

Researching US Army Air Forces and Personnel of WWII

Last updated 22-Apr-2006 -vjlw-

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Sources:

1. ArmyAirForces.com

Available: <http://www.armyairforces.com/help.asp>

2. North Carolina WWII Resources

Formerly available at: http://www.rootsweb.com/~ncwwii/NCWWII_Resources.htm

3. B24.NET's Government Research Resources and Scott Burris of Heavy Bombers

Available: <http://www.b24.net/resrchrs/govlstings.htm>

I. Research Tips and Addresses

Introduction

Whether you are a veteran, a descendent of a veteran, or an interested researcher, you can locate the information you are looking for. Check each of the sections below for what fits your needs. If you are looking for a bombardment group, visit the [ArmyAirForces.com Research Website](#).

First Steps

If you are a veteran, write down your recollections. Concentrate on known dates, events, or other significant details. The more data points you can provide, the easier the research task will be. If you are a descendent or interested researcher, it is important to gather every scrap of information you can. A lot of your initial ideas may derive from oral histories passed around the family. These can be important leads, but should never be looked at as absolutes. Oral histories change and mutate through each retelling. Look for photos, old letters, telegrams, government documents, diaries, uniform items, anything that might tell a portion of the story. As a researcher you should always strive to find the truth of the story. Often the research will lead you in directions that you might never have considered at the start of the process.

Records to Locate and General Aids - Finding Needles in Haystacks

One of the most common requests is help with finding crew members and other veterans. It helps to know the full name of the individual(s) you are searching for. In cases of lost aircraft, obtain the [Missing Air Crew Report \(MACR\)](#) for a list of crew member names.

National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records: This is where you obtain Service Records (201 file) located in St. Louis. Note that a fire in 1973 destroyed many records, nearly 80% of them. You'll need their Standard Form 180 and an understanding of the Privacy Act of 1974. With access to a printer and the Adobe Acrobat Reader software, you may download and print a copy of the Standard Form 180 - Request Pertaining to Military records. The front and back of the form are separate files which must be downloaded separately. NOTE: Please download both sides of the form as the back of the form contains important mailing addresses and instructions.

The Standard Form 180 is formatted for legal size paper (8.5" X 14"), please print that way if your printer can accommodate. If your printer can only print on letter size paper (8.5" X 11"), select "shrink to fit" when the Adobe Acrobat Reader "Print" dialog box appears.

Mailing address

National Personnel Records Center
Military Personnel Records
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Available: http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records.html

Social Security Death Index, search this online index for likely matches. This resource can save you a lot of time.

Available: <http://www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/vital/ssdi/main.htm>

American Battle Monuments Commission: WWII Honor Roll, if the veteran you are searching for was killed in action and buried overseas he should be listed in this database. Burials in the domestic United States are not covered. Note: the ABMC website can be very slow at times.

Available: <http://www.abmc.gov/home.php>

WWII POW Database Search at NARA, the records identify World War II U.S. military officers and soldiers and U.S. and some Allied civilians who were prisoners of war (POWs) and internees. (Select "Subject: Prisoners of war", then "World War II Prisoners of War File, ca. 1942 - ca. 1947").

Available: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>

World War II Honor List of Dead and Missing Army and Army Air Forces Personnel, indexed by State. This resource is not searchable yet, the information presented online consists of image scans from the NARA publication.

Available: <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/ww2/army-casualties/>

Records To Locate:

The Army Air Forces of W.W.II generated a lot of paperwork. Many of these records exist today in their original form or on microfilm and microfiche. These records are maintained at a handful of facilities around the country.

Available: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

Personnel records - these records are maintained by the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records in St. Louis Missouri. Unfortunately a fire in 1973 destroyed many records, but you should always start here. If you are not a family member you will be prevented by the Privacy Act of 1974 in the amount of information you can obtain via this source.

Available: http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records.html

Dealing with archives requires patience, but the rewards can be well worth it. Before writing or calling any facility, try to put as much information down on paper that might assist the archivists in locating the records you are interested in. It may seem obvious, but attempt to provide full name with middle initial, rank, branch of service, dates of service, units served in, etc. The archivists can work miracles, but every additional data point you can provide makes their job that much easier - and the chances of obtaining the results you want that much greater.

