

Compiled Military Service Records Part IV: Carded medical records

In honor of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, this is the fourteenth in a series of articles about records at the National Archives in Washington, DC, that are useful in researching the war and its participants.

In previous issues of *NGS Magazine*, we learned about Compiled Military Service Records (CMSRs) of individual volunteer soldiers of the Civil War (Union and Confederate), and the “record of events” cards about military company activities.¹

Some Union CMSRs have medical information but others have none. Carded medical records usually include information about a man’s medical history and treatment that his CMSR lacks. Thus, the researcher who fails to consult the carded medical records will miss much of the story of wounded or ill servicemen.

Carded medical records comprise ten record series in Record Group (RG) 94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office (see sidebar on the next page). Within each series, the cards are arranged by organizational unit and then in rough alphabetical order. These cards were primarily created between 1887 and 1892 when clerks of the Record and Pension Division of the Surgeon General’s Office copied information from original hospital registers, rolls, and reports created during the Civil War.² (Some cards were added as late as 1916.) The information on each card may include the man’s name; rank; organization; complaint; date of admittance and hospital to which admitted; date returned to duty, deserted, discharged, sent to general hospital, furloughed, or died; remarks; and a reference to the original hospital record from which the information was copied. We will

Carded medical records

The clerks of the Surgeon General's Office arranged the cards into these ten record series, then by unit, then roughly alphabetically by the first letter of the man's surname. There are 5,045 boxes containing perhaps ten million cards.

"Carded Medical Records of Volunteer Soldiers in the Mexican and Civil Wars, 1846–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 534, National Archives Identifier (NAID) 655646), 4,109 boxes. Most Civil War soldiers will be found in this series unless they served in one of the specialized units listed below.

- "Carded Medical Records of the Regular Army, 1821–1884" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 529, NAID 655638). 896 boxes.
- "Carded Medical Records of the Marine Corps, 1821–1884" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 533, NAID 655645). 1 box.
- "Carded Medical Records of Officers, 1861–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 533A, NAID 655649). 1 box.
- "Carded Medical Records of Voltiguers and Pontooniers, 1847–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 533B, NAID 655650). 1 box.
- "Carded Medical Records of Musicians, 1861–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 533C, NAID 655651). 8 boxes.
- "Carded Medical Statements of Hospital Attendants, Matrons, and Nurses, 1861–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 533L, NAID 655680). 19 boxes.
- "Carded Medical Records of Gunboat and Naval Service, 1861–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 536, NAID 655722). 4 boxes.
- "Carded Medical Records of the Pioneer Corps, 1861–1865" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 537, NAID 655723). 2 boxes.
- "Carded Medical Records of Hospital Stewards, Noncommissioned Staff Officers, and Musicians, 1821–1884" (RG 94, PI-17, Series 538, NAID 655724). 2 boxes.

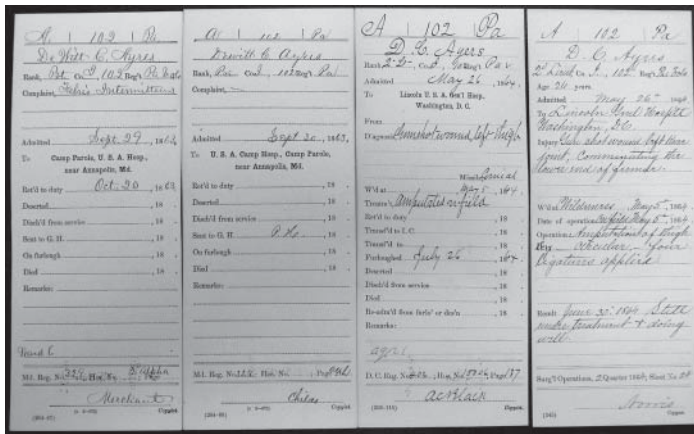
discuss the carded medical records of four men to see how these records provide greater insight into their war experiences.

George Henry Moulton

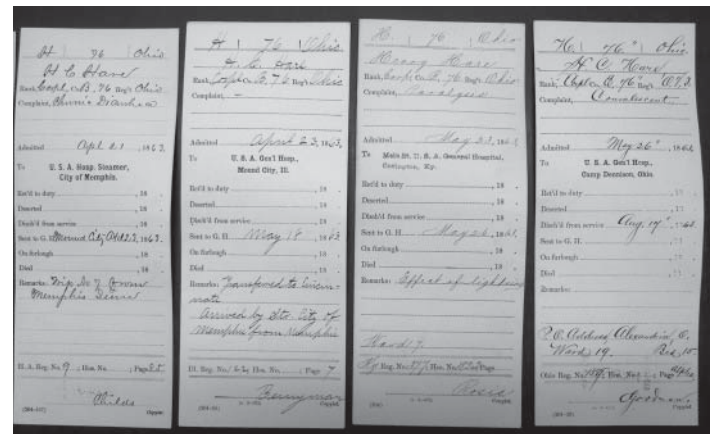
Moulton, a private of Company I, 38th Massachusetts Infantry, whom we met in previous articles, has five cards in the carded medical records that help fill in the chronology of his medical treatment for diarrhea. He was on a list of sick and wounded at General Hospital, Springfield Landing, Louisiana, 18 June 1863, and then admitted to the U.S.A. Convalescent General Hospital (Barracks) in Baton Rouge on 17 July 1863 because of debility. His troubles resurfaced in 1864. He was sent from the field to Sheridan Division Field Hospital on 24 September 1864 because of diarrhea. (Located in Winchester, Virginia, it was the largest field hospital operated by the Union.) On 2 October 1864, he was sent from the field to the U.S. Army Field Hospital, Sandy Hook, Maryland, and subsequently, on 4 October 1864, admitted to the U.S. Army General Hospital, York, Pennsylvania, where he remained until 25 October 1864. Most of these details are not in Moulton's CMSR or in the unfiled cards separate from his CMSR jacket.

