A Brief Guide to Researching
Your Maine Civil War Ancestor

by

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Searching for information about your Civil War ancestor(s) can be both fun and exciting. However, if you are new to researching Civil War soldiers (as I was just 10 months ago), it can be difficult to know just how to begin. Luckily, there are many excellent resources available, and it is now possible to acquire quite a bit of useful information in a short period of time. In this *Guide*, I have pulled together some basic information to help direct you in your search. It is not intended to be exhaustive (there are now literally thousands of websites that focus on the Civil War in one way or another!). Rather, it reflects what I have found to be especially helpful resources during my search for information about my great-great-grand-father Charles A. Clark, who served in the Sixth Maine Volunteers (*see picture, next page*). Additionally, the *Guide* is generally limited to the discussion of resources that can be accessed without leaving home; that is, by using the internet.[2]

In addition to the resources noted below, those searching for information about Maine Civil War soldiers are encouraged to follow the discussion on, and submit inquiries to, the **Maine Civil War Discussion Forum** (*www.cwoodcock.com/forum/db_TalkToMeV2.cgi?forum_name=maineboard*). You can also link to this site from the **First Maine Heavy Artillery** website (*cwoodcock.com/firstmaine/*), which contains links to additional Maine Civil War resources.

Do you know the regiment(s) in which your ancestor served?

Before you can progress very far, you will need to know the military organizations in which your ancestor served. There are several excellent resources that can help you identify your ancestor's service history. The very best is the **Civil War Research Database** (*www.civilwardata.com*). The CW Database contains information about individual soldiers, regimental histories, summary statistics, and more. There is a modest fee ($25/year) for accessing the database, but if you need to find information about several soldiers, it pays for itself quickly. A form of this database is also included in subscriptions to *www.ancestry.com* ($59.95 annual/$19.95 quarterly).

The **Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System** (*www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/index.html*) is a free resource that is now being developed by the National Park Service. I haven't found this resource to be as helpful as the CW Database, but it can still be useful for identifying the regiment in which an individual served. It also contains information about regimental histories, battles, and the national parks. You can also find some
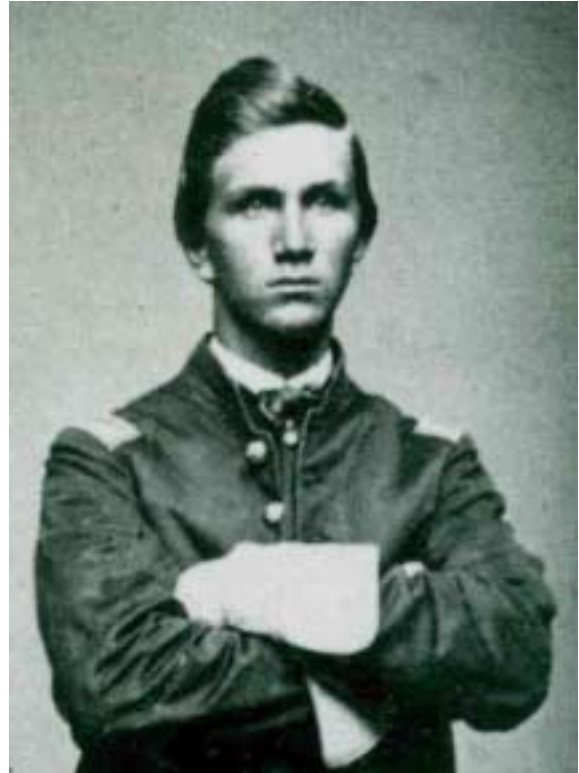
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[1] With thanks to Wayne R. Bean and Clarence Woodcock for reviewing an earlier draft and suggesting additional resources. Credit also goes to Wayne for introducing me to many of these resources over the past year and for generally instructing me on how to conduct research on Civil War soldiers, and to Clarence for creating the Maine Civil War Forum, which has provided me many mini-tutorials on conducting this research.

[2] If you have suggestions for resources to add to the *Guide*, please forward them to me at asolarz@prodigy.net.

limited information about prisoners of war and the name of soldiers buried in the national cemetery at Poplar Grove (Battle of Petersburg).

