

Reprinted from the April 2011 issue of *Wellesprings*, the newsletter of the Welles Family Association.

## The Civil War Sesquicentennial and Family History

By Barbara J. Mathews, CG

I'm excited about all the events planned throughout the U.S. to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War. It makes me want to discuss Civil War ancestors and how to find them. Problem is, the current book project covers five generations with the sixth as children. It is in the seventh generation that we see Civil War participation. I feel frustrated by the "haven't gotten there yet" aspects of this.

The newsletter has certainly covered in past issues the participation of Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy under Abraham Lincoln. From Gideon's own diary, we know what he did during the Civil War and how it affected his family. Can we bring the same sense of immediacy and intimacy that we find in Gideon's diary into our own family research?

What can you do to bring the Civil War into your own genealogy? Certainly understanding what military service your ancestors gave is a start, but other family members also participated in Civil War service. Finally, the Civil War took place here in the U.S. It may have come into your ancestors' personal experience in many different ways, from actual fighting to witnessing related events. Let's look at the many resources we have for documenting our family during the Civil War.

- Reenactments bring the war to life
- Learning about Civil War battles
- Learning about how towns and cities supported the troops
- Learning about military service

I've put a focus on online information providers below. If you don't have personal subscriptions to these sites, please remember that there are places where you can gain access for free, including the National Archives regional offices, local libraries, the Connecticut State Library, and your local Family History Centers.

### REENACTMENTS

One of the best ways to bring the Civil War experience to life is to experience it directly.

- <http://www.civilwartraveler.com/> lists reenactments by state
- <http://www.reenactmenthq.com/eventlist.asp> lists reenactments by date
- <http://www.cslib.org/wmwebb/> features Kevin Johnson, a Connecticut State Library employee who reenacts William Webb, a member of the Colored Troops

## CIVIL WAR BATTLES

### Major Battles

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_American\\_Civil\\_War\\_battles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_American_Civil_War_battles)
- <http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/battles/bystate.htm>
- [http://americanhistory.about.com/od/civilwarbattles/Civil\\_War\\_Battles.htm](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/civilwarbattles/Civil_War_Battles.htm)

### Navy and Army records

- <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/civil-war-genealogy-resources/>
- 

### Maps

Supporting the troops from back home, full view books on Google Books:

- Women's Work in the Civil War, <http://tinyurl.com/3htkhs4> which, in full is: [http://books.google.com/books?id=MQ9CAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=civil+war&hl=en&ei=rz3ZTdLpJYXagAfJ06xY&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwATgK#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=MQ9CAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=civil+war&hl=en&ei=rz3ZTdLpJYXagAfJ06xY&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwATgK#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- The Civil War in Song and Story, 1861-1865, <http://tinyurl.com/4ycxbk6> which in full is: [http://books.google.com/books?id=DHLnnVDf\\_bUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=civil+war&hl=en&ei=Xz7ZTaW-OIO\\_gQeSsrBY&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBDgU#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=DHLnnVDf_bUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=civil+war&hl=en&ei=Xz7ZTaW-OIO_gQeSsrBY&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CD0Q6AEwBDgU#v=onepage&q&f=false)

## MILITARY SERVICE

You can find that ancestor's service record online. Some resources for this include:

- Ancestry.com:
  - Consolidated Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers
- Footnote.com:
  - Confederate Soldier Service Records
  - Union Soldier Service Records

## CIVIL WAR PENSIONS

- Ancestry.com:
  - General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934
  - Index to Case Files of Disapproved Pension Applications
  - 1890 U.S. Census Schedules Enumerating Union Veterans and Widows

- Footnote.com:
  - Index to veterans of Civil and later Wars
  - Widows Pensions