

NAVY

National Archives Building, Washington, DC

Records Relating to Naval Service

Enlisted Men

Useful sources to consult for Navy enlisted men include pension files, rendezvous reports, keys to enlistment, jackets of enlisted men, and muster rolls.

The place to begin research on Navy enlisted men is the pension files. The pension file may provide leads such as dates of service and the ship(s) or duty station(s) the sailor served on. Pensions usually provide the most genealogical information for researchers. For information on searching these records see the pension file section found later in this reference information paper.

Your next step is to search rendezvous reports. A rendezvous was the recruiting station where the men signed up to enlist in the Navy. Officers at the rendezvous kept a record of each man enlisted and reported the information weekly to the Navy Department. These documents are known as the “rendezvous reports” and provide the following information: name of recruit, date and term of enlistment and rating, previous naval service, usual place of residence, place of birth, occupation, and personal description. The indexes to these records, both arranged alphabetically, are available on microfilm T1098, *Index to Rendezvous Reports, Before and After the Civil War, 1846–1861, 1865–1884*, and T1099, *Index to Rendezvous Reports, Civil War, 1861–1865*. The enlistment rendezvous have been reproduced on M1953, *Weekly Returns of Enlistments at Naval Rendezvous (“Enlistment Rendezvous”), January 6, 1855–August 8, 1891*.

Next search RG 24, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, entry 224, Keys to and Registers of Enlistment Returns, 1846–1902. The keys to enlistment show names of men enlisting at rendezvous or on board vessels, enlist-



Crew working the gun on a Civil War Navy gunboat. (111-B-486)

ment data, and a summary of service. The series is arranged chronologically.

Another good source to consult is jackets of enlisted men found in RG 24, entry 204, Records Relating to Enlisted Men Who Served in the Navy Between 1842 and 1885. The “jackets” that make up this series are arranged alphabetically by sailor’s name and contain correspondence that was collected on men who served in the Navy between 1842 and 1885. The jackets also contain material for the years 1885 to 1941 if the sailor made an application for pension, filed a claim, or requested verification documents. Jackets may also contain letters received, copies of letters sent, endorsements, applications for certificates of honorable discharge, or copies of other types of certificates.

To track the service of an enlisted man in the Navy consult the Navy muster rolls and pay rolls, which cover 1798 to 1938. There are several series of bound volumes of muster rolls and pay rolls of ships and stations. Muster rolls generally show the name of the enlisted man, the ship or station on which he was serving, his dates of service, and, in some cases, the ship or station from which he had transferred. Pay rolls generally show the name of the enlisted man, his station or rank, date of commencement of his service, and terms of service. To use muster rolls and payrolls, researchers should know where the subject of research was stationed during the time

pertinent to the research. Generally, muster and pay rolls of vessels are arranged alphabetically by name of ship and thereunder chronologically. Muster and pay rolls of shore establishments are also arranged alphabetically by name of station and thereunder chronologically. Many of the pre-1860 Navy muster rolls and pay rolls have been reproduced on T829, *Miscellaneous Records of the Office of Naval Records and Library*.

For medical information consult RG 52, Records of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (Navy), entry 21, Medical Journals of Shore Stations, 1812–89; entry 22, Medical Journals of Ships, 1813–1910; entry 30, Reports of Diseases and Deaths, July 1828–December 1846; entry 31, Certificates of Death, Disability, Pension and Medical Survey, June 1842–January 1896; and entry 51, Registers of Patients, 1812–1929. U.S. Navy deck logs and Navy courts-martial files may also prove useful. Information on Navy deck logs and Navy courts-martial files can be found in later sections of this reference information paper.

If you are researching sailors in the Revolutionary War, the War Department compiled service records of naval personnel for that conflict. These records are fragmented, and it should be noted that they are based on War Department records and not Navy Department records. The place to begin is the index found on M879, *Index to Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel Who Served During the Revolutionary War*. The compiled service records are reproduced on M880, *Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel and Members of the Departments of the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General of Military Stores Who Served During the Revolutionary War*.

Navy (Enlisted Men)

- Pension Files
- Rendezvous Reports
- Keys to and Register of Enlistment Returns, 1846–1902
- Jackets of Enlisted Men, 1842–85
- Muster Rolls
- Deck Logs
- Court-Martial Records

Officers

When beginning research on U.S. Navy officers first consult the *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and of the Marine Corps, From 1775 to 1900*, edited by Edward W. Callahan for names and dates of service. You can also consult M2078, *General Register of the United States Navy and Marine Corps, 1782–1882*. Next consult the pension files. The pension file may provide leads such as dates of service and the ship(s) or duty station(s) the officer served on. Pensions usually provide the most genealogical information for researchers. For information on searching these records see the pension file section found later in this reference information paper.

Your next step is to consult the abstracts of service. These records have been reproduced as M330, *Abstracts of Service Records of Naval Officers (“Records of Officers”), 1798–1893*, and M1328, *Abstracts of Service Records of Naval Officers (“Records of Officers”), 1829–1924*. The descriptive pamphlet for M1328 provides a name index to the abstracts. If the officer attended the Naval Academy you can consult M991, *U.S. Naval Registers of Delinquencies, 1846–1850, 1853–1882, and Academic and Conduct Records of Cadets, 1881–1908*. You can also consult various records relating to applications and appointments of naval cadets found in several series in RG 24.

