

European Theatre – WW2 (1941-1945)

As the United States entered the war in 1941, the country had already been supplying England with war material through the lend-lease program. Hitler, in his haste, declared war on the U.S. right after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. However, the U.S. was not prepared to invade Europe at the time. It would take several years for men and material to be sent to England to stage an invasion of France. In the meantime, Africa then Italy would become the focus of the fighting. This would give the U.S. the experience dealing with German and Italian forces. The U.S. would also be fighting a war on two fronts, both in the Pacific and the Atlantic. German U-Boats would create problems for getting the much-needed supplies to England. German U-Boats were sinking merchant ships almost as fast as the U.S. could build them. 1942 and 1943 would be bell weather years for the U.S. and England. Planning and staging the invasion of France would be one of the greatest feats of WW2.

The Battle of the Atlantic

One of the longest-running battles of WW2 pitted the German Navy and Air Force against the Allies. The Allies would use large convoys to move material and soldiers while the German U-Boats used the clusters of submarines (call Wolf Packs) to attack Allied shipping. During the early part of the war, the U.S. and England could not protect vital shipping lanes with air cover. The German Navy would exploit gaps in naval coverage to wreak havoc and sink vital war material being shipped by sea. Technology and the breaking of the German Naval code would allow the Allies to shift the tide of battle to their favor.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Atlantic (source: Wikipedia)

Merchant Marine Genealogy: <https://lisalouisecooke.com/2018/08/08/merchant-marine-records/>

American Merchant Marine at War: <http://www.usmm.org/>

American Merchant Marine at War Records and Contact Information:

<http://www.usmm.org/contact.html>

U.S. Armed Guard and Merchant Marines: <https://www.armed-guard.com/searchmil.html>

Online Genealogy Sites:

FindMyPast: <https://www.findmypast.com/articles/world-records/full-list-of-united-kingdom-records/education-and-work-records/merchant-navy-seamen-merchant-marines>

National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/178.html>

U-Boat dot Net: <https://uboa.net/allies/merchants/crews/>

Canadian Archives: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/genealogy/topics/employment/Pages/merchant-marine.aspx>

Cyndi's List: <https://www.cyndislist.com/mariners/merchant/>

United States Coast Guard: <https://www.usni.org/magazines/naval-history-magazine/2016/october/coast-guards-world-war-ii-crucible>

Wikipedia (U.S. Coast Guard WW2):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_Coast_Guard#World_War_II

U.S. Coast Guard Resources: <https://www.history.uscg.mil/home/resources/>

U.S.C.G. Blog: <https://coastguard.dodlive.mil/tag/world-war-ii/>

National Archives USCG Records: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/coast-guard>

U.S. Navy in the Atlantic: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-ii/1942/atlantic.html>

Fold3 U.S.Navy Muster Rolls: <https://www.fold3.com/title/829/wwii-navy-muster-rolls>

Ancestry Search “Navy” – list of databases:

<https://search.ancestry.com/search/cardcatalog.aspx#ccat=hc=25&dbSort=1&sbo=1&title=&keyword=Navy&vy&>

FamilySearch.org Search – List of Military Resources:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Online_Genealogy_Records

And: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/U.S._Navy

Albuquerque Library MyHeritage Edition:

https://records.myheritagelibraryedition.com/research?formId=military&formMode=1&action=query&exactSearch=0&useTranslation=1&catId=3000&qkeywords=Keyword+kw.Navy&csrf_token=D_9pcr290fffr5eb67_6ec9c3n059p97fxf.1554070530.4ad43cf0c55a21b404ee4f5d77c9f828

