



between 18-45 be subject to military duty, it wasn't until May 1917 that they passed the Selective Service Act. This established civilian boards from the local level up to register, classify, examine, induct or defer men between ages 21-30 for WWI. Opposition and failure to conform led Congress to defeat efforts to set up standards for military training and service. In 1920, a

voluntary recruitment system was set up under The National Defense Act. Then in Nov 1940, all men 21-35 had to register for the draft and the 1st national lottery under the Selective Training and Service Act. They were sent to nationwide army induction centers for the 1st peacetime draft.

The draft age was lowered to 18 in WWII, and men were sent by age (the oldest first) instead of by lottery. After Pearl Harbor,

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## The Selective Service Act Finding Your Ancestors

by Deborah Murphy

Finding the regular army of the Colonies undermanned, Gen. George Washington had to rely on often poorly trained state militias to fight the Revolutionary War. As president, he tried to establish military registration and proper training, but Congress refused to go along.

to pay for a substitute and buy exemptions from service. In the North, draft riots occurred resulting in property damage, injuries, and deaths. In 1864, the North changed policy, allowing only conscientious objectors to be exempt. Though in 1898 (Spanish-American War) Congress declared that all males

Despite signing bonuses and promised land after service, recruitment for the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War was inadequate and ineffective. But in April 1862 and March 1863, the Confederacy and the Northern Army respectively, began conscription of able bodied men to supplement the number of volunteers.

However, these men were allowed

World War I Draft Registration Card A—(5 June 1917)

REGISTRATION CARD		REGISTRAR'S REPORT	
1	Name in full _____ (first name) (middle name) (last name)	1	Tell whether or not (Specify which?) _____ (Specify whether or not) (Specify which?) _____
2	Home Address _____ (City) (County) (State) (Country)	2	Color of eyes _____ Color of hair _____ Build _____
3	Date of birth _____ (Month) (Day) (Year)	3	This person has arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, or both eyes or to be substituted (Specify which?) _____
4	Are you (1) a natural born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (Specify which?) _____	I certify that the statements made, that the person registered has read this card, and that I have explained the requirements, and that all his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows: _____	
5	When were you born? _____ (Month) (Day) (Year)	Signature of Registrar _____	
6	What is religion, if other religions you are a member of _____	City or County _____	
7	What is your present rank, occupation, or office? _____	State of Registration _____	
8	By whom employed? _____	Date _____	
9	When employed? _____	I certify that I have verified above answers and that they are true.	
10	Are you a laborer, mechanic, clerk, (Add under 11 or a class or branch under 11, wholly dependent on you for support (Specify which?) _____	(Signature or Mark) _____	
11	What military service have you had? Rank _____ (Specify which?) _____	Ancestry.com	
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (Specify grounds?) _____	McFadden, Inc. © 2002	

the president could send draftees anywhere in the world for the duration of the war plus 6 months, and no distinction was made between draftees, regulars, National Guardsmen, and Reservists. This draft lasted until 1947.

Peacetime resulted in voluntary enlistments, but in March 1948, the Cold War required reinstatement of the draft for men 19-26 for 12 months active duty. In 1950, the Korean War exempted WWII vets, and called up men 18½-35 to serve on average 2 years.

In June 1951, the Universal Military Training and Service Act required males 18-26 to register, and in 1952, the newly enacted Reserve Forces Act compelled all men drafted or enlisted to an 8 year obligation of service, comprised of active duty and standby status. They could be called back as active due to war or national emergency.

The Vietnam War caused so much opposition and dissension that 'conscientious objection' was broadened to include nontraditional and nontheistic religious beliefs. A special committee was appointed to suggest changes to the Selective Service structure. Then in 1969, a random selection lottery system replaced drafting men according to age.

1973 saw the expiration of the Selective Service Act, but it was reinstated in 1980 without induction authorization. At present, we have an all volunteer policy, but males 19-26 are still required to register for the draft.

### Draft Records:

Military draft records include those who served and those who registered but were never called. Persons who enlisted or were in service at the time of a conflict will

not be in these records. With that said, what draft records are available to the researcher?

### Civil War Draft Records:

Four drafts took place between 1863-1865, and included 3.175 million records. The 1863 draft was one of the most tenuous moments in the Union, due to the draft riots in New York in 1863. There are 631 volumes of registries, which are basically lists of individuals who registered for the draft.

The records are in two different classes: Class I for those aged 20-35 and 36-45 and unmarried; and Class II for all others who registered. Information included is: class, Congressional district, county, state, residence, name, age on 1 July 1863, race, profession, marital status, birthplace, former military service, and remarks. A special census, the 1890 Veterans' Schedule, lists names of surviving Union (and in some areas Confederate) soldiers, sailors, marines, or surviving widows; rank; name of regiment or vessel; enlistment and discharge dates; length of service; residence; disability incurred; and remarks. This schedule includes states alphabetically beginning with Kentucky (partial) through Wyoming, and D.C. This information is a partial substitute for the 1890 census records destroyed by fire.







