

# RESEARCHING YOUR WORLD WAR II ANCESTORS

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Researching your ancestors who served in World War II is not without its challenges or rewards. The loss of records in the monumental file in St. Louis, MO in 1973 along with stricter privacy laws in place in many states; This lecture focuses on other ways to reconstruct military service for lost records and covers both military and civilians

## **AMERICANS IN CANADIAN ARMY:**

Canada entered World War II in 1939. By 1945 more than 30,000 Americans fought for Canada during the War. This included both Americans living in Canada and native born men who crossed the borders to fight.

Service files relating to the men and woman who fought for Canada are available onsite at Library and Archives of Canada in Ottawa. The facility can be accessed online at [www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca) for any research queries. The Service Files are closed (except to immediate family) unless proof of dead for those persons deceased at least 20 years can be established. The only service files open are those files of the war dead. This set of records is available online at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

## **OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FILES:**

The National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records (NPRC-MPR) is the repository of millions of military personnel, medical, and payroll records of discharged and deceased veterans of all the services branches in the 20th century.

The service member's military records (also called #201 File) also referred to as the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) is a set of documents maintained by the United States Government. On July 12, 1973 a disastrous fire ravaged the building housing the OMPF files. Those records affected included the following group of records:

Army Personnel discharged November 1, 1912, to January 1, 1960 **80%**

Air Force Personnel discharged, September 25, 1947, to January 1, 1964 **75%** (Starting with names alphabetically after James E. Hubbard).

The Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard were not affected by the fire. When requesting military records -send your requests to the following address:

National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)  
Military Personnel Records  
1 Archive Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63138

Visitors are recommended to make an appointment to visit the NPRC to view material. Service files of military personnel who were discharged before 1957 are considered Archival. After this date accessing the records are only available to immediate family.

The date is a rolling date and moves forward one day for every calendar day. Patrons can access these record in person (appointment), or can hire a genealogist locally (Archives provides a listing) or thirdly can mail in a request for records. The latter takes the longest time to get an answer.

## **DRAFT REGISTRATION CARDS:**

The Selective Service Act of 1940 was passed and signed into law by President Roosevelt. It was the first peacetime draft in United States history. All men between the ages of 18 and 65 (regardless of citizenship) registered for the draft. These records are covered in seven registrations:

1st Registration-October 16, 1940-All Men between ages of 21-31

2nd Registration-July 1, 1941-All Men who reached 21 since the first registration

3rd Registration-February 16, 1942-All Men between ages of 20-21 and 35-44-required to register

4th Registration-April 27, 1942-Men between ages of 45-65-not eligible for military service "OLD MENS DRAFT"

5th Registration-June 30, 1942-All Men between ages of 18-20 were required to register

6th Registration-December 10-31, 1942-Men who reached age 18 since last registration.

7th Registration-November 16-December 31, 1943 for American men living abroad ages of 18-44 were required to register.

The World War II Draft isn't complete. All states are not represented completely. The other Draft Registrations are limited online at the following: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) .

For those records not digitized online research must be conducted at the National Personnel Record Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, MO.

Besides copies of the draft registration cards from all seven registration periods, the copies of the draft classification status is also kept in their office for patrons to request.

Outside of the Draft Registration Cards; Researcher can request the Draft Classification. Some of the more common Draft listings included:

*I-Available For Service*

I-A Fit for military service

*II Deferred Because of Occupational Status*

II-B Necessary to National Defense

II-C Necessary to Farm Labor

*III Deferred Because of Dependents*

III-A-Deferred to hardship/Dependents

III-B Occupation vital to War Effort

*IV Deferred By Law or Unfit For Service*

IV-C Non Declarant Aliens

IV-D Minister of religion

IV-E Conscientious Objector

IV-F Rejected For Military Service

## **MORNING REPORTS:**

Record created by United States Military to report the day to day activities of a military unit as the name implies. The records cover the years 1912-1959 and considered Archival and therefore open to public inspection. Records from 1960-1974 are non Archival. The Morning Reports are NOT a roster of all the personnel for each unit.

The reports are exception based, which means that a soldier will appear in the records if his status has changed from a previous report. Examples would include leave, sickness, killed, wounded, captured, hospital, promoted, or reassigned among other types of documentation.