The information in these two sources is based primarily on the annual **Reports of the Adjutant General of the State of Maine**. These reports contain detailed lists of the soldiers in each regiment at various points in time, including information about promotions and transfers. If you don't find your ancestor when first searching these databases, be sure to try several spelling variations before you give up. In addition to possible transcription errors, it is not uncommon for names to be misspelled (or alternate spelling to be used) in various records.

Finally, you can order a copy of your ancestor's compiled military service record (CMSR) from the **National Archives and Records Administration** (NARA). The CMSR contains cards that can include information on when the soldier was present or absent during a certain period of time, dates of enlistment and discharge, amount of bounty paid him, place of birth, and other information such as wounds received during battle or hospitalization for injury or illness. The CMSR may also contain personal papers of various kinds such

Charles A. Clark
6th Maine Volunteers

as a copy of the soldier's enlistment paper, papers relating to his capture and release as a prisoner of war, or a statement that he had no personal property with him when he died. Information about battles in which a soldier fought must generally be derived from other sources.

You will need to submit a separate NATF Form 86 to the NARA for each set of records requested (i.e., one form for each soldier, and one form for each regiment or other military organization in which he served). The forms can easily be requested by sending an email to: *inquire@nara.gov*. Be sure to specify the correct form number and the number of forms you need, and to provide your mailing address. The cost for copies is $17 for each set of records ordered.   More detailed information on Civil War records available through NARA can be found at: *www.nara.gov/genealogy/civilwar.html*.

Did your ancestor or his dependents receive a military pension?

If your ancestor, or one of his dependents, received a pension because of his service, you will very likely want to order a copy of the pension records from the **National Archives and Records Administration** (NARA). If you subscribe to **Ancestry.com**, you can search their database to see if they have a copy of a pension card on file for your ancestor. If they do, you will be able to see when application for pension benefits was made, the application number, whether widow's or other dependent benefits were applied for, the regiment(s) in which the soldier served, and the state from which the pension application was filed. This information will be useful for completing the form to order copies of pension records from

NARA. Even if you don't have this information, though, you can go ahead and order a copy of the pension file from the Archives; they will only charge you if a file is available.

You must submit a completed NATF Form 85 to NARA to order copies of pension files (note that separate forms are now needed to request both pension and military service records). As noted above, the forms can be requested by sending an email to: *inquire@nara.gov* (be sure to specify the correct form number and the number of forms you need, and to provide your mailing address). You will have the option of ordering a copy of the full pension application file for $37.00, or a partial record with some key documents for $14.75 (note that this reflects a recent change in rates for copies of pension files). The more limited Pension Documents Packet will contain (to the extent the documents are available):

1. Declaration of pension
2. Declaration of widow's pension
3. Adjutant General statements of service
4. Questionnaires completed by applicants
5. "Pension Dropped" cards
6. Marriage certificates
7. Death certificates
8. Discharge certificate

Unfortunately, there is no way to know how much additional material is actually in the file without seeing it. Thus, it is not possible to determine in advance whether you will obtain much additional information if you order the full pension application file.

Do you know what your ancestor looked like during his Civil War service?

If you are very lucky, you may be able to find a picture of your ancestor! The **Maine State Archives** has approximately 600 photos, mostly of officers (the Maine Adjutant General solicited photos from officers during and immediately after the war). A list of the available carte-de-visite (CDV) photos, sorted by regiment, can be found at *www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/offpix.htm*. Copies of the photos can be ordered for a nominal fee (send your inquiry to Jeff Brown at the State Archives: *jeffrey.brown@state.me.us*).

The **United States Army Military History Institute** has an archive of Civil War photos that includes several of Maine soldiers. Because the photos are not posted online, they will first send you a photocopy of the picture so you can decide whether you want to place an order. You can link to their searchable Photograph Database at *carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/PhotoDB.html*. Instructions for ordering copies of the photos are also provided on this page.

There are a few Maine-related photos (e.g., of regiments rather than individual soldiers) in the **Matthew Brady Collection** available online through the National Archives. Information about searching the Archives holdings is available at *www.nara.gov/nara/searchnail.html*.

Finally, the enlistment cards available through the **Maine State Archives** sometimes include a brief physical description of the soldier (e.g., height, eye color, hair color, complexion). These cards (usually) also contain information on occupation, town of birth, residence, marital status, date of enlistment, date mustered in, length of service, and date mustered out. You can obtain a copy of an enlistment card for a nominal fee (contact *jeffrey.brown@state.me.us* for additional information).