### WWI Draft Registration Records:

The U.S. declared war on Germany on 6 Apr 1917, and on 18 May 1917 the Selective Service Act was passed. Every male between 18-45 living in the U.S. was required to register, including immigrants who were not yet citizens. In 1917 and 1918, the U.S. population was about 100 million, and of those, 24+ million men registered for the draft. That accounted for approximately 98% of men born between 1872 and 1900 living in America. Odds are that you'll have luck finding draft cards for ancestors who fit this category, and these records include more than just names and dates.

There were 3 separate registrations in this draft: the 1st on 5 June 1917 for men 21-31, born between 6 June 1886 and 5 June 1896; and the 2nd on 5 June 1918 for men who had turned 21 since the 1st registration, or who hadn't previously registered or weren't already in the military. A supplemental registration was held 24 Aug 1918 for those who had

turned 21 since 5 June 1918. The 3rd was on 12 Sept 1918 for men 18-21 and 31-45, born between 11 Sept 1872 and 12 Sept 1900.

Each registration used a slightly different card known for the number of questions on the front: the 1st was the 12-Question Card; the 2nd, 10; and the 3rd, 20. The information included: full name, age, home address, date and place of birth, father's birthplace, race, country of citizenship, occupation and employer's name and address, address of nearest relative, marital status, military service or exemption, physical description (hair and eye color, height, weight, build, and disabilities), signature, and the date, precinct, city or county, state, date of registration, and signature of registrar.

If a registrant wasn't living in his hometown, he could register where he was and have his card sent to his home board. Non-citizens had to register, but weren't subject to induction. In many areas, the draft registration was a real event

with parades, church bells ringing, cannons firing, whistles blowing, and businesses closing for the day.

### WWII Draft Registration Cards:

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. officially entered WWII on 8 Dec 1941, and a new selective service act required all men 18-65 to register for the draft. Over 10 million American men registered between Nov 1940 and Oct 1946, but only the 4th Registration or the "old man's registration" is available to the public. This took place on 27 Apr 1942 for men 45-64 years old, born on or between 28 Apr 1877 and 16 Feb 1897, and not already in the military.

The other registrations have been withheld due to privacy concerns of those still living. Information on these cards include: name, age, birth date, birthplace, residence, employer information, name and address of person who always knows registrant's whereabouts, physical description (race, height, weight, eye and hair color, complexion), and disqualifying characteristics.

Some cards may have mailing address (if different from residence), serial number, order number, and board registration information. If your ancestor lived near a state border, their Draft Board Office might be in the neighboring state.

The database in Ancestry.com contains draft cards for the following states: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana\*, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York\*, Ohio,



Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin (\*collection incomplete). Records for additional states will be added when available.

The original draft registration cards for the following were destroyed and never microfilmed, so they'll never be available: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

### Locating Records:

The original draft cards are held by each state's National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Regional Branch. All of these cards are also available on microfilm from the Family History Library (FHL) and/or NARA.

• NARA: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1994/winter/civil-war-draft-records.html>,

[www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration/](http://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration/) and <https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/archival-programs/other-records/selective-service.html#wwii>

html#wwii

• Family History Library: [familysearch.org/civil-war](http://familysearch.org/civil-war), [familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Union\\_Draft\\_Records](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Union_Draft_Records), [familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_World\\_War\\_I\\_Draft\\_Records](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_World_War_I_Draft_Records) and [familysearch.org/search/collection/1861144](http://familysearch.org/search/collection/1861144) (WWII draft cards). FamilySearch is the Latter-Day Saints database located at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, and is the world's largest collection of genealogical records. Accounts are free and funded completely by the LDS. You can sign up at [familysearch.org/](http://familysearch.org/).

• [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (a free 14-day trial is available) • [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) (subsidiary of Ancestry.com; 7-day free trial available; their tutorials important to get best results) • [www.archives.com](http://www.archives.com) (free trial available) • 'Online World War I and II Indexes and Records – USA: A Genealogy Guide' can be found at: [www.militaryindexes.com/worldwarone/](http://www.militaryindexes.com/worldwarone/) and [www.militaryindexes.com/worldwartwo/](http://www.militaryindexes.com/worldwartwo/)

• <http://usgwarchives.net/> -

Arranged by state, then counties, and each site is run by volunteers, so available information varies. Some sites have military records.

• Civil War Service Records Research Guide - How To Find Compiled Military Service Records For Civil War Soldiers: [www.genealogybranches.com/civilwar/servicerecords.html](http://www.genealogybranches.com/civilwar/servicerecords.html)

• Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database at: <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>

• National WWII Museum: <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/> • Census records from 1840, 1910, and 1930 include military service information.

### How are Cards Organized?

The draft cards are arranged by state; then by surname in alphabetical order, though some were misordered prior to filming, e.g., M surnames ended up under Q-S; then by local draft board number. Note: Images for DE, MD, PA, and WV were microfilmed at the National Archives in such a way that the back of one person's draft card appears in the same image as the front of the next individual's card. Thus, when viewing the scanned images, you'll see the correct front side of each person's draft card, but the back side of the previous person's card. Images for the other states are displayed correctly in the database.

*It's amazing the information you can glean about your family from these wonderful resources.*  
*Deborah Murphy*