National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records: This is where you obtain Service Records (201 file) located in St. Louis. Note that a fire in 1973 destroyed many records, nearly 80% of them. You'll need

their **Standard Form 180** and an understanding of the Privacy Act of 1974.

Available: http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records/standard_form_180.html

A note from NPRC on delays: "Response times for records requested from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) vary greatly depending on the nature of the request. For example, the NPRC Military Records Facility currently has a backlog of 180,000 requests and receives approximately 5,000 requests per day. Routine requests for separation documents currently require only 2-4 weeks for servicing. However, requests that involve reconstruction efforts due to the 1973 fire or older records which require extensive search efforts may take much longer. The average turnaround time on all requests is currently running at approximately 12 weeks".

293 file, Individual Deceased Personnel File - this file is maintained by the Department of the Army in Washington, DC. If the veteran you are researching was Killed in Action you will definitely want to obtain this file. This file documents the activities of the Graves Registration Command and the Army to locate, identify, and provide a final resting place for the deceased.

Form Available: <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/dd0293.pdf>

The disinterment file will have information about the identification and reburial process. The U.S. Total Army Personnel Command handles these requests. Mailing address for Individual Deceased Personnel File:

Mailing address
U.S. Total Army Personnel Command Public Affairs Office (TAPC-PAO(FOIA)) 200 Stovall Street Alexandria, VA 22332-0404.

Available: <https://www.hrc.army.mil/indexNonFlash.asp>

Available: <https://www.perscom.army.mil/faqs.htm>

The **U.S. Army Personnel Command** handles these requests. National Archives: MACR's, KU-Reports, Tactical Mission Summaries, replies may take two to four months.

NOTE: most 15th AF records are stored at AFHRA, Maxwell AFB (see #4) instead of the National Archives. Records pertaining to the military in W.W.II are maintained at National Archives at College Park, MD (Archives II).

Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR) - if your research involves the loss of an aircraft in a combat situation and not in Allied territory, the MACR will be invaluable. This document was generated shortly after the loss of the aircraft (usually within a day or so) and lists the crew roster, aircraft, and basic details of the loss including eye witness statements if they were available. A MACR database, equipped with a search engine, is available at:

<http://www.armyairforces.com/dbmacr.asp>

These records are maintained by the National Archives and Records Administration II in College Park, Maryland. Over time, the MACR report became a file, containing a collection of documents relating to the aircraft loss. You should request the entire file.

Mailing address

National Archives and Records Administration
Textual Reference Branch
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001
Phone 301-713-7250

Available: <http://www.archives.gov/research/start/index.html>

Available:

http://www.archives.gov/research_room/media_formats/print_friendly.html?page=textual_documents_content.htm

KU Report - National Archives and Record Administration (NARA). If the loss of the aircraft occurred over German territory, a German Kampf Flugzeuge USA [Battle Planes USA] document was prepared by the Luftwaffe concerning the location of the aircraft wreckage and fate of the crew. National Archives has the original reports as well as translations available. We know of no Japanese equivalent.

Available: <http://www.archives.gov/research/captured-german-records/citing-german-microfilm-sources.html>

USAF & USAAF Aircraft Accident Reports: If your research involves a plane crash in training, transit, or combat, these guys are well worth checking into. They have a comprehensive database of some unique materials. Sometimes difficult to locate, they are maintained by the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) on microfilm. An accident report can run from just a few pages to a half dozen or more pages and may even include photos of the accident.

Unit Histories, War Diaries, Daily Reports, Station Memorandum, Special Orders, Public Relations Reports, Loading Lists, etc. - these unit documents are archived by the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell AFB, located at Maxwell AFB Alabama.

You can usually obtain squadron and group historical summaries at no cost through written request. You should also be able to obtain a specific monthly squadron diary upon request. A larger request, say for the entire War Diary, would probably necessitate a copying fee. You can order Group & Unit microfilm at \$30.00 a roll from AFHRA. The microfilm rolls are usually divided up between Group histories, Squadron histories, and tenant command histories. You can [e-mail AFHRA](#) to obtain the roll numbers for your unit.

