

Hints and Helps

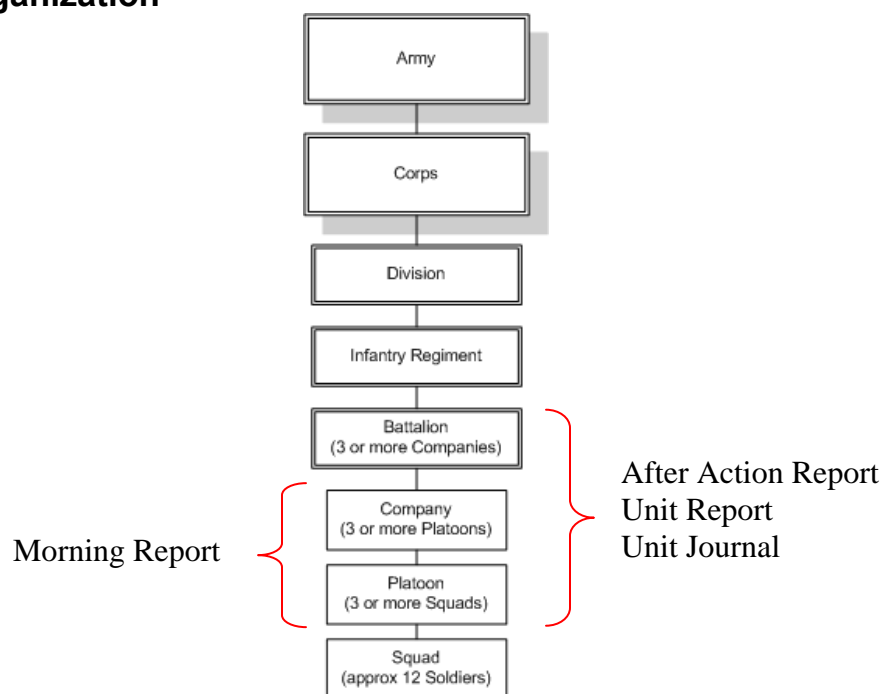
Handbook for WWII Army Research

Gawne, Jonathan. *Finding Your Father's War : A Practical Guide to Researching and Understanding Service in the World War II US Army*. Casemate, 2006.

Unit Histories

- Controvich, James T. *United States Army Unit and Organizational Histories: Vol. 2, World War I to the Present*, 2003.
This book is available at the San Jose King Library reference desk.
- <http://usawc.ipac.dynixasp.com/>, US Army War College Library at Carlisle

Army Organization



National Personnel Records Center — St Louis, MO

Repository of millions of military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of all services during the 20th century.

National Personnel Records Center
9700 Page Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Individual Service Records

- <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>
- Tracked soldier service from start to finish
 - Promotions and Assignments
 - Furloughs
 - Medals and Decorations
 - Court-martials
 - Etc.
- 85% of WWII Army and Army Air Force individual personnel files were lost in a fire during July 1973
- Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard records intact

Unit Rosters and Morning Reports

- <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/morning-reports-and-unit-rosters.html>

Unit Rosters

- Created monthly, quarterly or semi-annually
- Listed all men in the unit
- Sometimes enlisted men and officers listed separately
- 1912-1974
- 1944, 1945 and 1946 destroyed in 1970s
- No Air Force rosters after 1947

Morning Reports

- Produced at HQ, Company, Battery level
- Produced each morning for the period midnight to midnight just passed
- Primary purpose is to determine rations
- Documented soldiers coming into or leaving the unit that day, but not always accurate or complete. Per Mitchell Kaidy, Assistant Co. Clerk, 345th Infantry:
 - “During infantry action the First Sergeant and Company Clerk often derived their information from fellow combatants, from the walking wounded waiting to be evacuated, or, occasionally, by scouting out foxholes. . . .
 - “During especially bloody combat, the wounded could lie unnoticed in inaccessible battle zones for hours or days until detected. Or, because of the severity of their wounds, they could have been quickly evacuated by jeep or ambulance before company headquarters was notified.
 - “The killed in action (KIAs) could lie for weeks on abandoned battlefields, or in woods or foxholes, before being located by Graves Registration Teams.
 - “Reports of the capture of American soldiers by the enemy were even more problematic.”
- Closest thing you will get to a unit roster
- Only place you will get personnel grades and actions
- Tells daily events at platoon level
- May find other supporting documents

Getting Access to Records

- Can order limited copies through the mail
- Can view records onsite, but *MUST* have permission from the appropriate Service Branch; you can't just show up and look at records
 - Request permission for anything you may want to view
 - Without permission, you won't get access
- Allow two months to get permission and an appointment to view the records
- Once you arrive:
 - Must put personal articles, like your purse, in lockers
 - Half dozen tables, bathroom, "guard"
 - Microfilm viewing/printing machines
 - Printing capabilities work sporadically
 - Will accept checks to pay for copies
 - No place to eat on site and not much in the area
 - Co-researchers doing background checks
 - Staff is not equipped to help you understand the records
 - *Finding your Father's War* is good resource
 - Be polite!
 - Stay calm!
 - Keep smiling!
 - Say "Thank You"!

