



May 4, 2010

### **Information Needed: Jewish Civil War Soldiers**

The Shapell Manuscript Foundation is a leading institution established to develop original projects of great importance in diverse areas of United States history. The Foundation has become prominently associated with unique collections, landmark exhibitions, publications, and documentary films. American Jewish military history is a major focus of the Foundation.

The Foundation is proud to announce it is developing an expanded and corrected roster of Jews who bore arms in the Civil War. It has assembled a team of historians and researchers to help bring this to fruition. The impending sesquicentennial of this conflict and increased interest in American Jewish military history underscore the great significance and timeliness of this effort.

**BACKGROUND:** Simon Wolf, a leading attorney and B'nai Brith spokesman, authored *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen* in 1895. A number of public figures (Mark Twain included) outwardly proclaimed Jews failed to serve in the military during the Civil War. Wolf factually destroyed this myth! In his monumental book, Wolf documented the Civil War service of well over 8,000 Jews, north and south, who took part in this conflict. Included were Jewish commanders, Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, and numerous men who played major roles in this conflict. We owe a great debt to these patriotic Jewish Americans for this unique legacy.

Three vitally important facts, however, must be taken into consideration. First, Wolf rushed to get his book into print to dispel the myth that the Jew avoided military service. Second, his work took place long before the advent of the information age. Third, even at that time many unit records had been lost, destroyed or were simply nonexistent. Both scholars and students of Wolf's work recognize that it contains many omissions and errors. Until now, no planned broad based effort has been made to expand, revise, and correct Wolf's rosters.

**THE FOUNDATION'S GOAL:** The Foundation has initiated an unprecedented project for the factual revision, correction, and expansion of Wolf's work published 115 years ago. Upon completion, its publication by the Foundation will be of unique and extraordinary benefit to historians, educators, libraries, museums, and genealogists.

**METHODOLOGY:** The service records of every verified individual Jewish soldier and sailor in the National Archives are being carefully reviewed. Wherever needed, pension files, unit histories, muster rolls, census records, army and navy registers, etc., are rounding out this massive effort. In addition, we are investigating additional resources such as period Jewish, secular and military publications.

**ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT:** The work will be logically organized by Union and Confederacy and from there, by state. Briefly, the action plan of the Foundation includes:

1. Adding the names of soldiers and sailors (verified to have been Jewish) who were omitted by Wolf. Thus far, we have identified approximately 1,000 who will now be included.
2. Correcting the many errors contained in Wolf. Examples are misspellings of names, incorrect attributions to units, deleting soldiers who were found to be of another faith, etc.
3. Adding essential information to include citations of heroism, whether a casualty or prisoner, service in multiple units and states, and highest rank attained. We are adding major categories such as service in the Veterans Reserve Corps and U. S. Colored Troops that Wolf overlooked. Furthermore, we have identified states and territories in which Jewish soldiers served that were not included by Wolf.
4. The units for many of Wolf's "unassigned" soldiers are being matched properly with the soldiers. Wolf's unassigned and addenda sections will be deleted and the information included within each proper state.
5. The Foundation will include original and largely unpublished photographs of the soldiers and sailors. About 150 images have thus far been identified. We are also including copies of original important documents and letters which we have discovered and have never been published.
6. Biographical and anecdotal summarized information is slated for inclusion for many soldiers.
7. Important supplemental information such as statistics, Jewish communities, religious life of soldiers, examples of brother against brother, soldiers who served on both sides, etc., shall be included.

In short, this is a monumental, much needed effort that has never been attempted or can be replicated or surpassed in the future.



**The Foundation hereby requests and welcomes your help and input to better enable the Foundation to have the most complete and factual rosters of Jews who served in the Civil War.** All contributions will be greatly appreciated and acknowledged with proper credit. Please circulate this message to all who may possibly lend assistance. Specifically, we ask you to advise us if you have:

1. The names, state, and unit affiliation of any soldier or sailor who may have initially been omitted for inclusion by Wolf. The supporting basis is essential for inclusion (synagogue membership, marriage, burial, etc.). The following should be examined as they may contain the names and unit affiliations of Jews who served in the Civil War; statewide Jewish military burials (where compiled), locally published Jewish histories frequently identified Jewish soldiers, and the minutes books of Hebrew congregations which noted military service by congregation members.
2. The use of identified photographs of soldiers or sailors in uniform will greatly contribute to this work.
3. Any factual events of importance involving these men.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Please send any information you may have to the following email address: [roster@shapell.org](mailto:roster@shapell.org) or to:

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We thank you for your input to this most important project.

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