

Researching American Military Records

June 2023

Fold 3

- Fold 3 was launched in 2007 as Footnote which wanted to publish original documents from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). It is now owned by Ancestry.
- The term Fold3 is a reference to the flag-folding ceremony in which the third fold is said to memorialize veterans.
- It ranges from the Revolutionary War up through the present; however there is a waiting period if you are not the veteran or member of the immediate family.



fold3 [®]
by  **ancestry**[®]

Fold 3 Procedure

1. Search for a name, time period, and place. (John Q. Smith, Smith John Q.)
2. Filter your results.
3. Focus on Fold3's Key Collections.
4. Browse Collections. For example, you could search the entire Civil War category or work your way down to Civil War pension index, a state, an arm of service such as a calvary or infantry, and finally a company.
5. Search with a wildcard. Use as asterisk * to stand in for any number of letters. (Example: Olmst*d will find Olmsted and Olmstead.)



Fold 3 Procedure (Continued)

1. Annotate records: Use the plus button in the image viewer toolbar at the top to add notes about people, places and dates the record mentions. Example: note both the wife's maiden and married name.

2. Don't give up on bad links. Look at the document. Sometimes the annotation is incorrect.

3. Create a memorial page.

4. Attach records to your tree.



Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR)

- CMRS is an envelope (called a jacket) that is labeled with the soldier's name, rank, military unit, and a list of card numbers. The information on these cards are taken from some type of original record in which the soldier's name appears such as an enlistment book, muster roll, hospital roll, descriptive book, prison record, payment voucher, or discharge. Some may contain personal papers, especially those of officers. CMSRs primarily cover those who served in volunteer military units raised at the local or state level in times of war. If an ancestor re-enlisted or served in two different companies during a war, he'll probably have two separate CMSRs.



Clues in a CMSR

- date and location he mustered (joined) the unit
- name of his commanding officer
- presence at regular musters
- notation about illness, wounds or desertion.
- date he mustered out (left) the company or died.



