

New York in the Civil War

Before conducting any research for a soldier who served in the Civil War you must know the unit. There are a few ways to do this. Please keep in mind that the spelling of names was inconsistent so if you cannot find the soldier you are looking for, you should also search for permutations of the first and last names.

There were three types of units in the Civil War excluding the Navy and Marines. The US Army, Volunteer units raised by the states, and state militia/national guard units. The museum only has information regarding the Volunteer units. If a state militia unit left the state during the war, there is a chance we will have that information as well. Please be aware that a soldier who was [drafted served in a Volunteer unit](#).

1 – If the name of the soldier is relatively uncommon you can do a simple search at the [Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database](#) published by the National Parks Service. Simply enter the last name in the search box and hit enter. On the left select 'New York' in the 'State' section. You can then sort by first name. This site will not give you much information on the soldier but it will give you the unit number and it is free to use. The other good thing about this site is that it includes soldiers who served in the New York State Militia/National Guard. BUT only if that unit was sent out of state. If the unit never left the state chances of finding information about the soldier are minimal. Once you have the unit information you can proceed to our [web site](#) where we have unit rosters and muster rolls for nearly all New York Volunteer units. This will also give you enough information to [request the soldier's pension file](#). Please be aware that not all soldiers will have a pension file and that there is a charge for this that varies from soldier to soldier depending on how extensive the file is.

2 – If the soldier you are looking for has a relatively common name, there are two ways accomplish this but you need to know either where the soldier was living or his approximate age.

A – If you know the area where the soldier was living you can try to use that to find the soldier. How to do this:

- Go to [The Communities of New York and the Civil War](#)
- Select the appropriate county
- Within the county find the correct city or town and note the units that were raised there. (Note: the number refers to the unit, the letter the company. So 121ACF means the 121st Infantry Regiment, companies A, C, and F)
- Open the link to the units and look at the unit rosters for the soldier

B – If you know the approximate age of the soldier it may be easier to pay \$25 for a one year subscription to [www.CivilWarData.com](#)

- Once you log in select "Skip below and proceed to the Database"
- Select "Personnel Directory"
- Enter the last name and first name. Hit the "Go" button.

- If there are too many results choose New York in the "State Served" menu.
- DO NOT enter anything in Residence or Occupation boxes. New York did not consistently gather this information so if you try to find something using these boxes many results will be excluded.
- You can then sort by age or enlist date or any of the column headers.
- This database will give you everything that we have in the official unit roster.

Again, the goal is to get enough information to [request the soldier's pension file](#).

Link to the museum's website

<https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/conflict/us-civil-war-1861-1865>

The link to the museum's catalog is www.catalog.nysmm.org. This will allow you to search our different databases.

For more information on individual soldiers you will can visit the New York State Archives

[New York, U.S., Town Clerks' Registers of Men Who Served in the Civil War, ca 1861-1865](#)

[New York State Adjutant General's Office Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts of New York State Volunteers, United States Sharpshooters, and United States Colored Troops](#)

Both of these are available on Ancestry.com

New York state residents have [free access to parts of Ancestry.com](#).

Ancestry.com has some related resources that may be of help.

In addition to Ancestry.com is a related site, [Fold3](#). Fold3 is a genealogy website that specializes in military records. If you have an All Access membership to ancestry you also get membership to Fold3.

Other places that may have information:

[The Army Heritage & Education Center](#)

950 Soldiers Drive, Carlisle, PA 17013

(717) 245-3971

[US Army Center of Military History](#)

103 Third Avenue

Ft. McNair, DC 20319-5058

Voice: 202.685.2704

Fax: 202.685.4570

[National Archives and Records Administration](#)

700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20408

(1-866-272-6272)

[New York State Library](#)

Cultural Education Center
222 Madison Avenue
Albany, NY 12230
(518) 474-5355

[New York State Archives](#)

New York State Education Department
Cultural Education Center
Albany, NY 12230
(518) 474-6926

To search for Images see [Sources of U.S. Military Images: Major Repositories](#)

If you cannot find information on a particular soldier the best thing you can do is to look for information on the unit they served in. You can also try searching for the unit's commanders. They may have written books about the war.

In addition to the above places a good place to search is [WorldCat](#). WorldCat is a database of thousands of library catalogs. This is more of a discovery database since you will not be able to borrow these directly.

You might also be able to find unit histories at [The Internet Archive](#).

Another good place to look is the local (to the soldier/unit) historical societies and public libraries.

There are also two great newspaper databases:

[NYS Historic Newspapers](#)

[Fulton History](#) (This database covers the whole state)

Finally, NYS residents have access to different [databases through the NYS Library](#).