

THE DRAFT AND THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

The United States since 1862 have passed congressional legislation, and several Selective Service Acts in 1917, 1940, 1948, and 1967 that have account for men who would serve between the Civil War and the Vietnam War. The history of the draft and conscripting men for military service dates back to the days of the Revolutionary War. Individual colonies were given the authority to draft men based on a class system.

CIVIL WAR DRAFT

Union Draft Records

The Civil War draft can be traced to the Militia Act of 1862 (12 Stat. 597) that was effective on July 17, 1862. This Act was very controversial. The following year with the passage of the Enrollment Act of 1863 (12 Stat. 731) passed on March 3, 1863, in response to the need the ranks of the Union army grew with all males between the ages of 20-45. The Act then divided the United States into Enrollment Districts with the finding aid at *FamilySearch*: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1358330?availability=Family%20History%20Library> divided by congressional district number, boundaries, and representative.

Draft lists are divided into 3 separate classes:

- Class I –Men aged 20-35 years old
- Class II–Men aged 36-45 years old
- Class III–Volunteer Enlistments

Draft records include the following types of original documents:

- *Consolidated Lists*–Major set of records that cover lists of men drafted by location.
- *Medical Records of Examinations*–These lists are for men either drafted or rejected for military service and organized by state, and then listed by congressional district.
- *Descriptive Rolls*–Very similar to the Consolidated Lists, but provide additional details on persons eligible for service.
- *Statements of Substitutes*–Lists of men who were paid as substitutes for a drafted. The usual computation fee was \$300.00.

- *Case Files of Drafted Aliens*-These are case files for men who were aliens living in the United States found in RG59.

Draft records can be found in two separate record groups within the collection of the National Archives:

- RG59-Department of State
- RG110-Provost Marshal Office

Draft records are located at the National Archives in Washington, DC or in regional archive's branches. Limited access to draft records for the Union is found on *Ancestry* at: (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/consolidatedlistsofcivilwarreg>). The records online are not complete and really focus on the consolidated lists as these are the largest of the set of five documented types of draft related records.

Confederate Draft Records:

The history of the Confederate Draft dates from April 16, 1862 when the first National Conscription Act passed by Confederate Congress. It authorized men between the ages of 18-35 for 3-year terms in 1862. Initially draft exemptions based upon a person's occupation including agriculturists, confederate officials, state officials, railroad workers, physicians, druggists, apothecaries, ministers, teachers, mail contractors, newspaper employees, and their editors. By 1864 the ages were expanded to men between 17 and 50.

SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT OF 1917

The passage of the Selective Service Act of 1917 on May 18, 1917 (40 Stat. 76), that authorized the President to increase the military. All males between the ages of 18 and 45 was required to register.

The World War I-Draft consisted of three (3) separate registrations:

- 1st Registration-June 5, 1917-Men aged 21- 31 born between June 6, 1886-June 5, 1886 (12 Questions)
- 2nd Registration-June 5, 1918-Men who turned 21 born between June 6, 1896-June 6, 1897 (10 Questions)
- 3rd Registration-September 12, 1918-Men aged 18-21 and 34-35 born between September 11, 1872 and September 12, 1900 (20 Questions)

Records online at 3 locations:

Ancestry at: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6482> and on *Fold3* with cards indexed at: <https://www.fold3.com/title/959/wwidraft-registration-cards/description>, at located on *FamilySearch*: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1968530>. The

SELECTIVE SERVICE AND TRAINING ACT OF 1940

The Passage of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 (54 Stat. 885) by Congress on September 16, 1940 instituted a National Draft requiring all men between the ages of 21-45 to register. By 1945 nearly 50 million men had registered for the Draft. The Act include men between the ages of 18 and 65 (regardless of citizenship) to register for the draft and covered in 7 registrations:

- 1st Registration-October 16, 1940-All Men between ages of 21-31
- 2nd Registration-July 1, 1941-All Men who reached 21 since the first registration
- 3rd Registration-February 16, 1942-All Men between ages of 20-21 and 35-44-required to register
- 4th Registration-April 27, 1942-Men between ages of 45-65-not eligible for military service It is often referred to as the "*Old Men's Draft*".
- 5th Registration-June 30, 1942-All Men between ages of 18-20 were required to register
- 6th Registration-December 10-31, 1942-Men who reached age 18 since last registration.
- 7th Registration-November 16-December 31, 1943 for American men living abroad ages of 18-44 were required to register.

The WWII cards are not complete. Those online cards are available on *Ancestry* at: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/wwiidraft>, and located on *Family Search* at: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1861144>, and also located on *Fold3* at <https://www.fold3.com/title/816/wwii-draft-registration-cards>. For cards not digitized consult NPRC in St. Louis, MO

SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT OF 1948

The Korean War saw the passage of the Selective Service Act of 1948 (62 Stat. 604) on July 24, 1948 and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman. Men who previously were Active Duty during World War II were not eligible to be drafted during the Korean War. Between the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the end of hostilities in 1953 the Selective Service inducted more than 1.5 million men under arms to fight.

SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT OF 1967

The Military Selective Service Act of 1967 (81 Stat. 100), came as amendment of the earlier Act of 1948. On November 26, 1969 President Nixon signed into law drafting men by lottery (by Executive Order 11497), with the first lottery held on December 1, 1969. Men would be made eligible born between 1944-1950. On July 1, 1970 a second lottery had eligible men born in 1951 with the draft classifications used for men seeking deferments. The final lottery was held on March 12, 1975.

ACCESS TO DRAFT CARDS AND LISTS

Requests for the draft records by mail are downloaded from the National Archives online: <https://www.archives.gov/files/na-13172.pdf> with the cost for the cards and classifications:

\$7.00 for the Draft Card

\$27.00 for the Draft Classification listing in addition to the original Draft Card.

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