WHERE TO START

Before you dive into WWI records, start with the basics and confirm all your details. Use the same information, documents, and techniques you use in all genealogical research:

- Vital Records (birth, marriage, death)
- Federal and State Census
- Personal Records (family bible, wills, letters, etc.)
- Probate/Court Records
- Church Records
- Interview family members

Once you’ve traced your family back to an ancestor born in the right time frame (from 1872—1900), then you can move on to WWI-specific records. In the US, the first draft (June 1917) was open to men aged 21—31. The second draft (June 1918) was open to all men over the age of 21. The last draft (September 1918) included all men aged 18—45. Keep this in mind.

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BASIC RECORDS

There are several types of records commonly used in WWI research:
- Draft Registration Cards
- Casualty Lists
- Compiled Military Service Records*
- Census Records (1930 and 1940)
- Veterans Records
- International Records

DRAFT REGISTRATION CARD

Information provided here includes: name, address, birth date and place, and occupation and employer, marital status, race, any dependents, and exemption request. It was not unusual to request exemption based on the fact that they had too many dependents to leave unsupported while off fighting abroad.

The second sheet is the Registrar’s Report which details their stature, hair and eye color, and whether they were bald or had an obvious disability.

ONLINE RESOURCES

National Archives Records
For an overview of WWI record collections and resources available at the National Archives, visit: www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/wwi

WWI Compiled Service Records*
NARA holds the compiled service and pension records for WWI and other military conflicts. However, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in 1973 destroyed 80% of the Army service records for all personnel discharged between November 1, 1912 to January 1, 1960. This will greatly affect record availability.

Ancestry Library Edition – Using the Card Catalog, search with the keywords “World War I,” or “WWI” to get a list of all relevant record collections. Examples include:
- U.S., WWI Troop Transport Ships, 1918-1919
- Kansas, Enrollment of WWI Veterans, 1930
- U.S., World War I Naval Deaths, 1917-1919
- Ireland, Casualties of World War I

FamilySearch – From the main search page, browse record collections and then filter the collections by title with the keyword “World War I.” Types of records here include: service cards by state, indexed naturalizations of WWI soldiers, and veteran aid and compensation records.

Fold3 – Users can browse record collections organized by conflict. For WWI, the database contains service, pension, casualty records and more for the US and other allied countries.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Missouri Soldiers Records at MDH
http://s1.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/archivesdb/soldiers

WWI Records Indexes (user-contribution)
www.militaryindexes.com/worldwarone/index.html

A NOTE ON THE DRAFT

Over 24 million men between the ages of 18 and 45 were forced by law to register for the draft. There were three separate drafts from 1917 to 1918.

It is important to remember: not all men who registered for the draft went on to serve, and not all who served registered for the draft – some were already serving and those who enlisted during the war will have enlistment records instead of a draft card.

CASUALTY & BURIAL RECORDS

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
www.cwgc.org
Search by name or cemetery for grave and memorials from 154 countries

Soldiers of the Great War, Vol. 1-3
Haulsee, Howe & Doyle (Free E-Book)
US casualties by name, rank, cause of death

Navy, Coast Guard & Marine Casualties
Casualty lists for WWI and other conflicts available at Naval-History.net
https://bit.ly/2yS1c1B