**Look Closer: Mining Genealogical Gold
in Civil War Pension Records
for Jewish Soldiers
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How to Access Union Civil War Pension Records

I. **Check both indexes**
There are two main indexes for locating and requesting Civil War Pension Records. These indexes have similar information however, sometimes one index will have additional numbers or information you must include on your pull slip to receive a pension. In addition, record group T289 may include a date of death, while record group T288 may have a widow or dependant's name listed. You can find the indexes on the subscription sites fold3.com and ancestry.com, but access to both sites is free on any computer at any NARA facility.

   A. Record Group T289 (available on fold3.com)
      1. Browse>Civil War>Civil War Pension Index>State>Arm of Service>Regiment>Company>Alphabetical by Surname
      2. At any point you can narrow down some of these criteria and then use the search bar.

   B. Record Group T288 (available on ancestry.com)
      1. Search>Military>Pension Records>U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934
      2. Search by First & Middle Name(s), Last Name, Year, Event, and Spouse
      3. Include any C or XC Numbers if applicable (see also: FOIA Requests)

II. **Establish the pension record's location**
   A. NARA (Washington, DC)
      Most pensions will be located on site at the National Archives in Washington, DC on Pennsylvania Avenue.
   B. NARA (St. Louis, MO)
      Some pensions that include a C or XC number on their index will be located on site at the National Archives in St. Louis (see FOIA requests below) and must be requested by mail, online, or in person.
   C. Online (fold3.com)
      Widow's certificates with a number less than 175,000 are digitized and available to view on fold3.com.

III. Request the pension record
A. NARA (Washington, DC)
1. Fill out a pull slip

2. Obtain archive staff initials
3. Submit pull slips for specified pull time
   Archives pull times are subject to change. Limit 4 records per pull time. Wait time is approximately 30-60 minutes past the pull time to receive your record. You can submit record requests the day before you would like to view them! Staff will hold the records for up to 3 days in the reading room until you request to have them refiled to the stacks.

B. NARA (St. Louis, MO)
In person requests follow the same procedure as above in Washington, DC. If you can't visit St. Louis in person, you can request these files via a FOIA request (see FOIA requests below).

C. Online (fold3.com)
To view a digitized "Widow's Pension" on fold3.com go to:
Browse>Civil War>Civil War "Widow's Pensions">State of Service>Arm of Service>Regiment>Company>Veteran's Name (Certificate #)

IV. FOIA Requests
If there is a C or XC number on the T288 Pension Record Index, the Veterans Administration had custody of the pension record at some point in the early 20th century, and they may have lost it, thrown it away, or transferred it to NARA, either the Washington, DC or St. Louis, MO facility. The only way to determine which facility has the Pension Record (if the Pension Record Index has a C or XC number on it), is to request it from NARA in DC. If it is there, you will get it, but if it is not, you will need to submit a FOIA request to get the record from NARA in St. Louis. If it is not in St. Louis, it might not be extant.

After multiple attempts by our staff to locate Pension Records supposedly located in St. Louis, our recommendation is to write them, using the following form letter:

Date

Attn: FOIA Officer
National Archives at St. Louis
P. O. Box 38757
St. Louis, MO 63138

To: Freedom of Information Officer

I am writing to request a Civil War pension under the Freedom of Information Act. I have searched for this file at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and was told that the National Archives at St. Louis has custody of this particular record. The soldier's information is as follows:

Name: Soldier's Name (as it appears on the Pension Record Index)
Widow/Dependent: [if applicable]
Service: Regiment(s) and Company as written on the Pension Record Index
Invalid Application #: e.g. 616114
Invalid Certificate #: e.g. 441620
Widow Application #: e.g. 1129094
Widow Certificate #: e.g. 873692
XC#: e.g. XC2698810

I am willing to pay any fees that may apply for this request. If you have any questions, I can be reached at [phone #] or [email address]. My mailing address is as follows:

[mailing address]

Thank you,

[name]

V.   Requesting copies of Pension Records via NARA's eservice portal

In our experience, while many people have successfully submitted an electronic request for Pension Records via NARA's online system, the wait, expense and quality of the reproductions received are unsatisfactory, IF the request yields anything. That being said, it is an option.

1. Start here: https://www.archives.gov/

2. Scroll to the bottom, and under "Shop Online," click on "Buy Reproductions and Microfilm."

3. Create a User ID and Password by clicking on the link for "New User?"

4. Follow the directions to create your account, then return to this page and click on "Order Reproductions."

5. Under the Heading "Record Reproductions," click on "Military Service and Pension Records"

6. On the next page, click on "Federal Military Pension Application - Civil War and Later Complete File (NATF 85D)"

**Note that there is a maximum of 100 pages that NARA will reproduce for you, so if the Pension Record exceeds 100 pages, you will not receive a complete copy of the record.

7. On the next page, you have the choice of three delivery options: CD/DVD; Electronic Transfer; or Paper Copy (e.g. a black and white photocopy). We recommend that you choose CD/DVD so that you receive scans, not photocopies.

**Note: "This product usually ships in 42-120 calendar days."

**Note: Fee (including shipping & handling) $80.00

8. On the next page, populate as many of the fields as you can based on the information found on the Pension Record Indexes.

9. When you've finished, click on the button "Continue to Pay & Ship," enter your payment and shipping information and you're done.

Good Luck and if you know of or discover a Jewish Civil War soldier, please let us know at:
https://www.shapell.org/contact/