

World War I Records at the Archives of Michigan

The Archives hold a number of military records from World War I. These collections are especially useful as federal records from this conflict were largely destroyed in a fire at the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri. Military records can provide evidence of military or patriotic service, residence at time of military service or pension, birth information, evidence of family relationships.

Step One: Did the individual serve in World War I?

A frequent starting point for researching World War I is a family story or a draft record. While these are good hints that someone served during World War I it is not definitive evidence. The draft was wide spread but it is important to note that not all men who registered for the draft actually served in the military and not all men who served in the military registered for the draft.

So where should you begin? The Archives holds bonus and census records that were collected after the war and are able to confirm an individual military service. Furthermore these records give details of service like regiment and company that may help to find additional records.

Veterans' Bonus Files, 1921-1953

RG 84-107

These papers pertain to World War I veterans who qualified for the payment of a bonus. These index cards include name, address, serial number, race, place and date of induction, place and date of birth, rank, training camp, assignments and transfers, engagements, overseas services, discharge date, and disability. There are separate collections for army, navy, and marines files. The material is arranged alphabetically within the army, navy, and marine files.

Military Affairs, Series 1 – 3, Boxes 1 – 173, Microfilm 5875 – 5909

Census of World War I Veterans, 1917-1919

RG 78-92

This census was taken by members of the Daughters of the American Revolution, with financial assistance from the state of Michigan. Each county was canvassed to obtain names of servicemen who had served during World War I. The forms used in this project requested the veteran's name, serial number, address, date and place of birth, nationality, color, occupation before and after the war, marriage date, wife's name, date and place of wife's birth, names of children and their dates of birth, parents' name and addresses, first camp entered and date, rank, units, transfers and promotions, battles engaged in, date and reason for discharge, and additional information. The census is

arranged by county then alphabetically by surname. An index by name is available if county is unknown.

Military Affairs, Series 1, Boxes 1 - 373, Microfilm 8247 - 9118

Women served in World War I in the military and the American Red Cross working as nurses. The Archives has access to an online database of these nurse files through Ancestry.com.

Online Databases Available in Archives Reading Room

Ancestry: U.S., American Red Cross Nurse Files, 1916-1959

This collection includes case files for nurses who served in World War I and World War II. These rich biographical records include applications, recommendations for awards, lists of assignments, newspaper clippings, efficiency reports, correspondence, and more. Since many of these nurses served overseas, check the collection of U.S. passport applications. Applications from this era typically include photographs.

In addition to the American Red Cross, women served as nurses in the regular Army and Navy military, although without rank. However, women who were not nurses were allowed to enlist in Navy and Marine Corps. It is important to note that the US Army refused to enlist women officially, relying on them as contract employees and civilian volunteers. Researchers can request federal records, either civilian or military personnel records, from the National Archives. However, these records are difficult to navigate as they are not organized alphabetically, but by unit/regiment.

Step Two: Service Records

Once you have established that an individual served in the military, you can start to compile his/her military records. Unfortunately, a fire in 1973 destroyed U.S. Army personnel records created from 1912 to 1963, but it did not damage U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps personnel files. For more information on World War I military records at the National Archives, read this [article](#) from *Prologue Magazine*. In addition to federal records, the State of Michigan kept various military records from the Michigan State Troops and the Michigan Naval Force.

Michigan State Troops

The State of Michigan kept records on the Michigan State Troops, later known as the National Guard. Some of these units were called up into federal services. There is not an overarching guide connecting individual State Troop units to federal units. For this reason, this section of records requires some digging.

Register of Michigan State Troops, 1917 – 1919 **RG 80-36**

Offers name, unit designation, dates “in” and “out,” grade, place and date of birth, occupation, color of eyes, hair and complexion, marital status, name and address of person to notify, age, height, residence, and comments. These records are arranged alphabetically by name of enlistee. The microfilm is hard to read.

Military Affairs, Series 22, Drawers 42 – 47, Microfilm 290-294

Record of Officers and Men Comprising the 125th Infantry as Organized on Leaving Germany. ca. 1919 **RG 68-67**

These typewritten 3x5 cards offer identification number, name, rank, company, name and address for emergency or next of kin, religion, occupation, age, date of enlistment, commission, promotion and appointment, date and name of company served on arrival in England, France or Germany, amounts of payroll deductions for loan, insurance and bonds, history of service and, in case of officers, the schools attended. Cards are arranged by designation of company. There is no name index. Also includes similar card records of men who passed through the 125th Infantry and were separated either by death, wounds, sickness, transfer or other reason.

