

Join the Club: Submitting Successful Lineage Society Applications

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Joining a lineage society is a great way to honor your deceased ancestors. There are many types of lineage societies ranging from small family organizations to national groups. Most require annual dues and detailed research to be accepted. If you are not a member of a lineage society but qualify, you should consider joining. Even if you are not a member, if you find your ancestor listed in their collection, make sure to request a copy of the file. This may save you many hours of research since admittance requires kinship proof and documentation.

Why Join

There are many reasons why people want to join lineage societies including:

- To honor an ancestor
- To validate your research skills
- For social reasons
- For scholarships

Getting Started

The first step to join a lineage society is to **decide which lineage society you want to join** and identify an ancestor that qualifies. Some lineage societies require a sponsor to issue an invitation before you can apply while others allow you to apply directly. Details on their application policy can be found on their website.

There are many types of lineage societies available in the United States as well as worldwide. There are several websites to help you find these.

- FamilySearch Wiki, United States Military Records – will help you understand various U.S. conflicts and the dates they occurred https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Military_Records
- Active Hereditary Societies http://hereditary.us/list_a.htm
- Lineage Society of America <http://lineagesocietyofamerica.com>

Once you decide on the society you want to join and identify the ancestor that qualifies, then **check to see if that society has an online database** and your ancestor's name is already listed. If your ancestor's name is not listed, then not only will you have to prove kinship to that line, but you will also need to submit other documentation showing your ancestor qualifies. The additional documentation will depend on what type of society it is. If you want to join USD 1812, then you'd have to prove your ancestor is the same person who served in that conflict as well as your kinship to him. If you are trying to join a local or state early settler society, you would have to prove kinship and also that the person resided in the specific locality by the date for that specific society.

Other repositories and online websites that might provide useful records about military service:

- **National Archives** – can order military service and other records for veterans <https://archives.gov>
- **Fold3** – many military records included on this subscription-based website www.fold3.com
- **FamilySearch** – many free records can be found in the historical records, catalog, and images. My favorite way to find the most popular is to click on SEARCH, RECORDS, then BROWSE ALL COLLECTIONS. Under the Collection Type filter select MILITARY. This will provide you with military records in the Historical Records part of the website on FamilySearch. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list?fcs=recordType%3AMILITARY&ec=recordType%3AMILITARY>
- Ancestry – many military collections can be found in the card catalog using the MILITARY filter. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/catalog/?category=39>

Once you've checked to see if your ancestor is listed in the society's online database (if they have one), **contact the local registrar / historian to get the paperwork to start the process.** For some lineage societies, there are downloadable forms on their website that can be printed and sent to the registrar to start the process.

National Lineage Society Organizations: National lineage societies are much stricter in admitting new members. Direct proof of kinship and all associated documentation must be included in the application along with the application fee. Below are some of the most popular national lineage societies with their contact details.

Daughters of the American Revolution
1776 D St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20006-5392
www.dar.org

Children of the American Revolution
1776 D St, NW
Washington DC 20006-5392
www.nscar.org

Sons of the American Revolution
National Headquarters
1000 South Fourth Street
Louisville, KY 40203-3208
www.sar.org

Sons of Confederate Veterans
Elm Springs
Box 59
Columbia, TN 38401-0059
www.scv.org

General Society of the War of 1812
P.O. Box 106
Mendenhall, PA 19357-0106
www.gsw1812.org

United Daughters of the Confederacy
Memorial Building
328 North Boulevard
Richmond, VA 23220
www.hqudc.org

United States Daughters of 1812
1461 Rhode Island Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20005-5402
www.usdaughters1812.org

The National Society of the Colonial Dames
of America
2715 Q St. NW
Washington, DC 20007-3041
<http://nscda.org>

Society of Colonial Wars
www.gscw.org
National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars
<http://nsdcw.org>

National Society Daughters of the American
Colonists
<http://nsdac.org>

State Genealogical Society Lineage Societies: These state organizations contain a wealth of information. Many have lineage societies for early settlers or first families. Some will have military groups such as the Civil War. Lineage society availability varies from state to state. All have an application fee. Most states maintain a website and some even have a Facebook page. Google search the state name and the phrase "genealogical society" to find their website and details on how to apply for their lineage societies.

Local Lineage Societies: These could include local genealogical or historical societies or chapters of the state organization. Local chapters generally have their own lineage societies that could include different people than the state organization. Often their contact information can be found on FamilySearch Wiki or at US Gen Web under the state and then the specific county. Some have details about their application process on their website.

Family Organizations: Ask family members if they know about any family organizations. Google the surname and the phrase "family organization." Many of these organizations have family newsletters with details on family research. Sometimes they have family websites or Facebook pages.

The Application

Each lineage society has different eligibility requirements to join (female, male, legitimate heirs, settlers by a certain time / place, served in a specific war, on a specific ship, etc.). For some lineage societies you must be invited to join by someone already a member of the organization while others will allow you apply yourself if you are sponsored by someone who is already a member. Most societies have a fee to join, but this cost varies. Refer to their website for more specific details and their deadlines.

Things to remember

- Follow the directions on the application!!!
- Each generation must have kinship proof. For those that lack direct evidence, an indirect proof argument should be included for that generation.
- The review of your application will take time, so be patient.

