

What's Your Civil War Connection?

Do you have a Civil War soldier in your family tree? Get started with these simple steps developed by Sue Masse and the Willamette Valley Genealogical Society.

1. **Start with what you know.** Most Civil War soldiers (and sailors) were born between 1825 and 1844. Men younger or older than this still may have served, but it is less likely. You will have better luck finding your ancestor if you know his date and place of birth. It is also worth finding out where he was living in the 1860 census, this can help you determine if he was in the Union or Confederate Army. Remember that some states like Kentucky, Kansas and Missouri were split between the two sides. Complete the worksheet on the back of this handout to begin your search.

2. The first place to start is the **National Park Service site: Civil War Soldiers and Sailors database.**

(<http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/index.htm>). The search function will be found in PEOPLE: SOLDIERS AND SAILORS DATABASE. If a name is found matching your data, clicking on the name will give some data including Union/Confederate, rank in and rank out, alternate name, film number, and notes. Record this information, then click on the link to his regiment. This link will give you information on where the unit was formed, whether it was regular Army or volunteer, and a list of battles the regiment engaged in. Remember that not all members of a regiment may have participated in every battle.

3. Then plan a **visit to the Salem Public Library.** Volunteers with the Willamette Valley Genealogical Society can help you access two paid subscription sites that you can access for free at the library.

-- **Ancestry.com** has some military records which can be searched by collection, or in general. Also has census data that can help you determine where your relative was living.

-- **FoldThree.com** has many actual records, including muster rolls, pay rolls, pension files and so on. These are digital copies of NARA files. (See #8 below).

These sites can also be accessed online for a fee and may also be available through your local Family History Center.

5. If your ancestor was a Confederate soldier or sailor, any pensions granted were granted by the state where the veteran was living when he applied, not the state he enlisted from. You should start with the **Library of Virginia Civil War Research Guide** at <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/Civil-War/Veterans-Memorials.htm>.

6. When looking for pension files, you must know which laws governed who was eligible for a pension. For an in-depth **review of these laws**, visit <http://drbronsontours.com/pensionsunderstandingcivilwarpensions.html>. Also, the Family Search learning center has a lot of information on the various pension statutes at http://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Union_Pension_Records. African American soldiers were treated differently, and if you are doing research on a line that includes African Americans in the war, you will be looking at some different statutes.

7. Many veterans and support group organizations like Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) for Union veterans and the Daughters of Union Veterans were founded after the war. Membership records can also give other clues. Check the local historical society near where your relative was living to see if they have records. **The Willamette Heritage Center** has some Oregon G.A.R. records in its collections that can be viewed at its research library Tuesday – Friday 12 – 4 pm.