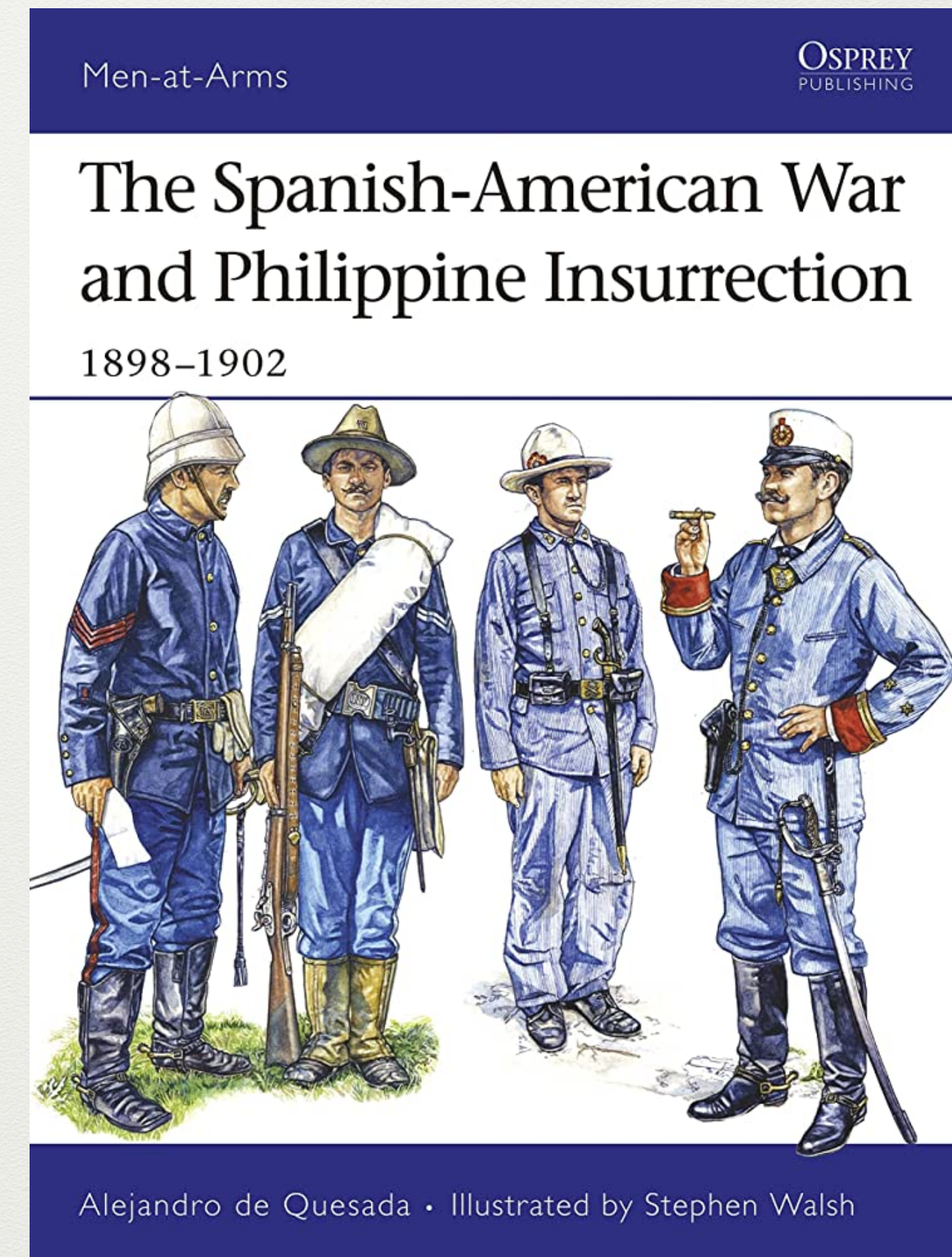
Finding CMSRs

- CMSRs may be on microfilm and/or digitized online. You may have to order a copy from NARA.
- **Revolutionary War (1775-1783):** The bad news is that many records were destroyed when the British burned Washington, DC in 1814 and others deteriorated or were lost over the years. The good news is all the surviving records have been indexed, microfilmed, and digitized.
- **War of 1812 (1812-1815)** Many men enlisted in local or state militias for short stints from three to nine months, and some served in more than one company. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4281/>



Indian Wars and Mexican-American Wars

- Indian Wars and Mexican-American War (1816-1858) Volunteer armies were raised for the Seminole Wars, Black Hawk War, Creek Wars, and other conflicts. (NARA M694)
- Fold 3 and FamilySearch has also digitized an index to Mexican-American War service records (from NARA M616)



Civil War (1861-1865)

- Company muster-in or muster-out rolls that identify rank, age, date and place of enlistment, term of enlistment, date, and place of mustering in/out, date last paid, and balance owed.
- Company descriptive books give enlistment information including color of eyes, hair, complexion, birthplace and occupation.
- Company muster rolls can tell whether the soldier was present for the time period on the card plus remarks.



Spanish-American and Philippine Wars (1898-1902)

- These are similar to Civil War CMSRs on microfilm (NARA M871) and online. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1919583>
- The Philippine Insurrection developed in the wake of the Spanish-American War and lasted until 1902. The index to these records (NARA M872) is part of a larger collection in Family Search, but you may have to go to the National Archives to find it. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2120733>



Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

World War I: 1917 to 1918

- The availability of military records for genealogical research drops off sharply in the 20th Century conflicts due to privacy regulations which limits records access for 75 years to the veteran or, if deceased, the next of kin. There was also a 1973 fire that destroyed 18 million records. You can request surviving records from the NPRC using Standard Form 180. <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>
- Draft cards: You need to know name, residence at time of registration (use a city directory and map of draft boards in large cities). They can give you name, address, age, date of birth, race, citizenship status, occupation, employer's name and address, name and address of nearest relative and physical appearance.



World War II (1941 to 1945) Korean War (1950-1953, Vietnam War (1961 TO 1975)

- Federal privacy laws restrict your access to records from recent wars.
- eVetrecs System: <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>
- If your ancestor died in the Korea or Vietnam conflict look for him or her in the Military Index CD, available at the FHL and many FHCs. NARA's state-by-state Korean and Vietnam War Casualty Lists: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/korean-war/casualty-lists>
- You may find more information in local newspapers which often printed military stories about hometown boys and the Veteran's History Project. <https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/about-this-program/>



Ordering a CMSR

- All pre-WWI service records are now held at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, DC. <https://www.archives.gov/forms>
- Go to Pre WWI Military Service Records (NATF Form 86). You can receive them as a PDF mailed to you or in print via postal mail (all for a fee). Orders are estimated to take two or three months to fulfill.



Military Service Records Resources

- **Ancestry.com: Military Records.** <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/39/>
- **Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database:** <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
- **Cyndi's List: US Military Records** <https://cyndislist.com/us/military/records>
- **FamilySearchWIKI: US Military Service Records:** https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Military_Records
- **FindMyPast:** <https://www.findmypast.com/>
- **National Archives Military Records:** <https://www.archives.gov/research/military>
- **Online Military Databases and Records:** <https://www.militaryindexes.com/>