The Documents

In order to qualify for a lineage society, applicants need to prove lineal parentage starting with themselves back to the applicant ancestor. This is not difficult for generations born after the start of the 20th century because most citizens of the United States are easily identified by their birth certificate and social security record. You must prove kinship for each generation using good quality records. Include vital records (B,M,D) for the husband and wife for your direct line, if the record exists. Birth records are considered a primary source and can be used to prove kinship only if the parents of the child are listed on the record. If you have a copy where the parents are not listed, then contact the state health or other similar department and order a copy of the “long” form.

As you move earlier in time proving kinship becomes increasingly difficult. Those born in the late 1880s to early 1900s may not have a birth record if they lived in a rural location. Some of those people may have applied for a late or delayed birth registration when time came to apply for social security benefits. Make sure to check for these delayed records if the birth record is missing. Copies of the application for social security, church birth and baptismal entries, and bible records can also be used to prove kinship when used in conjunction with other sources such as census and probate records if the relationship to their parents is clearly stated.

Proving kinship when no birth record exists is difficult, but not impossible. Sometimes it can be easily remedied by including a will for the child’s deceased parent where the child is listed by name as an heir. Other times an indirect proof using many sources such as probates, census, court records, deeds etc., will have to be used to show how the family connects. Occasionally applicants will have to prove their kinship to the parent through a sibling then prove how their ancestor relates to their sibling such as using deed where siblings are listed as such. If the kinship is not clearly identified a short explanation or proof argument should be included in the application.

Helpful records for proving kinship:

- Birth records
- Death records
- Marriage records (post 1900s)
- Church records
- Obituaries
- Probates
- Cemetery & related records
- Census records
- Military records
- Tax records

Tips:

- Don’t assume kinship just because they are on the same record together (e.g. 1850 census).
- Be thorough
- Search for statements of relationships in deeds and probate records for earlier generations
- Search cemetery interment records for extended family members who may be buried in the same cemetery or plot.
- Use military service records and widow’s pension files for affidavits and statements of kinship.
- For lineage society applicants proving their ancestor resided in a location by a certain date, the use of land records and tax records are helpful in proving the residency.

- For lineage society applicants proving their ancestor served in a military conflict, make sure there is ample proof showing your ancestor is the same person who served in the specific military unit. Local genealogical societies often have published lists of deceased veterans in their county. Make sure to include a copy of this secondary source along with the military service record and other supporting documentation.

Citations

Good researchers know it is imperative to keep a detailed log of the resources you have used, where you got it and what it contained. When submitting proof for a lineage society; writing a family book or research report; or submitting an article for a scholarly genealogy journal or quarterly it is important to cite your sources. For lineage society applications there will be a section of the application for listing the resources used to verify the vital record facts and kinship. Many groups use abbreviated citations in these forms. It's helpful to include a detailed log sheet with your sources numbered and fully cited with the application so the registrar can more easily identify each source. Some lineage societies want full citations included on each page of the sources while others prefer the pages to not have anything written or marked on them.

To have the correct citation format, you will need to use Elizabeth Shown Mills' book, *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*. (Genealogical Publishing Company: Baltimore, Maryland, 2015). The third edition is the most current version of the book. The *Quick Sheet, Evidence Style, for Citing Ancestry.com Databases & Images* (green one); *Citing Online Historical Resources* (red one); and *Citing Online African-American Historical Resources* (brown one) are also very useful.

For those needing help with the Genealogical Proof Standard and source citation methodology, Thomas W. Jones' book, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* published by the National Genealogical Society in 2013, can be very beneficial. This book has an entire chapter devoted to source citation with examples and practice examples.

Putting it All Together

Each lineage society form is slightly different. Make sure to carefully follow the directions for completing the form for that specific society. Some require digital submission of all documents while others prefer paper copies of all records. Regardless of the method of submission be organized so it is easier for the registrar to find the applicable documents for each generation.

For paper submissions, use colored card stock to label each generation as a cover sheet for that generation and use this to divide your documents. This makes it much easier for the person reviewing the application to see which documents relate to the generation. Each source document should also be numbered on the back of the page (in case all the pages fall on the floor and get out of order). These numbers should be used on the log sheet. Include all correctly cited source documents relating to that generation in that section and note it on the log sheet. Make sure to mark the source citation on the record per the society directions. On the specific document, I like to mark the person's entry with an arrow post-it note so it is easier to find the relevant entry. The easier you make it for the review committee to understand how each generation links with the sources you have to prove it, the quicker you will be approved.

For electronic submissions, create a folder on your computer specifically for the documents you will be submitting for that lineage society. Label each record with the number of the generation it relates to, the name of the person, and a short description of what it is (i.e. 05-Webster-1802deed). This helps the files to stay organized when they get transferred digitally, and will help the reviewer find the relevant documents more easily.

What's Next

Once you are approved, celebrate! You earned it. If you have another ancestor that qualifies for the same society, submit a supplemental application, and encourage your family and friends to join also. Other lineage societies might go through this same ancestor, so you can use some of the documentation to apply elsewhere (e.g. DAR records could be used towards Colonial Dames or Mayflower). If possible, be active in your society and volunteer.