The records can only be accessed from the National Personnel Record Center in St. Louis, MO. Researchers have the option of visiting the center to conduct the research or hire someone to search the records. Most records are microfilmed and NARA has set the cost at \$.60 per image

### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORTS:**

During World War II-The U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF)-under the U.S. Army flew thousands of bombing missions. In the event the crew failed to return after a flight mission-a report was filed to AAF Headquarters. The reports details including most of the following for each crew member:

- Name • Rank
- Service Number
- Crew Position
- Name and Address of Next of Kin
- Status- (POW or MIA)

The Missing Air Crew Reports have been scanned and available on [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com)

### **WOMAN IN WORLD WAR II:**

By 1945 more than 350,000 woman served in the U.S. Military. Woman served in many capacities as nurses, clerks, pilots, and other vital positions at the time of need of the United States. Some of the organizations that recruited Woman included the following;

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAC)  
Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP)  
Women's Navy Reserve (WAVES) •  
Women's Coast Guard Reserves (SPARS)

### **MERCHANT MARINES:**

Loosely organized until 1915; The Merchant Marine Act of June 29, 1936 formed the nucleus of the organization during World War II. Records of vessels in service log books, and discharges of merchant sailors is available from the National Maritime Center.

Commanding Officer  
USCG-National Maritime Center (NMC-41)  
ATTN: Correspondence Section  
100 Forbes Drive Martinsburg, WV 25404

Outside of the center in Martinsburg, WV the NPRC in St. Louis, MO also maintains copies of Merchant Marine deaths during World War II in addition to licenses of men who served.

### **OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE (OCD):**

This office was a United States emergency war agency organized on May 20, 1941 by Executive Order #8757 and signed by President Roosevelt into law. It coordinated both state and federal authorities bring together measures for the protection of civilians in a war or another emergency. Records from this organization are housed at the National Archives II in College Park, MD as part of RG171. Work positions on the home front were a large part of this organization including: Air Raid Wardens, Fire Watchers, Nurses, and Auxiliary Police among other job descriptions. Boxes of files detailing personnel, work performed is available to patrons. An online finding aid is available at [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov).

### **OFFICE PRICE ADMINISTRATION (OPA):**

This office was established through the Office of Emergency Management on August 28, 1941 by Executive Order #8875 and signed by President Roosevelt into law. The functions of the OPA were originally to regulate and control prices of good and commodities used by the public during World War II.

The records are found at National Archives II in College Park, MD in RG188. Boxes of files detailing personnel, letters, cases opened related to persons who abused the law are found in this collection open to patrons. An online finding aid is available at [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov).

### **PENSION/CLAIM FILES:**

Veteran of World War II filed for pensions after their service was completed. Many of the files are closed at the NPRC in St. Louis, MO and have indexes that cover to 1970. Outside of looking at pension claims consider searching at the state level for pensions/monetary aid.

## **WAR DEAD CASUALTIES:**

Casualties during World War II for the [U.S. Army and Air Force](#) are part of RG497 at National Archives. This set of records included

- KIA-Killed in Action
- DOW-Died of Wounds
- DOI-Died of Injuries
- FOD-Finding of Death
- M-Missing

Also included are the name, rank, and service number for each casualty. A separate listing was provided for the [U.S. Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard](#) and included the nearest next of kin.

## **HEADSTONE APPLICATIONS:**

Records of persons buried domestically or abroad in cemeteries that found applications for headstone cover the years of 1925-1963. These records include; name, birth date, enlistment details, rank, unit, cemetery name and location and marker type or emblem for the deceased. Often includes details about the nearest next of kin. This set of records is available online at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) and [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com)

## **INDIVIDUAL DECEASED FILES:**

Individual Deceased Personal Files or called IDPF files. This collection of records for soldiers who were killed in action (KIA) or MIA. Not to be confused with OMPF files. The files were not affected by the Fire of 1973. The NPRC has custody of the IDPF files from the United States Navy, Marine Corps, Merchant Marine, and Air Force in addition to the United States Army with surnames beginning A-L. The remaining alphabet is in the custody of the Department of the Army located in Ft. Knox, KY Any questions contact them directly.

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## **NOTES:**