

NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS

Pamphlet Accompanying  
Microcopy No. 508

COMPILED SERVICE RECORDS OF  
VOLUNTEER UNION SOLDIERS WHO SERVED IN  
ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE STATE OF  
WEST VIRGINIA



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On the 261 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the compiled service records of volunteer Union soldiers belonging to units from the State of West Virginia. The compiled service records consist of a jacket-envelope for each soldier, labeled with his name, his rank, and the unit in which he served and typically containing (1) card abstracts of entries relating to the soldier as found in original muster rolls, returns, hospital rolls, descriptive books, lists of deserters, and lists of prisoners; and (2) the originals of any papers relating solely to the particular soldier. There are cross-references for soldiers' names that appear in the records under more than one spelling.

The compilation of service records of Union soldiers was begun in 1890 under the direction of Capt. Fred C. Ainsworth, head of the Record and Pension Division of the War Department. Abstracts were made from documents in the custody of the War Department and from muster, pay, and other rolls borrowed from the Second Auditor of the Treasury. The abstracts made from the original records were verified by a separate operation of comparison, and great care was taken to ensure that the abstracts were accurate.

The compiled service records of soldiers belonging to units from the State of West Virginia are arranged according to an organizational breakdown ending with the regiment or the independent battalion or company. Under each unit the service records are arranged alphabetically by soldiers' surnames.

Preceding the jacket-envelopes for the individual soldiers in each organizational unit are envelopes containing record-of-events cards giving the stations of the unit and sometimes information relating to the movements, activities, or organization of the unit or a part of it. In addition, there sometimes are envelopes containing general notation cards giving information relating to the entire organizational unit.

Following the series of jacket-envelopes for all the organizational units are two separate series of card abstracts and personal papers that are not in jacket-envelopes. These two series were accumulated by the War Department to be interfiled with the regular series of compiled service records but for one reason or another were not interfiled. The usual reason was that the information was insufficient or contained

discrepancies so that it could not be positively identified with any soldier for whom there was a compiled service record. Another reason was that no compiled service record had been established on the basis of regular service records, and the item by itself did not provide enough evidence to justify establishing one. In some instances, even where the abstracts appear to be complete, the process of identifying and filing the cards was not carried out. There are some reference slips and working papers among the unjacketed abstracts. The series of card abstracts is arranged in the same general organizational order as the jacket-envelopes. The personal papers are in two subseries: one arranged alphabetically by name of soldier; the other by organizational unit and thereunder alphabetically by name of soldier.

There is a card index that may be used to locate the compiled service record of a Union soldier from West Virginia. This index, reproduced as Microcopy 507, contains the names of West Virginia soldiers for whom there are regular compiled service records. An index card gives the name of the soldier, his rank, and the unit in which he served; sometimes there is a cross-reference to his service in other units or organizations.

The compiled service records here reproduced and the index referred to above are part of Record Group 94, Records of The Adjutant General's Office.

The record of a volunteer Union soldier from West Virginia may not appear in this microcopy for several reasons. First, he may have served in a unit from another State or in the Regular Army. Second, he may have served under a different name or used a different spelling of his name. Third, proper records of his service may not have been made; or, if made, they may have been lost or destroyed in the confusion that often attended the initial mobilization, subsequent military operations, and disbandment of troops. Fourth, the references to the soldier in the original records may be so vague that it is not practicable to determine his correct name or the unit in which he served.

The National Archives has other records that may contain information relating to Union soldiers from West Virginia. Other series of compiled service records of volunteer soldiers are (1) an alphabetical series of records of Union staff officers, (2) medical records of volunteer Union and Mexican War soldiers, and (3) records for non-State organizations, such as U. S. Sharp Shooters, Signal Corps, U. S. Colored Troops, and Veterans Reserve Corps. Information relating to soldiers who served in the Regular Army is recorded in Registers

of Enlistments in the U. S. Army, 1798-1914 (reproduced as Micro-copy 233), and in other records of The Adjutant General's Office. If an application for a pension was made, additional information about the soldier may be among the pension application files of the Veterans Administration in Record Group 15. Supposed Union military service is sometimes shown by the records to have been civilian service as a scout, guide, or spy. Evidence of such service may be among the records of the Provost Marshal General in Record Group 110.

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The price of the 238 rolls of film in Microcopy 508 is \$1,051.