

South Central Pennsylvania Civil War Database

Frequently Asked Questions

What individuals appear in the database? Any Civil War veteran or civilian significantly involved with the war effort who at the time of the war was:

1. Living in south-central Pennsylvania.
2. Moved to south-central Pennsylvania after the war.
3. Died in south-central Pennsylvania (exception: non-locals buried in the Gettysburg National Military Cemetery).
4. Veterans from anywhere who were brothers, sons, or fathers of those eligible to appear in the database.
5. Veterans born in south-central Pennsylvania, but who had moved away prior to the war (hardest to locate and fewest in number).
6. A member of a company or regiment that I have studied, a practice I have had to curtail in recent years but one continued for 87th Pennsylvania veterans.
7. A handful of Confederate soldiers who died in the region's military hospitals after the battle of Gettysburg and who were otherwise undocumented.
8. Veterans who died at the military hospital on York's Penn Commons (today's Penn Square) and buried in the Soldiers' Circle at Prospect Hill Cemetery.
9. On occasion, someone of personal or familial interest to me, although these are few in number.

Why are Berks and Lebanon counties not represented given that they are south-central Pennsylvania counties? Sheer numbers. I haven't gotten to them yet.

Franklin county is not really a south-central Pennsylvania county. Why is it included? Because of the county's historical interaction with men from Adams and Cumberland counties.

Is the database updated regularly? As this is an ongoing project, the database will be refreshed as often as is feasible. Often, individuals will be added with as much data as may be available from reliable online sources and fleshed out in greater detail later. Corrections are ongoing.

Is there any priority as to when veterans will be researched and appear in the database? To some degree, yes. Lowest priority goes to those men whose only service was with militia regiments, especially those who enlisted in September 1862 for two uneventful weeks of service. That group has little to

no documentation on them as individuals, often not even an enlistment age. As a result, it is extremely difficult to tie 1862 militiamen to records such as censuses or genealogies. If I come across them - usually by finding their tombstone with the regiment inscribed - I include them in the database and always include that brief service if they had other military experiences that are better documented. I would like to say I will eventually add all the 1862 militiamen to the database, but that is probably not realistic. Militia regiments formed in 1863 and 1864 are usually better documented, and thus I do grant them somewhat higher priority although still lower than veterans who served in federally-mustered regiments. This prioritization is solely about the most efficient use of one man's time in the face of daunting numbers.

What data is displayed? As its single guiding purpose, an overview of each veteran's military experiences including service dates. In addition, to the extent possible I present three generations of veterans' genealogies solely to facilitate recognition by users of this system. The information presented will be, to the best of my ability, historically accurate and never whitewashed.

Why are some fields left blank or contain a question mark? The first possibility is that I could not find data for that field. The second possibility is that I have loaded as much data as I was able to locate via online sources with the goal of filling in details from future research, mostly accomplished at the National Archives.

What sources are used? I have included general sources in each field's help screen. (Roll the cursor over the desired field to read.) You may also from time to time see sources in the military and family and personal data fields. Sources come, to the greatest extent possible, from primary and sound secondary venues. What are NOT used for military data (or birth dates) unless clear corroboration exists, are unreliable sources such as tombstones, obituaries, newspaper articles, locally-written histories, and the Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, the last of which is among the worst sources for military data imaginable, but one sadly in common use, especially on www.findagrave.com.

How close is the database to completion? In the truest sense, it never will be complete. There always will be updates to existing records, especially genealogical data, and no doubt there always will be one more veteran or involved civilian springing from the unknown and asking to be added (virtually speaking). As stated before, the project likely will terminate with my passing or loss of mental faculties, although someone may wish to continue the hunt thereafter. As of early 2021, York and Adams counties have been so well covered that only rarely do I add a new member. Cumberland and Perry counties are well covered but still incomplete. Dauphin County has a long way

to go, and while Lancaster County is already well represented, it, too, is far from complete.

Are black soldiers, Confederates, and women represented? Yes, and you can search for them. All women on file at this point were civilians. Although an estimated 400 - 750 women did pass as men and serve as soldiers on both sides, I have yet to locate one involved with south-central Pennsylvania.

What qualifications does Dennis W. Brandt possess to present this information to the public? I hold a degree in music education from Northwestern University, studied at Indiana University and Mansfield State College (now University), and earned an MA in music performance at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Leaving the music world as a vocation, I entered the seemingly unrelated universe of data processing, retiring after twenty-five years. Along the way, my lifelong love of the Civil War goaded me into studying my family's involvement, and that led to a decision to study the subject seriously, initially in informal seminars under the auspices of Dr. Gary Gallagher, then of Penn State, National Park historian Robert K. Krick, and later formally with Dr. Mark A. Snell, then of Shepherd University, and erstwhile history instructor at West Point. That led to the publication of three books:

1. *From Home Guards to Heroes: The 87th Pennsylvania and its Civil War Community* (University of Missouri Press, 2006)
2. *Pathway to Hell: A Tragedy of the American Civil War* (Lehigh University under the auspices of Rosemont Publishing and Printing Group, 2008, paperback edition, The University of Nebraska Press). The work was cited in the HBO documentary *War Torn* for which I served as historical advisor.
3. *Shattering the Truth: The Slandering of Abraham Lincoln* (self-published, 2009)

I began this research nearly four decades ago and at the time of this writing have documented more than 20,000 Civil War compiled military service records and 9,000 pension files. (It would be more if Covid-19 had not closed the National Archives where most of these documents reside.) In addition, I am well read on the topic of the Civil War in general. My fascination with the individual soldier and families led me to document tens of thousands of death certificates, at least 15,000 obituaries, veterans buried in every cemetery in York and Adams counties, most in Perry, Cumberland, western Lancaster County, and many in Dauphin County. I have become intimate with the censuses, especially the 1860 enumeration, and have studied countless personal accounts written by veterans as well as their genealogies.