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INDEX TO COMPILED SERVICE RECORDS OF VOLUNTEER UNION SOLDIERS
WHO SERVED IN ORGANIZATION FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

On the 7 rolls of this microfilm publication is reproduced an alphabetical card index to the compiled service records of volunteer Union soldiers belonging to units from the State of Rhode Island. Each index card gives the name of a soldier, his rank, and the unit in which he served. There are cross-references for names that appeared in the records under more than one spelling and for service in more than one unit or organization.

The supposedly correct name of a volunteer Union soldier from Rhode Island may not appear in the index 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, a proper record of his service may not have been made; or, if made, it 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 have been so vague that it was not practicable to determine his correct name or the unit in which he served.

The compiled service records to which the index applies consist of a jacket-envelope for each soldier, labeled with his name and containing (1) card abstracts of entries relating to the soldier in the original muster rolls, returns, descriptive rolls, lists of deserters, and lists of recruits; and (2) the originals of any papers relating solely to the particular soldier. A typical example of a compiled service record is filmed at the beginning of the index.

The compiled service records of soldiers belonging to units from the State of Rhode Island 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 surname. Unless the unit in which a soldier served is known, his compiled service record can be located only through the use of an index, such as the one reproduced here, which gives the name of the unit in which he served.

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. 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 and the indexes were accurate.

Reproductions of specific compiled service records corresponding to entries in the index here reproduced may be obtained from the National Archives for a fee. Requests for such reproductions should give the name of the State, the regiment or battalion, and the company for each soldier, exactly as shown in the index.

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

The National Archives has other records that may contain information about Union soldiers from Rhode Island. 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 of non-State organization, such as the U. S. Colored Troops, and the 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 Microcopy 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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