Do you know where your ancestor is buried?

I suspect that the day will come when information about nearly every gravesite in the country is indexed and accessible on the web. Until that time arrives though, the following resources will come in handy for locating the gravesites of Maine Civil War soldiers.

The Maine State Archives has **Graves Registration Cards** available for many Maine Civil War soldiers. These cards may contain information about the dates and places of birth and death, cause of death, name of the cemetery where buried, type of marker, and war record. The Cemetery Index and Graves Registration Cards were compiled as part of a WPA Project conducted during the 1930's to locate each veteran's grave, and plot each grave location within the cemeteries where the graves were found. The records are incomplete and many inaccuracies have been noted. Copies of the Graves Cards are available for a nominal fee from the Maine State Archives (contact Jeff Brown at *jeffrey.brown@state.me.us*).

Another source to check for burial sites is the Find A Grave site (*www.findagrave.com*). Although this database is not comprehensive, it does include enough names to make it worth checking, including names of some individuals buried in the National Cemetery system.

The **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration** can provide limited burial location assistance related to decedents thought to be buried in VA national cemeteries. They will research their records to determine if a decedent is buried in one of the 119 VA national cemeteries. Directions for requesting this information can be found at: *www.cem.va.gov/lvburloc.htm*.

As noted above, the National Park Service **Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System** contains some information on soldiers buried at Poplar Grove Cemetery. If you know that your ancestor died in the Battle of Petersburg, this might be a good place to check.

The **United States Civil War Center Cemetery Listings** (*www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/projects/cemindex.htm*) contains links to alphabetical listings of soldiers interred in several national cemeteries (e.g., Richmond National Cemetery, Fort Harrison National Cemetery). A more extensive set of links (e.g., to Beaufort National Cemetery, local cemeteries in various states, and several listings of Confederate gravesites) is provided on their site at: *www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/links/hist.htm#Cemeteries* . Unfortunately, there is no search engine provided that searches for names across the various cemetery sites. Therefore, these sites will be most helpful if you already have an idea of the battle or campaign in which the soldier in question died (e.g., check the Poplar Grove Cemetery for those who died in the Battle of Petersburg, or Beaufort National Cemetery for those who died in the 1863 Charleston Campaign).

In trying to locate burial places, it's important to keep in mind that many Civil War soldiers were unidentified at the time of burial, or were buried in unmarked graves at the time of battle. It is also important to keep in mind that some of those who died in service were returned home and buried in family plots.

Following are some additional sites that contain many listings of gravesites in Maine cemeteries (note that since some of these sites are maintained by individuals, the addresses may become out-of-date more quickly):

The Tombstone Transcription Project (*www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery/maine.html*)—Contains links to listings of graves in various Maine counties; not comprehensive, but is a work in progress and just may have who you're looking for!

Civil War Veterans of Washington County, Maine (*members.aol.com/KTRUGENIUS/*)—Contains a listing of cemeteries in Washington County, and the names and regiments of Civil War veterans buried in them; has a particular focus on the 6th and 9th regiments.

DanaRae's Little Corner (*danaraepelletier.tripod.com/Links.html*)—This site is very "busy" graphically speaking, and awkward to use, but contains a lot of valuable information about Maine graves, particularly in the greater Lincoln area.

Jean's Maine Genealogy Page (*www.mnopltd.com/jean/*)—Doesn't contain cemetery information, but contains information about deaths in the Ellsworth area roughly from 1858 on (with some from 1853 and 1854); based on transcriptions from the Ellsworth newspapers.

Do you have information about the activities of the regiment(s) in which your ancestor served?

Gathering some information about the activities of the regiment(s) in which your ancestor served will give you a better idea of what his military service was like. Of course it's important to keep in mind that your ancestor may not have participated in all of the actions in which his regiment was engaged (e.g., if he was in hospital, on leave, on detail, etc.). You'll generally need to use other sources of information to confirm his whereabouts.

Short regimental histories are available through the **Civil War Database** and the **Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System**. The summaries on these sites will give you a nice overview of the battles in which the regiment was engaged, as well as some general history of their organization.

If you're lucky, a regimental history of some kind will have been published for the regiment(s) in which your ancestor served. You can find a nice annotated compilation of available regimental histories at the following website: *users.erols.com/jreb/regiment.html*. If the regimental history you want is no longer in print, you may be able to find it by searching through **Bookfinder** (*www.bookfinder.com*), a search engine that searches through the holdings of hundreds of small used book stores.