DeWitt Clinton Ayres

Ayres, a private of Company I, 102nd Pennsylvania Infantry, whom we also met in a previous article,³ suffered a partial amputation of the left leg from a gunshot at the Battle of the Wilderness on 5 May 1864. There are nine cards in the carded medical records, some of which provide new information not found in his CMSR. For example, one card specifies Ayres' amputation occurred on the field (as was often the case), with four ligatures applied. Other cards trace his transport aboard the U.S. Army Hospital Steamer, *Connecticut*, from Port Royal, Virginia, to Washington, DC, on 26 May 1864, where he was admitted to Lincoln General Hospital. He remained at Lincoln four months before being transferred to the U.S. Army Hospital at Camp Parole, Annapolis, Maryland.



Four of nine Carded Medical Records for DeWitt C. Ayres, 102nd Pennsylvania Infantry. (RG 94, PI-17, Series 534, NAID 655646.)



Four of seven Carded Medical Records for Henry C. Hare, 76th Ohio Infantry. (RG 94, PI-17, Series 534, NAID 655646.)

Lightning strike survivors Rice and Hare

Two of six men of the 76th Ohio Infantry who survived a lightning strike to their tent on Valentine’s Day night, 1863,⁴ have cards in the carded medical records. Sergeant Benjamin F. Rice has two cards that trace his eleven-day transport on the U.S. Army Hospital Steamer, *City of Alton*, from Youngs Point, Louisiana, beginning on 20 February 1863, until he reached Memphis on 1 March, where he was admitted to Adams U.S. Army General Hospital. He remained there until his discharge because of paralysis on 8 April 1863. Some of these details are not in Rice’s CMSR, which also gives his date of discharge as 6 April 1863.

Corporal Henry C. Hare of the 76th Ohio Infantry has seven cards documenting his long hospitalization before he was discharged because of paralysis. On 7 March 1863, three weeks after his injury, Hare was sent aboard the U.S. Army Hospital Steamer, *City of Memphis*, at Youngs Point, and reached Memphis on 11 March 1863, where he was admitted to Overton General Hospital on 12 March. His time was spent in hospital wards G and H. On 21 April, he reboarded the *City of Memphis* for a trip further northward to Mound City, Illinois, where he was admitted to the U.S. Army General Hospital. Three weeks later, on 18 May, he departed from Mound City, and, by means of transport that are not specified, finally arrived

five days later at the Main Street U.S. Army General Hospital, Covington, Kentucky, on 23 May, where his bed was in Ward 17. On 26 May, Hare left Covington and arrived the same day at the U.S. Army General Hospital, Camp Dennison, near Cincinnati, where he slept in Bed 15 in Ward 19. He stayed there until discharged from service on 17 August 1863.

Significantly, few details of either Rice’s or Hare’s hospitalizations appear in their CMSRs. Hare’s CMSR, for instance, notes his transfer to a “Division Hospital Boat” on 7 March, and subsequent transfer to, and discharge from, Dennison General Hospital, but lacks all of the other intermediate steps of his journey.

How to access carded medical records

Carded medical records have not been microfilmed and are not online. Copies of these records for specific soldiers may be requested by mail from the Old Military and Civil Records Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408, or by e-mail to archives1reference@nara.gov. Be sure to provide the soldier’s name, company, regiment, and war in which he served.

Researchers may do their research in person at the National Archives Building. See “Information for Researchers at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC” at <http://>

www.archives.gov/dc-metro/washington/researcher-info.html for general procedural guidance.

Conclusion

Carded medical records are often a forgotten “fourth pillar” of documentation of individual Union soldiers’ American Civil War experiences that fill in significant gaps about the nature and chronology of a man’s medical treatment that are not found in his CSMR. They help tell “the rest of the story.” 🌳

Notes

1. Claire Prechtel-Kluszens, “Compiled Military Service Records, Part I: The records inside the CSMR jacket,” *NGS Magazine* 38 (January–March 2012): 32–36; “Compiled Military Service Records, Part II: The records outside the CSMR jacket,” *NGS Magazine* 38 (April–June 2012): 32–38; and “Compiled Military Service Records, Part III: The record of events,” *NGS Magazine* 38 (July–September 2012): 38–31. *NGS Magazine* articles from

2005 to 2014 are available online in the members-only section of the NGS website.

2. Mabel E. Deutch, *The Struggle for Supremacy: The Career of General Fred C. Ainsworth* 32–52 (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1962); Claire Prechtel-Kluszens, “Thank you, General Fred C. Ainsworth!” *NGS Magazine* 37 (October–December 2011): 54–57.

3. Claire Prechtel-Kluszens, “Did your Union Civil War ancestor have an artificial limb?” *NGS Magazine* 40 (January–March 2014): 41–45.

4. Claire Prechtel-Kluszens, “The Lightning Brothers: A brief case study in Union Civil War research,” *NGS Magazine* 37 (July–September 2011): 52–57.

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