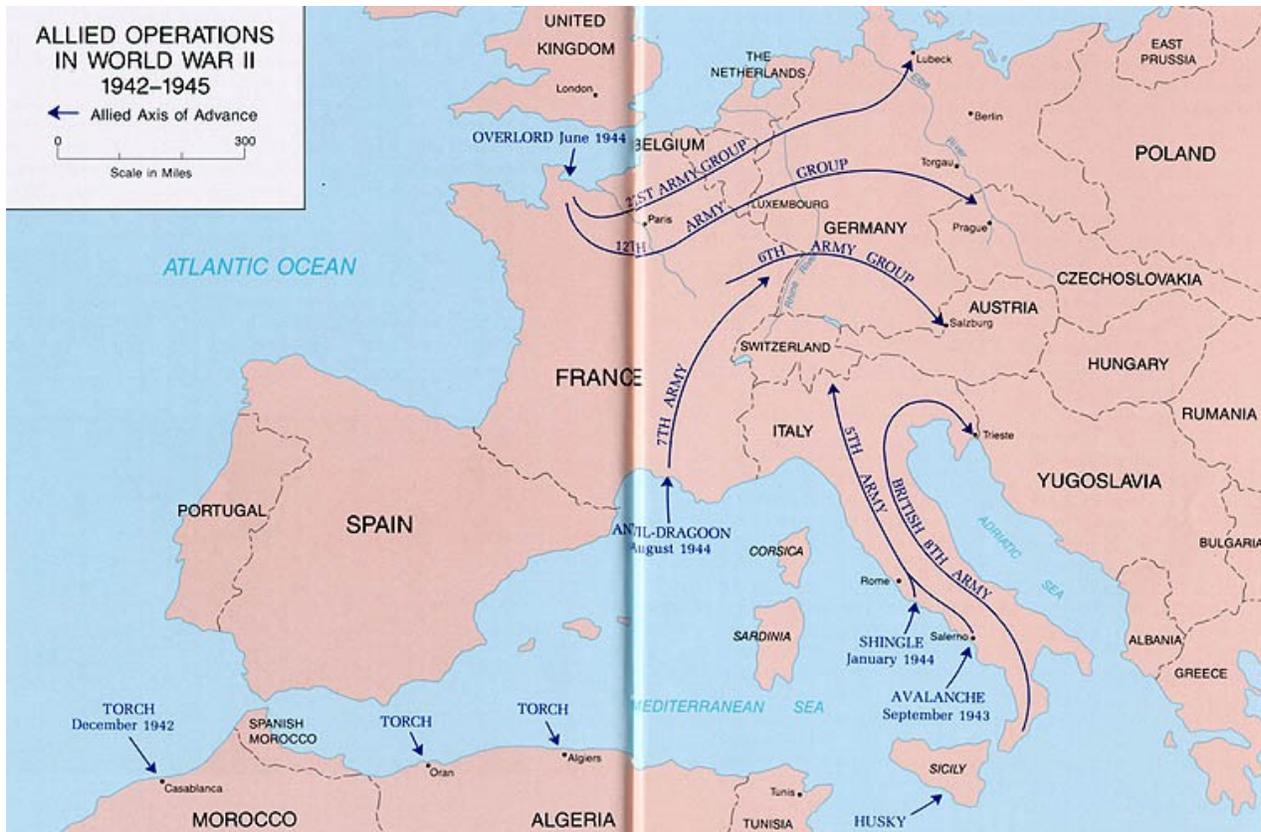
National Archives Search “U.S. Navy”:

<https://search.archives.gov/search?query=U.S.+Navy&submit=&utf8=&affiliate=national-archives>

Europe

After England’s evacuation of Dunkirk, the war was being taken to the southern part of Europe (i.e. Italy and North Africa). This gave time for the Allies to plan the invasion of France and the buildup of war material and troops. Germany was also building up fortifications along France’s coastline as they knew an invasion was inevitable. Where were the Allies going to invade? Secrets are hard to keep but they did and diversions also kept Germany guessing. When the invasion did come on June 6th, 1944, Normandy was chosen and over 150 thousand troops would be the largest invasion force put together.

Western Front: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_\(World_War_II\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Front_(World_War_II))



The US Army during WW2 also included the Army Air Force (USAAF). The air forces would remain a part of the Army until 1947 when it would become an independent service (U.S. Air Force). The following link breaks down how the U.S. Army was structured.

US Army Composition during WW2: <https://www.armydivs.com/>

During World War II about 16,000,000 personnel served in the U.S. Military. Approximately 11,200,000 or 70% served in the U.S. Army; 4,200,000 served in the Navy, and 660,000 served in the Marines. Over 7.5 million service personnel would serve in the European theatre.

US Army Resources

One of the best for finding your ancestor's service records online is the National Archive.

National Archive (Access to Archived Databases): <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/index.jsp> Also the National Personnel Records Center is where most military records are kept. <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center>

NOTE: On July 12, 1973, a disastrous fire ravaged the sixth floor of the NPRC's Military Personnel Records (MPR) building in Overland. In terms of loss to the cultural heritage of our nation, the fire was an unparalleled disaster, destroying approximately 16-18 million Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF). The records affected:

Branch	Personnel and Period Affected	Estimated Loss
Army	Personnel discharged November 1, 1912, to January 1, 1960	80%
Air Force	Personnel discharged September 25, 1947, to January 1, 1964 (with names alphabetically after Hubbard, James E.)	75%

American Battle Monuments Commission: <https://www.abmc.gov/> (This has been mentioned before.)

U.S. Veterans Administration: <https://www.va.gov/>

\$\$ Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/>

\$\$ Ancestry.com: Go to the Search Card Catalog and enter the keywords “World War 2” and restrict the year to the 1940s. A list of databases will be shown where it is possible your ancestor’s records are kept. This will include both military and civilian records. This includes all theatres where hostilities took place.

https://search.ancestry.com/search/card/catalog.aspx#ccat=hc=25&dbSort=1&sbo=1&title=&keyword=world%20war%202&filter=2*234&

Armed Force’s Unit’s Awards and Citations is another possible location where your ancestors might be listed. The following link gives a list of how the citations were called.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awards_and_decorations_of_the_United_States_Armed_Forces

Family Search (Comprehensive list Military Records):

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Records

American Legion Digital Archive: <https://archive.legion.org/>

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW): <https://www.vfw.org/search-results?q=World%20War%202>

Women in WW2: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_women_in_World_War_II

And Foreign Web Sites...

British Military Websites (I have not checked them out thoroughly, but look promising).

Ancestor Research & Military Genealogy - <http://www.armymuseums.org.uk/>

British Military Casualties: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/British_Military_Records#World_War_II

Forces War Records - <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/> (free to register, but \$\$ if you need records)

Cyndi’s List for French Military Resources <http://www.cyndislist.com/france/military/>

Genealogy in France: http://genealogy.about.com/od/france/a/french_ancestry_5.htm

Best Continental European Genealogy Websites of 2015

<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/best-continental-european-genealogy-websites-2015>