The **United States Army Military History Institute** (USAMHI) has compiled and placed online bibliographies of materials related to individual regiments. These bibliographies may include, for example, magazine articles about the regiment, sections from larger volumes that include regimental history information (e.g., from *Maine in the War for the Union*, or *Maine at Gettysburg*), information from the Reports of the Maine Adjutant General, records from regimental reunions, and the like. You can search for a regiment of interest at: *carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/ACWUnits.html* . Information is also provided about how to order copies of the materials from the Military History Institute (you can order up to 300 copies per year).

Very detailed information about military operations in the Civil War is compiled in ***The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies***. A copy of the *Official Records* can be found online at: *library5.library.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html*. If you would like to have your own digital copy of the *Official Records*, you can purchase the *The Civil War CD-ROM*, which includes a copy of the *Official Records* along with several other useful publications (the CD can be purchased at *www.appletons.com* or *www.ancestry.com* at a cost of approximately $70). Don't forget to look for your ancestor's name when you search through this resource; he just may have been mentioned in one of the official reports.

Finally, a goldmine of contemporary "war news" can be found at the **Historical New York Times Project** site (*nyt.ulib.org/*). On this site, you can view a digitized image of the New York Times from any date during the Civil War years (1860-1866).

Long Shots

Believe it or not, I have had quite a bit of luck using **eBay** as a research tool (*www.ebay.com*). Known as the "largest flea market in the world," a surprising number of Civil War-related items show up for sale on eBay every day. I have actually been able to find documents related directly to my great-great-grandfather (e.g., completed requisition forms) for sale on eBay. In addition, I have been able to build my library of Civil War and Maine history resources. Generally speaking, the kinds of useful information that you can expect to find occasionally on eBay include:

- Regimental histories
- Books related to Maine or Civil War history (including town histories that cover the Civil War era)
- Requisition forms and other Civil War documents related to your ancestor's regiment
- Civil War era newspapers with battle descriptions and other war news
- Maine Adjutant General Reports
- Civil War artifacts

Regular searches using the terms "Maine Civil War" will bring many of these items to your attention. Because item descriptions often contain few details, you will want to view the images of documents and pictures to see if they might be related to your ancestor.

Many Civil War veterans were members of patriotic organizations such as the **Grand Army of the Republic** (GAR). Unfortunately, the records of the GAR are not centrally compiled. In fact, few of these

records were preserved. Additional information about the GAR can be found on the website of the **Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War** at *suvcw.org/research.htm*. Another patriotic organization was the **Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States** (MOLLUS), whose original members were officers who had served in the Civil War. Around the turn of the century, the MOLLUS published a series of 70 volumes of war papers containing first-hand accounts written by veterans. It's worth checking the list of articles to see if your ancestor wrote one (my great-great-grandfather wrote several), or if one covers the activities of your ancestor's regiment. If your ancestor didn't remain in Maine, be sure to check the volume(s) generated by the state Commandery where he later resided as well as the volumes compiled by the Maine Commandery of the MOLLUS (e.g., my ancestor's account of the 6th Maine was published in one of the Iowa volumes). An index of the MOLLUS war papers can be found at: *www.usmo.com/~momollus/books/Warpapers.htm*.

Offline Resources

If you have explored all of these resources, and *still* want to conduct further research, you will want to explore several important primary resources.

Extensive information is available through the **Maine State Archives**. To get an idea of what kind of information is available in their files about a particular regiment, check the Summary Unit Histories and Related Information (*www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/reghis.htm*).

The **Reports of the Adjutant General of the State of Maine** are a rich and detailed source of information. As noted above, these reports contain detailed information about the composition of the Maine regiments. The Reports of the Adjutant General also provide information on a range of other topics such as aid to soldiers' families, legislative acts and military orders, lists of substitutes, town quotas and bounties paid, and regimental histories.

The Reports of the Adjutant General contain numerous short biographies of officers that were solicited toward the end of the war. Some were submitted by the soldiers themselves; others were obituaries compiled by friends, colleagues, or family members (e.g., if the soldier died during the war). If your ancestor was an officer, there just may be a bio or obituary notice for him in the 1864-1865 or the 1866 Adjutant General Report.

