



Service numbers

WWI to most of the Vietnam years, the key to locating records a person's service number-

Brief History-

Prior to 1918 a record of service was tracked using unit rosters and muster rolls – Important to note regarding WWI- a service persons who served in 1917 and died prior to February 1918- will not have a service number. (there are a few exceptions, but most do not)

Service numbers were introduced into the Army February 1918 for enlisted men/women only. The officers were recorded in U.S. Registers Of Army Officers (note reserve officers are often not included-they are in the supplemental register)

Letters were added to Service Numbers in 1920

WWII -All branches of the military issued service numbers to both enlisted and officers.

Navy Service Numbers- the first two numbers are the recruitment code, the last 6 personal identifiers, until 1969 a W was placed at the end to denote a woman. (recruitment codes are numerous-links available online)

Army/Army Air Corps Service Numbers and meaning.

First number denotes how they entered service and status;

1-Enlisted Army

2- National Guard

3-Drafted

4- Drafted

O- Officer (male)

W-Warrant Officer (male)

T-Flight Officer

L-Commissioned Women's Army Air Corps

V-WAC Warrant Officer
A-WAC enlisted
R-Hospital Dieticians
M-Physical Therapy Aids

The second number designates the location where they enlisted or were drafted.

1 Conn., Maine, Mass, NH, R.I., Vt
2 Del, NJ, NY
3 Md, Penn, Vir
4 Ala, Fl, Ga, Miss, NC, SC, Tenn
5 Ind., Ky, Oh, WV
6 Ill, Mich, Wis
7 Col, Iowa, KA, Minn, Mo, Ne, ND, SD
8 Ark, LA, NM, Ok, Tx
9 Alaska, Ariz, Ca, ID, Mt, Nev, Oregon, Ut, WA
0 Draft outside the US – Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Panama etc

Second number is the most important- it tells you where the person was living prior to induction of service. Not necessarily where they were born. It can help locate other genealogical records.

The change over

The use of Social Security Numbers as an identifiers for Military Records began as follows-

Army/Air Force 1 July 1969
Navy/Marine Corps 1 January 1972
Coast Guard- 1 October 1972

If someone served from 1955 to 1975- their records would be filed under their service number and social security number.

Also important to note- if they enlisted as reg. army, then became an officer they will have two service numbers- and records will be found under both. This mainly happened in the Army Air Corps.

Where to find WWI service numbers-

United States Veterans Administration Master Index 1917 – 1940

The best site- Familysearch.org - it displays the image of the actual card – the image contains, the service number, unit, birthdate, and if they died in service the date of death.

Fold 3 and Ancestry only give birth, death, and name- they do not include the service number in the result.

Other Resources-

Service numbers can also be found on transport ships, burial cards, headstone applications, and separation papers.

If they are Navy- records are in ship logs and muster rolls.

Where to find WWII service numbers-

In 1965 The War Records Division of the Maryland Historical Society published a five-volume set-

“Maryland In World War II Register of Service Personnel”

Names are alphabetical, branch of service, service number, and where they were from * available at the archives and some libraries.

In 1956 the same group published-

Maryland in World War II Gold Star Honor Roll

The book is done by county, by service, then alphabetical by last name. *

Available at the archives and some libraries.

*** IMPORTANT*** although the service numbers may be correct- many of the men who are listed in the book as Maryland residents were not!!

There are several men listed in the Gold Star Honor Roll – who were instead of missing in action were AWOL. They were found after the war but records were never updated.

If you do not have access to the above books- Other sources that contain WWII service numbers-

Enlistment records found on Ancestry and Fold 3 will list the service number of the person, as well as the birth year and location of enlistment. (enlistment

records do not mean the person volunteered; it means they signed the paperwork to join- ie drafted men have enlistment paperwork)

Overseas burial cards, headstone request applications, WD-AGO papers (separation of service), unit histories, morning reports, general orders, and transport records, etc.

*if you have your relatives dog tags- the service number is engraved on it.

Draft Registration Cards-

- 1) Just because a person filled out and filed a draft card does not mean they served.
- 2) Not everyone required to fill out a draft card did
- 3) Draft cards are more for personal information (relative, job etc) and have no military value other than they registered.
- 4) Birth dates and locations are not always correct- always verify.
- 5) Always look at both sides of the card -sometimes notations are made on the back about disability, prior service, death in service, etc.
- 6) If they were active duty- enlisted prior to the draft, in the Reserves, or National Guard- they would not have a card.

Draft Cards -

WWI-

1st registration – 5 June 1917- men ages 21 to 31 prior (1886 -1896) **

2nd registration-5 June 1918 turned age 21 prior to 5 June (1896)

Supplemental -24 August 1918- age 21 current after 5 June (1897)

3rd registration- 12 September 1918- 18 to 45 (1873 – 1900_

The takeaway- the majority of the men who served were born between 1888 and 1896. Any man who died overseas under the age of 21- enlisted. They were not required to register until 2 months before the war ended.

**20 July 1917- the first draft lottery- papers listed the men who were drafted and where they were from.

WWII

16 October 1940 – born between 16 Oct. 1904 – 16 Oct. 1919

1 July 1941 – born between 17 Oct. 1919 – 12 Jul. 1920

16 Feb. 1942 – born between 17 Feb 1897 – 31 Dec. 1921

27 April 1942 (Old Man's Draft- accounting for workers/resources at home)
28 April 1877 – 16 Feb. 1897

30 June 1942- born between 1 Jan. 1922 – 30 Jun 1924

10 - 31 December 1942 born between 1 Jul. 1924 to 31 Dec. 1924

16 Nov – 31 Dec 1943- living abroad ages 18 -44 (Panama- Puerto Rico)

Interesting fact- the top right box the letter in front of the number relates to the draft registration date

S- 2nd draft

T- 3rd draft

U-4th draft

N-5th draft

W-6th draft

No letter means first or last draft

This lettering system can be very useful to know- there are instances where you cannot read the birth year- or in a few rare cases- no birthdate is recorded. The letter designation gives you an idea of the year they were most likely born.

Those who served and were born after 31 December 1924 volunteered.
(sometimes the service number designations are incorrect, and they have a 3 designation instead of a 1)

As always- any questions or if you need help or more information my email is Denise@thelegacyofhonor.com