

“Who’s afraid of some paperwork? : Navigating the Application Process for the Revolutionary War Lineage Societies”

Bryna O’Sullivan, Charter Oak Genealogy, www.charteroakgenealogy.com
(860)316-8200, bryna@charteroakgenealogy.com

What are the major Revolutionary War lineage societies?

- 1) Daughters of the American Revolution (<https://www.dar.org/>):
 - DAR is a women’s society, open to women 18 and over.
 - Members must be directly descended from someone who supported the American cause.
 - From “Who We Are” - The DAR, founded in 1890 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a non-profit, non-political volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children.
 - DAR works on a hierarchal system, with local chapters under state societies and the national society.

- 2) Sons of the American Revolution (<https://www.sar.org/>):
 - SAR is a men’s society and is open to men of all ages, although those under 18 are considered “junior” members.
 - Members must be directly descended from someone who supported the American cause.
 - From “SAR Mission & Goals” - The Objects of this Society are declared to be patriotic, historical, and educational; to unite and promote fellowship among the descendants of those who sacrificed to achieve the independence of the American people, to inspire them and the community-at-large with a more profound reverence for the principles of the government founded by our forefathers; to foster true patriotism; to maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom.
 - SAR works on a hierarchal system, with local chapters under state societies and the national society.

- 3) The Society of the Cincinnati (<https://www.societyofthecincinnati.org/>):
 - Society of the Cincinnati is a men’s society.
 - Members must be directly descended from officers or the siblings of that officer and *cannot* be descended from militia members.
 - Membership is passed through primogeniture.
 - From “About” - The founders of the Society assigned their descendants the task of preserving the memory of the patriotic sacrifices that made American liberty a reality.
 - Society of the Cincinnati operates on the state level.

- 4) Daughters of the Cincinnati (<https://daughters1894.org/>):
 - Daughters of the Cincinnati is a women’s society.
 - Members must be directly descended from officers or the siblings of officers listed in Bruce Metcalf’s *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of the Cincinnati*.
 - From the society’s main page: “Today, the Daughters of the Cincinnati honor these long-ago officers by continuing to discover and celebrate the history and wisdom of our ancestors in relevant lectures and trips, but most especially by operating and funding a

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scholarship program that contributes to the college tuition of daughters of career officers in the armed services.”

- Daughters of the Cincinnati is based in New York City.

What did my ancestor have to do for me to qualify for these societies?

- 1) DAR and SAR: Qualifying ancestors for the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution need to have publicly demonstrated support for the American cause. They could do this through joining the military, taking on an elected office, donating to the Army, or numerous other activities.
- 2) Society of the Cincinnati: Qualifying ancestors were generally either original members of the society or a) served to the end of the Revolution as an officer in the Army or Navy, b) resigned after three years of service, c) was removed from rank by an act of Congress, or d) died or were permanently incapacitated while in service. Most societies do not allow the descendants of militia officers to join.
- 3) Daughters of the Cincinnati: Qualifying ancestors must be listed in Bruce Metcalf’s *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of the Cincinnati*.

What do I need to document about my ancestor’s service?

- 1) DAR + SAR: For SAR and DAR, you will need to document the ancestor’s service and residence during the War. The DAR will not require to submit this documentation if it is already on file. See https://services.dar.org/public/dar_research/search/default.cfm?tab_id=0 to search by name.
- 2) For Daughters of the Cincinnati, no additional information should be needed beyond what is listed in the book. Please clarify with the society.
- 3) Society of the Cincinnati: You will need to document service. Heitman’s *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April, 1775 to December, 1783* can be a helpful resource.

What do I need to document about my connection to that ancestor?

You will need to document dates and places of birth, death, and marriage, as well as the connections between spouses (if a marriage record does not exist) and the connections between parents and children.

- a. If it is possible to document all of those dates and places, you should do so. DAR requires a minimum of one date and place (birth or death, no marriage), for every generation after the first three.
- b. Connections between generations are a **must**. If you don’t have the connection, you don’t have the line.
- c. SAR currently permits the submission of the information without supporting documentation for the non-bloodline spouse. That means if the ancestor is on the mother’s side, you’d only need to submit the documents relating to the mother. Many SAR registrars will not turn in applications that do not document both sides, so even though it is currently not required, it’s best to obtain all documents.

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- d. If vital records exist, it’s best to obtain them. DAR requires them for the first three generations (you, parents, grandparents).

What sources can I use to document the line?

Each society has its own rules, but here are few general guidelines:

- 1) If vital records *should* exist, obtain them or get a letter from the office that would issue them that no records could be found.
- 2) If vital records do not exist, start looking for church records or other records that might document birth, death or marriage, or connections between generations. Commonly acceptable sources include the census (**be sure it contains the information you’re using it to support**); land records; probate records; military records; and more.
- 3) Family histories can be used **if they cite original documents**. Uncited family histories and local histories may support another source, but they should not stand on their own.
- 4) **Family trees cannot be used.**
- 5) SAR will accept some DAR applications as a source. Otherwise, lineage papers of one society can generally not be used for another.

My grandma was a member. Does that mean I can join without submitting documents?

It depends. Many societies do allow you to “build” off an application that a previous family member created, provided it meets current standards. That means if your grandmother’s application was “up to date,” you may only need to provide the documents connecting your generation to her. Many older applications did not meet the requirements now used and will need to be redocumented to brought up to current standards. To check older DAR applications, review the lineages posted at https://services.dar.org/public/dar_research/search/default.cfm?tab_id=0 and look for blanks. To check older SAR applications, review the lineages posted at <https://sarpatriots.sar.org/> and look for blanks and other issues. You may be lucky enough to find that most of the line is already on file.