Military Affairs, Series 2, Boxes 1 – 6

Rosters of Michigan State Troops, 50th Infantry, 1917 – 1919 **RG 80-36**

Lists of officers that include company, name, and address in 1917. Also lists individuals comprising Company A, 14th Battalion Infantry, Michigan State Troops, 1918 – 1919. Names are entered in alphabetically order within chronologically periods of time.

Military Affairs, Series 14, Box 59

Michigan National Guard (State Troops), 1908 – 1919 **RG 80-36**
Records of Enlistments in from Company Commanders

Records can offer name, enlistment location, enlistment date, age, occupation, eye color, hair color, complexion, and height. Records are organized by regiment then alphabetically by serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 1, Boxes 1 – 36

Muster and Payrolls of State Troops **85-78**

These boxes include the muster and payrolls descriptions listing names, ranks, period of services, daily allowances, and the amount paid each trooper. Files from the Thirty-Second Infantry of State Troops and the First Battalion of the Naval Brigade go into 1917. Materials are arranged numerically by company or division, then alphabetically by serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 1 & 2, Boxes 12 & 15

Muster Roll and First Return of Unites Mobilized into Untied States Service, 1917

RG 80-36

Rolls created in response to the call of President Wilson on July 15 – 27 1917. The first return of force mobilized at various camps in and out of State. Muster rolls (Form 61) offer company, regiment, date, place, name, rank of present and absent commissioned and non-commissioned officered, date of enlistment, and remarks related to prior service and hour of report.

Returns (Form 30) was filled in by each commanding officer on the date of initial muster and first day of each month. Offers name and place of organization, condition and alteration in effective strength since last monthly return, certificate of examination dated and signed by assistant mustering officer, names of officers present and accounted for, and record of events. Both forms are organized by regiment.

Military Affairs, Series 3, Boxes 50 -51

Michigan Naval Force

The State of Michigan kept records on the Michigan Naval Force. Some of these units were called up into federal services. There is not an overarching guide connecting individual Naval Force units to federal units. For this reason, this section of records requires some digging.

Register of Personnel who served in World War I, Michigan Naval Force, 1917 – 1918

RG 80-36

These cards offer name, rating, state, battalion, division, date and place of enrollment typed on 3x5 cards. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name of serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 33, Drawer 61

Index to Personnel, Michigan Naval Force, 1917, 1921 – 1949

RG 80-36

These cards Offer name, division, and battalion of members of the Naval Force on 3x5 cards. The cards are arranged alphabetically by surname of serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 29, Drawer 62 – 63

Michigan Club Register, 1918-1919

RG 78-92

The guest register from the clubroom of Michigan Soldiers and Sailors Headquarters in New York is part of the records compiled by the War Preparedness Board (Michigan Department of Military Affairs). The volume lists the name, home residence, organization, station, and next friend for each soldier, along with a remarks column. An [index](#) on Seeking Michigan contains

the name of the guest and the volume and page number where the rest of the entry can be found.

Military Affairs, Series 2, Volumes 374 – 375

Step Three: Post War Records

The State of Michigan did not finish collecting information when World War I was finished. Below you will find various records related to discharge, death, and veteran benefits and honors.

Service Record of Discharge Men, Michigan National Guard, 1921 – 1926 **RG 80-36**

This form offers residence, name, and address of person to be notified in case of emergency; place of birth, age at enlistment in years and months, occupation, physical description, marital status, indelible or permanent marks and physical defects at enlistment, among other information. Material is organized alphabetically by name of serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 2, Boxes 37 – 50

Certificate of Disability for Discharge, Michigan National Guard, 1917 **RG 80-36**

These forms (Form 17) were created for those who had some sort of disability and were deemed unfit for service. The forms offers name, rank and assignment of serviceman; date, place and by whom enlisted, birthplace; age at enlistment; occupation; physical description; nature of disability; among other information. Material is organized alphabetically by name of serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 10, Box 59

Victory Medal Applications, 1920-1940 **RG 85-78**

A Victory was only awarded to combatants or those who saw active duty in World War I. The United States awarded the Victory medal to all officers, men, contact surgeons, field clerks, and nurses who served in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps between April 6th, 1917 and November 11, 1918. The medal was designed by Mr. J.E. Fraser under the direction of the Commission of Fine Arts. The medal was made of bronze and manufactured in France. The system of clasps attached to the ribbon on the medal was designed to show the major battles or operational conflicts between the allies and the Central Powers.

