South Central Pennsylvania Civil War Veterans Database

Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose of the Project: 1. To document every Civil War veteran and historically significant civilian associated with the war effort within a region known as south-central Pennsylvania. 2. Present the data in a format accessible both to individuals seeking information on an ancestor as well as providing detailed query capabilities for serious historical research. 3. To provide the information to the public free of charge. No one has my permission to charge a fee to access this database.

What research went into this project? The database was conceived, researched, and documented by Dennis W. Brandt. The database grew from research initially begun in the late 1980s for a regimental history on the 87th Pennsylvania infantry, a largely York County regiment that was the subject of my first book. From that project sprang the idea of documenting all veterans from York and Adams counties, which then expanded to the entire region.

Is the project completed? No. It will continue to be added to and updated every six months.

How many researchers are involved? Only one, Dennis W. Brandt.

Can corrections or upates be submitted? Yes, for correctons and updates, please email Nicole Smith at nsmith@yorkhistorycenter.org. Please use Civil War Database as the email subject.

What Pennsylvania counties and other areas are included in the data presented? Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Perry, and York comprise the bulk of entries. Berks and Lebanon will be addressed if I am able to live a sufficiently long, healthy, and fully sentient life.

Franklin County is a bit west of South Centra Pennsylvania, why include it? Because of the county's interaction with Adams and Cumberland counties.

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 (see above for the counties) 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 who moved away prior to the war (hardest to locate and as a group fewest in number) 6. A member of a company or regiment I have studied in depth, a practice I have curtailed in

recent years due to time constraints 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 and buried in the Soldiers' Circle at Prospect Hill Cemetery. 9. On occasion, someone of personal or familial interest to me.

Is the database updated every day? No. It is scheduled to be updated twice a year.

Why do some individuals have less data displayed than others? It could be that was all I was able to find. However, it is my practice to add and update records with data available from reliable online sources and later flesh them out in greater detail from records accessed at the National Archives in Washington DC. Come back later, and you may find more information present.

Is there any priority as to when South Central Pennsylvania 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 is because that group has little to no documentation, often not even an enlistment age, making identification difficult. If I come across them, 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 overriding purpose, the system is designed to present an overview of each veteran's military experiences gleaned from primary and strong secondary source materials and never from hand-me-down tertiary sources that are highly prone to error. The information presented will be, to the best of my ability, historically accurate as possible, never whitewashed, and never modified to assuage contemporaneous political viewpoints.

What are the sources for the genealogical data presented? To the extent possible, I present three generations of veterans' genealogies to facilitate recognition by users of this system and NOT to provide definitive family research. The best and most accurate source is soldiers' pension records, but not every soldier or widow applied for a pension or mentioned family even if they did. There is also the sheer bulk of pension records that exist, and they take years to access. Censuses, death certificates, and obituaries also provide

familial information but tend to be error prone. Please recognize that genealogical research on Civil War era individuals is far more difficult than obtaining military data and, sadly, even more given to error, this due to a general lack of formal record-keeping during that century that we today take for granted. As it would be physically impossible for one researcher to delve deeply into tens of thousands of families, I must rely in part on published genealogies even while recognizing how inaccurate some of them can be. I do my best to select those that appear to be well researched but reiterate that the genealogical data here, while as accurately reported as I can make it, is not presented as definitive but merely to identify the veteran.

Why are some fields left bland or contain a question mark? The first possibility is that I could not find data for that field. The second possibility is that I haven't yet gotten to in-depth research for that individual.

What sources are used for military data? I list general sources in each field's help screen. Click ? found on each field to view. What are NOT used unless clear corroboration exists, are tombstones, obituaries, newspaper articles, locally written histories, and the Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, the last being 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? The project will end when I die or lose my mental capabilities – unless someone then wants to pick up the gauntlet.

Can I download a spreadsheet of this file to perform my own research? Yes. See the system for details.

Are Black soldiers, Confederates and women represented? All veterans and pertinent civilians are represented if they fit the criteria discussed above. You can download the file to a spreadsheet and search for them there.

What qualifications does Dennis W. Brandt possess to present this information to the public? I hold a degree in music education from Northwestern University (GO CATS!), studied at Indiana University and Mansfield State College (now University), and earned an MA in music performance at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. So far, not so good as far as non-music related history is concerned. Leaving the music world as a vocation, I entered the seemingly unrelated universe of data processing, retiring after twenty-five years. Still, not so good as far as history goes. 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)

In addition, I am well read on the topic of the Civil War in general and, perhaps presumptuously, consider myself to be a historian, not a "buff." My fascination with the individual soldier and families led me to access tens of thousands of military records, pension files, death certificates, obituaries for veterans and their family members, and veterans' graves 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.