For a list of officers on board Naval vessels during the Civil War consult National Archives microfilm publication M1976, *Lists of Officers of Vessels of the United States Navy, August 1860–December 1877*. The microfilm is arranged primarily by vessel name.

Additional information on naval officers can be found in examining board and retiring board files in RG 125, Records of the Judge Advocate General (Navy). The records of these boards are found in entry 58, Records of the Proceedings of Naval and Marine Examining Boards, 1861–1903, arranged alphabetically; and entry 56, Records of Proceedings of Naval and Marine Retiring Boards, 1861–1909, numerical files arranged chronologically with a partial register found in entry 59. For additional information on Navy officers consult Navy deck logs and Navy courts-martial files. Descriptions for these files are found on page 26 this reference information paper.



WASHINGTON, D. C.,

Oct 28, 1903

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

The following is a statement of the service of *B. S. M. McCall*

since last promotion:

Grade to which to be promoted *Rear Admiral*

Present grade *Captain*

Total time in grade *2 yrs 2 mos 1 day*

Sea duty in grade *2 yrs 11 mos 18 days*

Shore duty in grade *1 yr 8 mos 8 days*

Percentage of time at sea in grade *57.1 + 0/100*

H. C. TAYLOR,

Chief of Bureau.

H. C. Taylor

If you are researching naval officers in the Revolutionary War, the War Department compiled service records of naval personnel for that conflict. These records are fragmentary. The place to begin is the index found on M879, *Index to Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel Who Served During the Revolutionary War*. The compiled service records are reproduced on M880, *Compiled Service Records of American Naval Personnel and Members of the Departments of the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General of Military Stores Who Served During the Revolutionary War*.

Navy (Officers)

- Edward W. Callahan's *List of Officers of the Navy of the United States and Marines Corps, From 1775 to 1900*
- Abstracts of Service Records (M330 and M1328)
- Examining Board and Retirement Board
- Pension Files
- Court-Martial Files
- Deck Logs

Additional Sources of Information

Hamersly, Lewis R. *The Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps; with a History of Naval Operations During the Rebellion of 1861–65, and a List of the Ships and Officers Participating in the Great Battles*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1870.

Hamersly, Lewis Randolph. *The Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps; Compiled From Official Sources*. Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1890.

Hamersly, Thomas H.S. *General Register of the United States Navy and the Marine Corps, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, For One Hundred Years, (1782 to 1882)*. Washington, DC: T.H.S. Hamersly, 1882.

Powell, William H. *Officers of the Army and Navy (Volunteer) Who Served in the Civil War*. Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1893.

Powell, William H. *Officers of the Army and Navy (Regular) Who Served in the Civil War*. Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1892.

Navy Courts-Martial

Navy court-martial records are found in Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy), RG 125. They also relate to officers and enlisted men of the Marine Corps. The records include transcripts of proceedings of general courts-martial. A name index identifies the case file of a particular person and the records relating to a court of inquiry. Each dossier, when complete, contains the precept appointing the court; letters detailing or detaching its several members; a letter dissolving the court; the charges and specifications; minutes of the court consisting chiefly of a verbatim transcript of testimony; the plea of the defendant (often printed); copies of correspondence introduced as part of the minutes; the finding of the court, the sentence in case of a finding of guilty; and various endorsements. The earlier records are available as M273, *Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799–1867*. Later records can be found in entry 28, Registers of General Courts-Martial, 1861–1904; entry 27, Records of Proceedings of General Courts-Martial, 1866–1940; entry 30, Records of Proceedings of Courts of Inquiry, Boards of Investigation and Boards of Inquest, 1866–1940; entry 31, Registers of Courts of Inquiry, Boards of Investigation and Boards of Inquest, 1866–1940, and entry 49, Index to Summary Courts-Martial, 1895–1904.

Navy Deck Logs

U.S. Navy deck logs typically provide information on a ship's performance and location, weather conditions, personnel (names of officers, assignments, transfers, desertions, deaths, injuries, and courts-martial), supplies received, and miscellaneous observations. For a listing of log books held by the National Archives, consult Special List 44, *List of Logbooks of U.S. Navy Ships, Stations, and Miscellaneous Units, 1801–1947*.

For brief histories of U.S. Navy vessels consult the multivolume *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*. In this publication you will find an alphabetical listing of Navy ships that includes a brief history of each vessel and provides statistics such as: type or classification, tonnage or displacement, length, beam, draft, speed, complement, armament, and



Officers and crew of the USS Monocacy, during the 1871 expedition to Korea. (200-KWG-42)

class. Consulting the dictionary is important for several reasons. It is important to verify that the ship was in fact a U.S. Navy vessel and to verify dates of service. Before conducting a search in ship-related records make sure you have information on the correct vessel. Several ships served at different times under the same name, so first consult the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* to find the dates of service of the vessel you are researching.

Additional Sources of Information

Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives, third ed., pages 155–160.

Bacon, Lee D. “Early Navy Personnel Records at the National Archives, 1776–1860,” *Prologue*, Spring 1995, Vol. 27, No.1.

Bacon, Lee D. “Civil War and Later Navy Personnel Records at the National Archives, 1861–1924,” *Prologue*, Summer 1995, Vol. 27, No. 2.