National Archives — College Park, MD

National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001
1-866-272-6272 (option #7, option #2)
<http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/>

After Action Reports with maps

Overview of what a **battalion** did in a given **month**

- Cover page
- Summary of Operations by periods
- Forces Engaged
- Losses in Action
- Awards and Decorations
- Commanding Officers
- Miscellaneous
- 8.5" x 14" (actually European paper size)

f. ~~X~~ Engineer Battalion in the Line as Infantry
At 181230 B June 1944 a request was received from Division to
clear out a nest of snipers at 526683. Two platoons of Company C were dis-
patched to reduce this strongpoint. The initial force proved inadequate for
the mission and A Company plus a platoon of Company B was ordered to reinforce
the elements of Company C. The piecemeal attack on the 18th was unsuccessful,
so a coordinated attack was prepared for the morning of the 19th, to be
supported by two tank destroyers, artillery fire and mortars from the 115th
Infantry. Our troops advanced approximately 300 yards under heavy mortar and
artillery fire. It was then apparent that this strongpoint was part of the
enemy main line of resistance. The positions reached by our attacking troops

Figure 2 - After Action Report June 1944 - excerpt from Summary of Operations for June 18

Unit Reports/Situation Report

- Name changed from Unit Report to Situation Report on 1-1-1945
- **Daily** account by **platoon**
- Hours “from” and “to” periodically change
- Includes:
 - Enemy contact / activities
 - Unit Situation
 - Unit HQ location
 - Operations
 - Combat Strength
 - Administration
 - Strength
 - Casualties

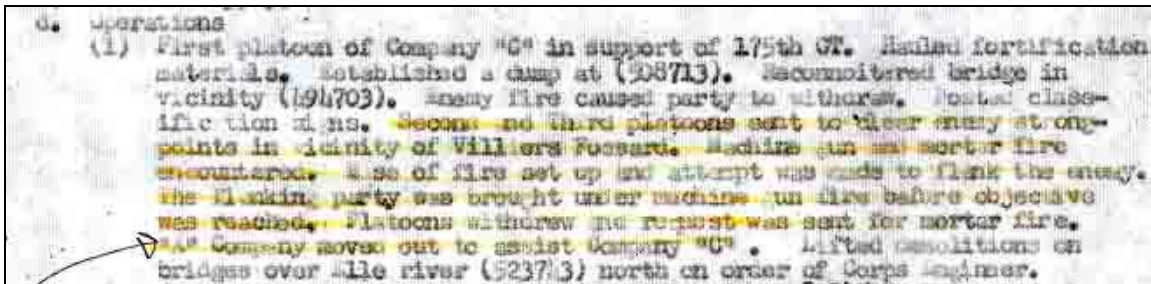


Figure 3 - Unit/Situation Report June 18, 1944 - excerpt from Operations section on Company C

Unit Journals

- **Daily**, minute-by-minute log of all message and other important matters that transpired at the unit (Battalion) headquarters
- S-1 (Personnel), S-2 (Intelligence), S-3 (Operations), and S-4 (Supply) all kept journals
- S-3 journals tell what unit is doing, this is likely what you will find

1500	12	181500	Col. Schornburg XIX Corps Engr Office gave OK to take out mines & demo in 30 Div zone	Troops & Div notified
1600	13	181530	Overlay from B Co on road clearance	Maps
1545	14	1530	Fortification materials for 115	Staff
1545	15		Contacted enemy machine gun at Villiers Fossard	Staff

Figure 4 - Unit Journal June 18, 1944 - excerpt

Getting Access to Records

- No special permission required to access records
- Can order limited copies through the mail
- Order your records ahead (allow a month) to ensure:
 - They are available
 - You have the box numbers to request report when you arrive at the archive

- Once you arrive:
 - Must register at the visitor entrance to obtain ID card good for one year
 - Card is used to pay for photocopies
 - Money is added to the card at the cashier
 - Cashiers desk is not open late
 - Must put personal articles in lockers
 - Can take in laptop, camera
 - Camera critical for map copies
 - Limited record pull times
 - Research area is outstanding
 - Computer stations
 - Three walls of windows
 - Excellent copy machines, including color
 - Large map copies can be made upstairs
 - Copying controlled
 - Must check with copy desk clerk
 - Cafeteria in the building
 - Staff is not equipped to help you understand the records
 - HOWEVER, individual you meet through correspondence can, so stay in touch!
 - Staff is helpful about process, pleasant and protective of our records
 - Follow the rules!