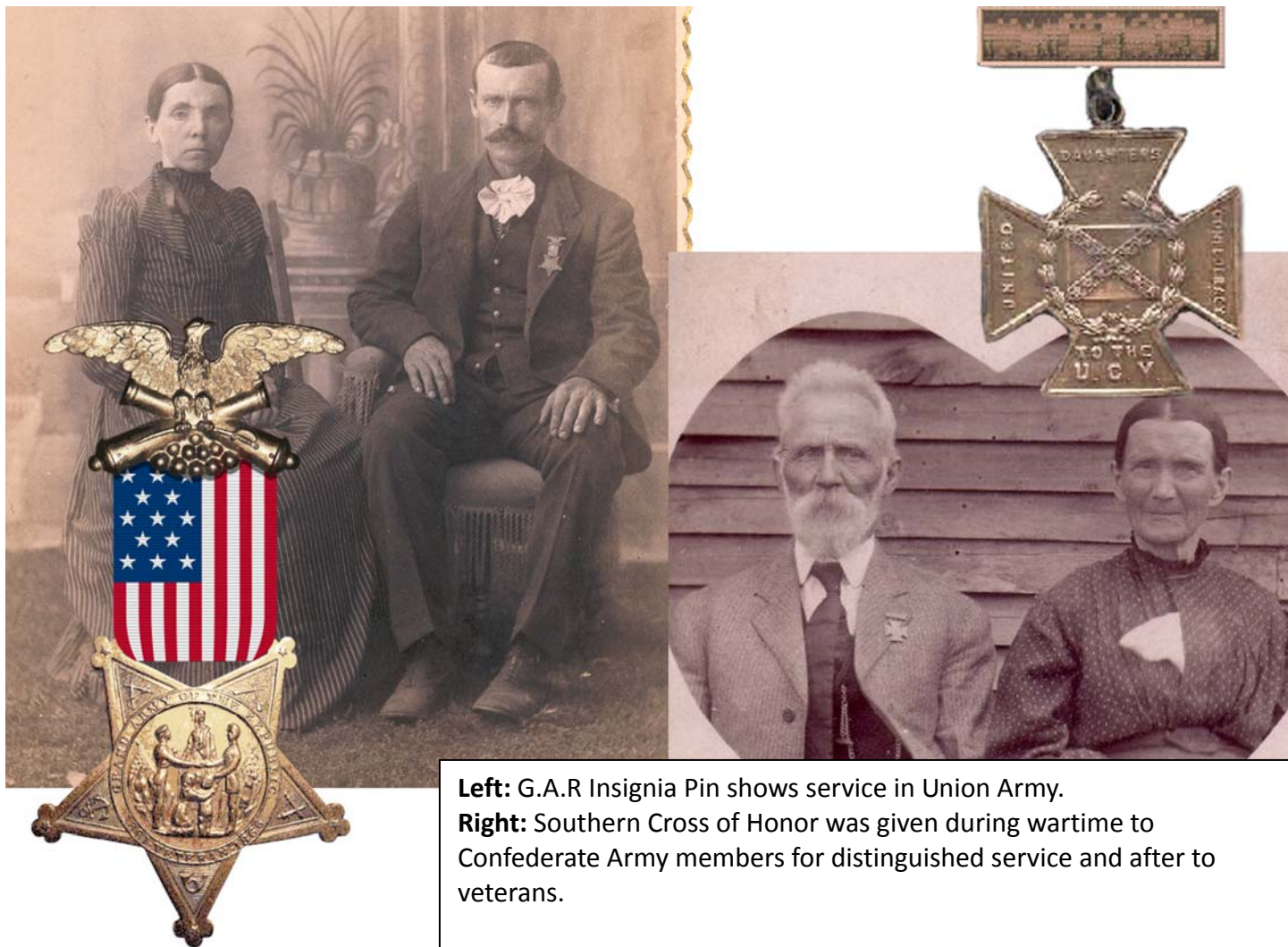
8. **The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)** is the repository for most official records. Many of these are microfilmed, but only a few are online. Go to <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/>

9. **The Library of Congress** (<http://www.loc.gov/index.html>) has amazing collections of photographs, sound recordings and written material on the Civil War. Some can be viewed online, and there are many more available in Washington, D.C., at the library.

10. Do not neglect looking for your ancestor in the **US Military Old Soldiers Home**. Veterans who were ill or just simply old are entitled to free care in the homes. In Oregon, the home was in Roseburg. There were homes in Washington and California as well. The records can include the veteran's birth data and place, names of his parents and spouse, rank and unit served, length of service, pension rate, admission date, and status including death date. There are cemeteries attached to the homes in most places. Go to https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/US_Military_Old_Soldiers_Home_Records for a list of the homes and where you might find the records. Do not forget FindaGrave.com for cemetery information, too.

What to Look for in Family Photos

Family photos can also provide clues. Medallions honoring service or indicating membership in a veteran's organization can point you in the right direction.



Left: G.A.R Insignia Pin shows service in Union Army.
Right: Southern Cross of Honor was given during wartime to Confederate Army members for distinguished service and after to veterans.

Research Facilities

Willamette Valley



Genealogical Society

Located within the Salem Public Library
Check the website for volunteer help schedule:
<http://www.wvgsor.org/>

Family History Centers

- 4550 Lone Oak SE, Salem, Oregon, 503-589-1495
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Salem_Oregon_Family_History_Center
- 862 45th Ave NE, Salem, OR 97301, 503-371-0453
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Salem_Oregon_East_Family_History_Center

Civil War Genealogy Worksheet

Use this worksheet to help document your relative. Fill out as much as you can, then start looking for more information:

NAME _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ PLACE OF BIRTH _____

FATHER _____ MOTHER _____

1850 CENSUS PLACE _____ 1860 CENSUS PLACE _____

1870 CENSUS PLACE _____ 1880 CENSUS PLACE _____

1890 VETERAN'S CENSUS _____

DATE OF DEATH _____ PLACE OF DEATH _____

UNION _____ CONFEDERATE _____ UNIT _____

_____ DATES OF SERVICE _____ RANK IN/OUT _____

MAJOR BATTLES:

PENSION FILE:

NOTES