There is also additional information in the **National Archives and Records Administration**, some of it on microfilm. For more detailed information about the resources available at the Archives, go to: *www.nara.gov/genealogy/civilwar.html*. A listing of regional NARA centers, which have selected microfilmed Civil War compiled military service records and other microfilmed military records, can be found at *www.nara.gov/genealogy/genindex.html#regional*.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has compiled a vast set of records for conducting family history research, some of which can be useful for identifying Civil War ancestors. Much of this information is available online through the **Family Search** website at *www.familysearch.com*. You may also want to visit one of the regional **Family History Centers** to access resources on microfilm or microfiche (go to *www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp* to locate a center near you).

Finally, don't forget your local library. Particularly if you are in a large city, some of these sources (e.g., the *Official Records*) may be on the shelves of the main library. Many resources, including information on microfiche, can also be obtained through interlibrary loans.

Of course, the potential sources of information are nearly inexhaustible! Other possible resources include newspapers local to the town where your ancestor was from (for articles about the activities of Maine regiments and letters written to the paper by soldiers from the local area), local Maine libraries (which may contain one-of-a-kind local histories or genealogical resources), archives of materials at battle sites (e.g., the library at **Gettysburg National Military Park**), the **United States Army Military History Institute** (located in Carlisle, PA), and holdings in the **University of Maine** libraries. Additional tips for searching for information can be found in the public (i.e., free) sections of *www.ancestry.com*.

Resources Cited:

Ancestry.com www.ancestry.com

Bookfinder (www.bookfinder.com)

Civil War Research Database (www.civilwardata.com)

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System (www.itd.nps.gov/cw/index.html)

Civil War Veterans of Washington County, Maine Page (members.aol.com/KTRUGENIUS/)

DanaRae's Little Corner (danaraepelletier.tripod.com/Links.html)

Family History Centers regional sites (www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/FHC/frameset_fhc.asp)

Family Search (www.familysearch.com)

Find-a-Grave (www.findagrave.com)

First Maine Heavy Artillery Homepage (cwoodcock.com/firstmaine/)

Jean's Maine Genealogy Page (www.mnopltd.com/jean/)

Historical New York Times Project (nyt.ulib.org/)

List of Regimental Histories (users.erols.com/jreb/regiment.html)

*Maine Civil War Discussion Forum
    (www.cwoodcock.com/forum/db_TalkToMeV2.cgi?forum_name=maineboard)*

Maine State Archives Civil War Page (www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/civilwar.htm)

*Maine State Archives—Officers Photographs
    (www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/offpix.htm)*

*Maine State Archives—Summary Unit Histories and Related Information
    (www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/reghis.htm)*

Military History Institute Photograph Database (carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/PhotoDB.html)

MOLLUS Papers (www.usmo.com/~momollus/books/Warpapers.htm)

*National Archives and Records Administration Civil War Records Information
    (www.nara.gov/genealogy/civilwar.html)*

*National Archives and Records Administration Regional Centers
    (www.nara.gov/genealogy/genindex.html#regional)*

National Archives and Records Administration Search Engine (www.nara.gov/nara/searchnail.html)

*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies
    (library5.library.cornell.edu/moa/moa_browse.html)*

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War/GAR Information (suvcw.org/research.htm)

Tombstone Transcription Project (www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery/maine.html)

United States Army Military History Institute—Photograph Database (carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/PhotoDB.html)

United States Army Military History Institute—Regimental Bibliography (Carlisle-www.army.mil/usamhi/ACWUnits.html)

United States Civil War Center Cemetery Listings (www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/projects/cemindex.htm) and www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/links/hist.htm#Cemeteries)

Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (www.cem.va.gov/lvburloc.htm)

Using Acrobat Reader

For more information about Acrobat Reader, please visit the
www.adobe.com Web site.

Acrobat Reader toolbar

This is how the toolbar appears in Acrobat Reader 3.0.

This is an explanation of various toolbar button functions

Page

Bookmarks & page

Thumbnails & page

Hand

Zoom-in

Text selection

First page

Previous page

Next page

Last page

Go back

Go forward

100% zoom

Fit page in window

Fit page width inside window

Find

Web browser (Optional)

Opening PDF documents

To open a PDF document, choose **File Open**. In the Open File dialog box, highlight the filename, and click Open. Normally, PDF documents have the extension .pdf. In Windows, or on the Macintosh, you can also open a PDF document by double-clicking the file icon.