These records consist of applications for the medals and provide name, rank, serial number, clasps for service, approving officers, signature, and rank; arranged alphabetically.

Military Affairs, Series 5, Boxes 26 – 42

Veterans' Bonus Payments, World War I**RG 84-91**

These volumes pertain to World War I veterans who qualified for the payment of a bonus. To qualify one had to have been a resident of Michigan serving in the military at any time between April 6, 1917 and August 1, 1919. The reward for this contribution was \$15 per month for each month spent in defense of the country. These requirements were determined in Public Act 1 of Extra Session in 1921. The volumes contain name and address of applicant; months of military duty; total of bounty awarded, if any; date paid; and remarks. Records are arranged serially according to case numbers. Case numbers appear in Veterans' Bonus Files (organized alphabetically and described above).

Military Affairs, Series 1, Volumes 1 – 7

List of Army, Navy, and Marine Dead, 1917-1919**RG 84-107**

This list includes name, serial number, race, residence, age, place of birth, date and place of enlistment, rank, promotions, units served with, overseas assignments, when died, and person notified. Materials are organized alphabetically by surname of serviceman.

Military Affairs, Series 4, Box 174 – 176, Microfilm 11277 – 11279

Administrative Records**93-67**

From the Department of Personnel, these administrative records include two interesting lists: the number of men from Michigan who served during World War I and the World War I Michigan National Guard officers. These lists do not list individuals.

Military Affairs, Series 1, Boxes 1 – 2

Records of the Grand Rapids Veterans' Facility****See Research Guide No. 5**

Step Four: Don't forget to check the Draft

During World War I there were three registrations. The first, on June 5, 1917, was for all men between ages of 21 and 31. The second, on June 5, 1918, for those becoming 21 after June 5, 1917. A supplemental registration was held on August 24, 1918, got those become 21 years old after June 5, 1918. This was included in the second registration. The third registration was held on September 12, 1918, for men age 18 through 45.

Online Databases Available in Archives Reading Room

Ancestry: U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918

This database contains draft registration cards from the three different drafts during World War I. The WWI draft registration cards database can be an extremely useful resource because it covers a significant portion of the U.S. male population in the early twentieth-century. If you had family in the United States during WWI, you are likely to find at least one relative's information within this large collection. In addition, these cards contain more than just names and dates; they can contain significant genealogical information such as birthplace, citizenship status, and information on the individual's nearest relative

Register of Deserters from Draft, 1918**RG 80-36**

Offers name, address, date, date notice returned and division assigned. May include order and serial number, and report for number. Materials are arranged alphabetically by surname. However, the records are incomplete. The files are missing all of surnames that begin with E, N, O, W-Z and portions of D, F, G, K, M, A, D, R.

Military Affairs, Series 36, Drawer 46, Microfilm 264 - 267

Step Five: Local Counties

Many counties had a War Preparedness Board that was devoted to meeting the needs of wartime during June 1917 through June 1919. These boards met to discuss efforts to support wartime needs. These needs were related to the draft, survey of skills, survey of veterans, and veteran relief.

Alger County, War Preparedness Board, 1918-1919**RG 68-53**

This collection contains letters in and carbons of letters out relating to collections and administration of funds for relief administered by the War Preparedness Board. The material is arranged chronologically. There is no name index to these records.

Alger County, Office of the Clerk, Series 1, Box 1 – 2

Bay County, Draft Eligibility Lists, 1917**RG 71-16**

This collection is a list of male citizens between 18 and 45 year of age liable for military duty in 1917. The records offer name and, occasionally, location and age. The materials are organized chronologically. There is no name index to these records.

Bay County, Office of the Clerk, Series 4, Box 1

Delta County, Military Board Minutes, 1917**RG 82-117**

This collection includes minutes of the local draft board at Escanaba, which dealt with determining who is qualified for conscription. This volume offers number, name, address, and physical status of draftees.

Delta County, Office of the Clerk, Series 4, Box 1

Genesee County, War Preparedness Board, 1917-1919 **RG 81-51**

The Genesee County War Preparedness Board created a survey of women's skills (1917-1919). Printed on 5x7 cards, the survey registered all women over 16 years of age. The cards offers information concerning education, previous training, and willingness to serve as paid or volunteer, full or part time work and desire for training in any specific branch of work deemed of use to the individual or for the benefit of the government. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name of registrant within classes according to kind of work preferred.