NOTE: You might want to view this index of the [381st Bomb Group \(Heavy\)'s microfilm records](#) to get an idea of what you can expect.

The source for unit information and for purchasing microfilm records. Requests can take between one month to four months for a reply. Orders for microfilm normally just take a month to fill.

Mailing address

AFHRA/RSA
600 Chennault Circle
Maxwell AFB, Alabama 36112-6424
Phone (334) 953-2437
FAX (334) 953-4096

Available: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/afhra/>

Air Force History Support Office (AFHSO): Located at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C. In conjunction with the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, which is the primary repository of historical information, the office responds to requests for information from private organizations, government agencies, and the general public.

Mailing address
AFHSO/HOS
Reference and Analysis Division
200 McChord Street, Box 94
Bolling AFB, DC 20332-1111
Phone 202-404-2261

Available: <http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/>

The **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)** has procedures to help you find surviving service members <https://iris.va.gov/scripts/iris.cfg/php.exe/enduser/home.php>

There is no guarantee that this will work, but it's a good resource. The procedure is for you to write a letter to the service member, place that in a SASE (Self Addressed Stamped Envelope) which is in turn mailed to the nearest VA office to the person in question. The VA will then try and forward the letter to that person, and it is up them to respond.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Phone (800)827-1000

Available: <http://www.va.gov/>

VA Contacts and Mailing Addresses by State:

http://www.appc1.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate_flsh.asp

Another avenue you might be interested in pursuing is to obtain any records relating to your veteran and the VA. You can submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Available: <http://www.va.gov/foia/guide.asp>

Group Associations - these associations were started after the war, many in the 1970s. Formed by the veterans themselves, they are tremendous resources for information. The associations have published books, documented their histories on videotape, compiled rosters, lists of aircraft, and many other details valuable to the researcher. Note that most associations are for combat units, stateside training units rarely have associations.

Many associations hold yearly reunions. If you are a veteran of a Group or a descendant, these groups want to hear from you and would welcome your membership! One of the primary goals of ArmyAirForces.com is to list the points of contacts for each Group.

You can find units or individual squadrons by looking in our forums. -[AAF Forums - <http://www.armyairforces.com/forum/>].

II. Additional Addresses and Resources

American Legion
Air Force History Support Office
500 Duncan Ave Box 94
Bolling AFB, D.C. 20332-1111
Phone: (202) 404-2264
<http://www.legion.org/>

World War II Memorial
American Battle Monuments Commission
2300 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 501
Arlington, VA 22201
<http://www.wwiimemorial.com/>

III. World Wide Web Resources

Washington National Cathedral
<http://www.cathedral.org/cathedral/>

American World War II Orphans Network (AWON)
<http://www.awon.org/awmain.shtml>

AWON Resources Page
<http://www.awon.org/awresour.shtml>

the 57th Bomb Wing Association Website
<http://57thBombWing.com>

57th Bomb Wing Listserver
<http://lists.northrock.bm/read/?forum=57th>

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA):
<http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

NARA Research Room:
http://www.archives.gov/research_room/getting_started/getting_started.html

Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command
<http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/>

Miami Valley Military History Museum (was WWII On The Web - Research Resources Page):
<http://www.donet.com/~mconrad/mvmhm.htm>

UK Defense Attaché Office - U.S. Air Force Records Centers
<http://www.usembassy.org.uk/dao/usafrecs.html>

World War II Research

NARA Military Personnel Records:

http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records.html

Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA)

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/afhra/>

USAAF Units of W.W.II Database:

<http://www.armyairforces.com/dbunitsearch.asp>

First Steps to Finding Your Dad's Story:

<http://members.aol.com/dadswar/index.htm#frststep>

Are You Related to Someone Who Served in the Military?

<http://members.aol.com/veterans/related.htm>

vjw's WWII Bookmarks page:

<http://home.att.net/~vjwhite/bookmarksWW2.html>

Tips for Locating WWII Air Crew Members (this document)

http://home.att.net/~vjwhite/researching_wwii.htm