If double-clicking a file on the Macintosh platform does not open the file in your Acrobat viewer, use File Open to open the file, close the file, and try again.

Printing PDF documents

First, select the print options you want by using the **File Print Setup** (Windows and UNIX) or **Page Setup** (Macintosh) command. When you are ready to print, choose **File Print**.

Acrobat Exchange offers a **Shrink to Fit** print option not available with most other applications. Shrink to Fit shrinks (and if necessary rotates) oversized pages to fit on the paper size currently installed in your printer.

PDF files produced by Acrobat Distiller 3.0 can contain custom halftone screens intended for high-resolution imagesetters. When sent to standard desktop PostScript printers, the custom halftone screens contained in the PDF file can produce "muddy" images. To avoid poor image quality on your printout, choose the **Use Printer's Halftone Screen** option in the Print dialog box.

Navigating through a document.

Acrobat Reader has a number of tools to let you move through a document.

1. **Moving Around the Current Page: The simplest way to move around the current page is to use the "hand" cursor** **. Press the left mouse button and the hand becomes a fist, grabbing the page. With the mouse button held down you can "drag" or "push" the page anywhere on the screen.**

1. The vertical scroll bar on the right of the screen lets you move up or down by line (arrows), by half-page (click in the scroll area), or by user-selected distances (drag the scroll button).

1. **Paging Through a Document: The arrow keys** **in the tool bar let you move to first, previous, next or last page.**

To jump to a specific numbered page, click the page number box in the status bar at the bottom of the main window, type the page number, and click OK.

1. **Browsing With Bookmarks:** You may jump to a topic or subtopic by clicking the **Bookmarks and Page** button .

1. or choose **View Bookmarks and Page** to display bookmarks

in the overview area. If a triangle appears to the left of the bookmark, click the triangle to show or hide subordinate bookmarks.

1. When you click on a bookmark, the document moves to the location in the document defined by the bookmark. You can move directly to any section of the document which has a bookmark.

1. If the bookmark window is empty, click on the leftmost button on the tool bar or select "Page Only" from the "View" menu.

1. **Browsing with Thumbnails: A thumbnail is a miniature view of each page in the document that you can display in the overview area.**

1. To jump to a page by using its thumbnail, click the **Thumbnails and Page** button or choose **View Thumbnails and Page** to display thumbnail images. Click a thumbnail to move to the page it represents. The point you click determines the center of the page display.

1. **Following Links: You can also navigate the page by following the links established by the publishers. When you position the cursor on any of these links, it will change from its default form to the standard Internet "pointing finger" cursor . Click on the link and you will move to the referred section of the document. To return to your original place in the document, click on the double left arrow in the tool bar.**

Adjusting a Page View

You can use the zoom tool, the magnification box in the status bar, or the Actual Size, Fit Page, and Fit Width toolbar buttons to change the screen magnification.

Actual Size (100% Zoom) Sets the zoom of the page to 100%

Fit Page In Window **Makes the current page fit inside the window.**

Fit Page Width Inside Window Makes the visible width of the current page fit inside the window.

When you select any of the Fit options, the magnification level resulting from the selection is displayed in the status bar. The Fit options, Fit Page, Fit Width, and Fit Visible are in a *sticky* state, which means they don't change as you page through a document unless you change the zoom level.

To increase magnification: Select the zoom tool on the document page to double the current magnification. Or you can click the magnification box in the status bar and choose a magnification level. If you choose Zoom To, type in the magnification level and click OK.

To decrease magnification: Select the zoom tool while holding down the **Ctrl (Windows and UNIX) or Option (Macintosh)** and click at the center of the area you want to reduce. Or you can click the magnification box in the status bar and choose a magnification level. If you choose Zoom To, type in the magnification level and click OK.

Note: If viewing a PDF document in a Web browser window, use the zoom out tool to decrease magnification.

Searching for text.

Use the Find command to find part of a word, a complete word, or multiple words in the active document.

To find a word:

1. Click the find tool , or choose **Tools Find**.

1. Choose Match Whole Word Only, Match Case, or Find Backwards.

Note: **"Find" only works in the currently open PDF file. It will not search across files. Under certain circumstances,**