Genesee County, Office of the Clerk, Series 6, Boxes 13 – 21

Grand Traverse County, War Preparedness Board, 1917 **RG 84-35**

These records consist of the minutes of the War Preparedness Board. In the minutes researchers can find names of officials, oaths of draft registrars, names of men registered, instructions from the Adjutant General's Office, telegrams, forms bulletins, and discussions of general business. The minutes are arranged chronologically. There is no name index to these records.

Grand Traverse County, Office of Clerk, Series 1, Box 1

Ionia County, World War I Veterans, 1917-1918 **RG 66-73**

These volumes contain personal, war, and family records of World War I veterans living in Ionia County circa 1930. The volumes are arranged alphabetically by serviceman. The material is a duplication of the census of veterans in record group 78-92.

Ionia County, Office of the Clerk, Series 15, Volumes 20 – 22

Ionia County, Selective Service Lists, 1917-1918 **RG 78-66**

These materials contain a list of names of men eligible for military conscription from each township. Also included is list of graduating seniors who will become eligible for the draft, a record of men inducted into military service, and loyalty oaths some of those men took. Material is arranged alphabetically by township.

Ionia County, Office of the Clerk, Series 4, Box 4

Ionia County, Selective Service Minutes, 1917-1918 **RG 78-66**

These materials include minute books which record the classification given members of the male population, number of cases examined, physical examination results, and number of men of cases classified, number of cases decided, and the number of men entrained by the county draft board. The material is arranged chronologically as received. There is no name index to these records.

Ionia County, Office of the Clerk, Series 5, Box 4

Mecosta County, Record of Soldier and Sailors in Service In the Great War, circa 1930 **RG 69-59**

These volumes contain personal, war, and family records of World War I veterans living in Mecosta County circa 1930. The volumes are arranged alphabetically by serviceman. The material is a duplication of the census of veterans in record group 78-92.

Mecosta County, Office of the Clerk, Series 1, Boxes 1 – 2,
Microfilm 887 – 888

Muskegon County, List of World War I Veterans, 1917-1918 **RG 84-32**

These volumes contain personal, war, and family records of World War I veterans living in Muskegon County circa 1930. The volumes are arranged alphabetically by serviceman. The material is a duplication of the census of veterans in record group 78-92.

Muskegon County, Office of the Clerk, Series 17, Box 32

Oscoda County, Veteran's Relief Commission, 1896-1944 **RG 67-40**

This collection consists of meeting minutes of Oscoda County's Veteran's Relief Commission meetings. The material is arranged chronologically. There is no name index to these records.

Oscoda County, Office of the Clerk, Series 7, Volume 234

Oscoda County, World War I Veterans, 1917-1918 **RG 67-40**

These volumes contain personal, war, and family records of World War I veterans living in Oscoda County circa 1930. The volumes are arranged alphabetically by serviceman. The material is a duplication of the census of veterans in record group 78-92.

Oscoda County, Office of the Clerk, Series 8, Volume 235

Saginaw County, World War I Veterans, 1917-1918 **RG 71-131**

These volumes contain personal, war, and family records of World War I veterans living in Saginaw County circa 1930. The volumes are arranged

alphabetically by serviceman. The material is a duplication of the census of veterans in record group 78-92.

Saginaw County, Office of the Clerk, Series 1, Volumes 1 – 9,
Microfilm 896 – 899

Shiawassee County, Military Discharges, 1919

RG 63-31

This collection of records contains certificates of honorable discharge from military service (1865, 1919). The certificates offers name; rank; unit of service; date of enrollment; term; date, place and condition of discharge; and occasionally age, physical description, and place of birth. These materials have an index to servicemen.

Shiawassee County, Office of the Clerk, Series 2

Owosso City, Veterans' Tax Exemption, 1920 & 1934-1937

RG 67-104

The collection consists of affidavits of soldiers' and sailors' homestead tax exemption according to Section 7, Public Act 331 of 1919 and Section 7, Act Public Act 243 of 1933, as amended, of Owosso (Shiawassee County, Michigan) for the years 1920, and 1934-37. Offers date, place, name of serviceman or his widow, war and unit served, description of property, signature of filer, and certificate of authority signed by city assessor.

Owosso City, Office of the Clerk, Series 4

Step Six: World War I Experience

The Archives of Michigan holds a number of collections donated by individuals that contain letters, photographs, and diaries from men who served in World War I. While these experiences may not be from your ancestor, they can shed light on what it might have been like to serve in World War I. These collections can be found through the Archives' online catalog at answercat.org.