W. Tomlinson (1839-1866) was located at 221 Washington Street, Boston, MA. His firm published maps for Port Hudson, Mobile, Charleston, Richmond, Washington DC, Savannah, and Gettysburg that contained full descriptions of the fortifications.

G. Woolworth Colton-Large publishing firm located at 18 Beekman St. New York, NY and operated by George W. Colton (1827-1901) who published several topographic, and railroad maps. The maps were useful during the Civil War.

H.H. Lloyd & Company-Located at 21 John Street in New York, NY. Operated by Henry H. Lloyd (1830-1905), and Emory F. Strong (1827-1899). Very active publishers of military maps and general public maps.

J. H. Bufford & Company-Owned by John H. Bufford (1810-1870)-who worked as a early lithographer and publisher of military maps during the Civil War. Located in both Boston, and New York. He operated his business from 1857-1864 as Bufford's Print

ONLINE MILITARY MAPS:

Military maps can be found in a number of locations both online and onsite to research in finding details about our ancestors.

The Library of Congress-One of the largest collection of manuscript and reference materials found in any library; their large collection of military maps are found and divided by war periods. Not all of the maps found online and digitized represent the entire holding of the library. Patrons are encouraged to use [the Library of Congress catalog](#) to find maps of interest. The map collection covers from the colonial era to the Vietnam war.

National Archives Records Administration-known also as NARA contains one of the largest holding of individual military map collections in the United States. Maps are located in several Record Groups (RG) that can be located online through their finding aids. Searches should be directed at RG77-Records of the Corps of Engineers, and RG109-Confederate War Department to find the bulk of historical maps spanning some two centuries of wars. For later wars consider looking at RG226-Records of the Office of Strategic Services. Most of the maps not digitized are available onsite at the Archive II located in College Park, MD in the Cartographic and Architectural Research Section. Search on the [National Archives website](#) and use the “[Advanced Search](#)” feature on their card catalog on their site.

The United States Serial Set-This series of documents and records covers publications from the United States Congress. Inside this collection are more than 70,000 historical maps of interest to researchers. Most of the maps contained therein are scanned at high resolution and easily readable. The original maps are in the collection of the National

Archives (part of the U.S. Congress), and can be accessed onsite. However another option for online access is provided through [Proquest Congressional Record](#) This selective database is likely available online at major law libraries and institution of higher education. Free access is provided at all [National Archives](#) locations and with limited access at the [Library of Congress](#).

Historic New Orleans Collection-Another great resource for searching information on the War of 1812 and the end of the war at the battle of New Orleans. A number of military maps and plans are digitized for free on their website [Maps, Artwork, Prints, and 3-D Objects](#) page

Historic Maps Works, LLC-Headquartered and based in Portland, ME. The online collection is geared towards genealogists and includes; property atlases, nautical maps, panoramic maps, and other geographic map sources. A search on their website using the [keyword search of “military”](#) brings 1,020 results. The maps come from a variety of sources.

ADDITIONAL MAP RESOURCES:

Military maps can also be found in local repositories. Numerous additional places to search can include the following:

- State Archives
- State Libraries
- Genealogical/Historical Societies
- Colleges and University Libraries
- Special Collections-Archives
- Sellers/Private Collectors

Example: One excellent example of military maps comes from the [Pennsylvania State Archives](#) located in Harrisburg, PA. Their collection consist of colonial & commonwealth maps that detail battlefields and engagements during the French & Indian War, Revolutionary War, and later Civil War. Additional maps covering later war periods are also available.

Links to .PDF files detailing the [Military and Battlefield Maps](#) in their collection provided.

Example is Fort Augusta, PA dated 1756.

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NOTES: