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Civil War Era Research Using Archival Records

RG 21, Records of the District and Circuit Courts of the United States. [50,155 cubic feet]

Record books, case files, dockets, indexes and other series of records from Federal courts in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The types of controversies during the Civil War era (1850-1878) that could involve ordinary people in federal court cases include:

- fugitive slave cases involving persons who allegedly escaped from slavery in Kentucky, Missouri, and Union-occupied Tennessee and Louisiana.
- habeas corpus petitions for the release of under-age boys who enlisted in the army or navy;
- criminal cases against allegedly disloyal persons;
- habeas corpus and civil action cases filed by civilians imprisoned by military officials;
- criminal indictments for evading draft enrollment, for assisting a deserter, or for giving a false statement in support of a claim of exemption from the draft;
- criminal cases involving pension fraud;
- the confiscation of property of allegedly disloyal persons under the First and Second Confiscation Acts (1861 and 1862);
- the mismanagement or fraudulent sale of real estate owned by Indiana residents who were caught in Southern states at the outbreak of war;
- failure to pay federal internal revenue tax assessments by owners of stallions and mules; brokers of cattle, hogs, and sheep; meat butchers; innkeepers; wholesale and retail liquor sellers; billiard table owners; peddlers; real estate agents; physicians; and auctioneers. See also **Records of the Internal Revenue Service (Record Group 58)**.
- prize cases involving Confederate vessels captured by Union gunboats on the Mississippi and Red Rivers and taken to Cairo, Illinois;
- lawsuits involving unpaid debts contracted by merchants, farmers, and other private parties;
- post-war debt-related lawsuits (1865-1878) and bankruptcy cases (1867-1878) of farmers, laborers, artisans (such as carpenters and millers), and small-town merchants.

Refer to the following articles for more about the research opportunities in federal court records:

Robert J. Plowman, "An Untapped Source: Civil War Prize Case Files, 1861-65," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter 1989), pp. 197-205.

Beverly Watkins, "'To Surrender All His Estate': The 1867 Bankruptcy Act," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter 1989), pp. 207-213.

Kellee Blake, "'Ten Firkins of Butter and Other Traitorous Aid': Disloyalty Prosecutions in the Federal Civil Courts, 1861-1866," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, vol. 30, no. 4 (Winter 1998), pp. 289-294.

RG 58, Records of the Internal Revenue Service. [173 c.f. and 120 rolls of microfilm]. Federal tax assessment ledgers, 1862-1873, from federal tax collection districts in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio (only 1867-1873), and Wisconsin (only 1867-1873). The records contain details about the personal property, real estate, and economic status of ordinary people who were required to pay federal income tax and revenue under a Civil War-era law (Act of July 1, 1862; 12 Stat. 432). The records are closely related in research use to federal census schedules of the **Bureau of the Census (Record Group 29)** and to bankruptcy and civil lawsuit case records of the **U.S. District Courts (Record Group 21)**.

See "Income Tax Records of the Civil War Years," by Cynthia G. Fox in *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1986), pp. 250-259 for a description of the records and their research uses.

RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General. [4 volumes and 3 inches] Copies and registers of letters sent and received by the Jeffersonville, Indiana Quartermaster Depot, August 1864-December 1865, and January-April 1877.

RG 110, Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General. [2885 volumes; 562 cubic feet] Records of State and District Provost Marshal Offices, 1861-ca. 1868 (mostly 1863-1865), in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The records include letters, lists, descriptive books, and many other types of textual materials about the enrollment, drafting, substitution, and induction of men into the Union Army during the Civil War, as well as records about deserters, draft evaders, and civilians who harbored them. The records are complex, voluminous, and must be examined by a researcher in person.

RG 112, Records of the Office of the Surgeon General (Army). [1 cubic foot] Includes five bound volumes of the Army Medical Examining Board at Cincinnati, Ohio, 1863-1865, pertaining to the examination of potential candidates for appointment as assistant surgeons in the Union army. The records consist of a List of Candidates Examined, June 1863-April 1865; a volume of letters sent, June 1863-April 1865; and three volumes of Minutes of Meetings, June 1863-May 1865, pertaining to the examinations of potential surgeons.

RG 156, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance. [268 cubic feet] Records relating to the production, storage, and shipment of ordnance by civilian workers and military personnel at facilities in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio. The records relate to 31 facilities overall and date from 1863 through 1963.

Records of the Rock Island Arsenal at Rock Island, Illinois (1865-1950) include a Register of Confederate Prisoners of War Released from the Federal Military Prison at Rock Island, 1865; a List of Deceased Confederate Soldiers Buried at Rock Island, 1912; Monthly Strength Returns of the Ordnance Company, July 1870-May 1875; Arsenal Orders, August 1865-January 1909, with name indexes for the period October 1872-December 1894; Special Orders of the Arsenal, January 1870-August 1871, with name index; and various series of incoming and outgoing letters, 1863-1903.

RG 181, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments. [1,351 cubic feet] Extensive information about individual sailors and officers may be found among the records of the Mound City Naval Station at Mound City, Illinois, 1873.

Civil War Veterans

RG 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs. [51 cubic feet]. Records of branch homes of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, 1867-1935. Records include Sample Case Files of Members and Veterans at the Central Branch, Dayton, Ohio, 1867-1935; the Marion Branch at Marion, Indiana, 1890-1931; the Danville Branch at Danville, Illinois, 1898-1934; and the Northwestern Branch at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1867-1934. Other records of the Marion, Indiana, Branch consist of a Register of Members Admitted to the Hospital at the Marion Branch, 1906-1920, and Name Index. Other records of the Northwestern Branch at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, include 12 cubic feet of Hospital Registers, 1877-1921.

See microfilm publication M1749, *Historical Registers of National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938*, for copies of related registers of members of these branch homes (rolls 26-103, 121-134, and 157-187).