



Membership in lineage societies has been a joy in my life. I belong to the “classics”: DAR, the Mayflower Society, Colonial Dames of the 17th Century, Daughters of Founders & Patriots of America, Jamestowne, National Society Daughters of 1812, plus some local ones: First Families of Nebraska, First Families of Tennessee, and lots more! I have used membership in the societies as a way to preserve and vet my research. And I met some of my most treasured friends through these societies. This is a heartfelt testimonial meant to encourage active membership.

—Beverly J. Nelson, Littleton, Colorado

Our June 20th *Weekly Genealogist* newsletter survey asked if readers belonged to lineage societies. More than 4,100 people took the survey, and nearly 100 emailed comments. Our readers were eager to share how rewarding they found their ties to these societies. Many people mentioned a desire to honor and preserve ancestral connections. Beverly J. Nelson’s “testimonial” above summarizes many reasons our survey-takers value lineage society memberships.

Lineage (or hereditary) societies are composed of descendants who honor the role of various ancestral groups in history. These forebears are recognized for many reasons, including military service, occupation, immigration on a particular ship, and early settlement of a state or town.

Although the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company (1638) and the Society of the Cincinnati (1783) were chartered earlier, many of the most popular lineage societies were formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By requiring proof of qualifying descent from members, organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, and the General Society of Mayflower Descendants helped establish and improve genealogical standards. Today’s documentation requirements are generally much more rigorous than in the early years of these societies.

Lineage societies differ in various aspects but researchers wishing to join almost any of them can follow four basic steps in the documentation process:

1. Establish your ancestral line
2. Contact the society’s membership liaison
3. Organize and document your line
4. Complete and submit your application

Regardless of membership status, genealogists can benefit from records preserved or created by these organizations. Collaborations with lineage societies allow NEHGS to offer unprecedented access to such material. This article treats a range of current and forthcoming resources. We are grateful to our many partners who have allowed us to preserve, review, publish, and share these valuable institutional records.



Lynn Betlock is Managing Editor at NEHGS.

AmericanAncestors.org databases

Massachusetts: Society of the Cincinnati

Information on Massachusetts officers and their families eligible for membership in the Society of the Cincinnati.

- Also useful for other military lineage societies.
- 618 searchable names; details are keyword searchable.

Mayflower Descendant—A Journal of Pilgrim Genealogy & History

- Published by NEHGS, and formerly published by Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants.
- 340,000 searchable names.

Mayflower Families Fifth Generation Descendants

- Fifth-generation *Mayflower* descendants from the “Silver Book” genealogies published by the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.
- 576,000 searchable names.

Colonial Soldiers and Officers in New England, 1620–1775

- Service records for Massachusetts men in the colonial era. Published with support from the Society of Colonial Wars in Massachusetts.
- 38,000 searchable names.

Massachusetts: List of Pensioners
Names, towns, and types of pension for Revolutionary and invalid pensioners in Massachusetts. Based on lists published by Congress in 1818, 1828, and 1832.

- Useful for establishing an ancestor's Revolutionary service.
- 6,400 searchable names.

Index of Revolutionary War Pensioners, 1800–1900

- Index to Veterans Administration records on Revolutionary War pensions.
- Useful for establishing an ancestor's Revolutionary service.
- 3.5 million searchable names.

Forthcoming databases

Society of Colonial Wars in Massachusetts applications

Founded in 1893, the Society of Colonial Wars in Massachusetts (SCWMA) is the state chapter of the General Society of Colonial Wars. Members descend from men who served in a military capacity between 1607 and 1775. In partnership with SCWMA, NEHGS is working to digitize all Colonial Wars applications and supporting materials, index them through 1976, and make the collection available on AmericanAncestors.org in 2019. Contact our volunteer coordinator Rachel Adams (Rachel.Adams@nehgs.org) to be part of this exciting project!

General Society of Mayflower Descendants lineage applications

NEHGS is partnering with the General Society of Mayflower Descendants (GSMD) and FamilySearch to digitize and index GSMD lineage applications of accepted members, from the GSMD's founding in 1897. These applications offer an unprecedented collection of verified research on *Mayflower* descendants. AmericanAncestors.org will present images of applications—from submitters born at least 100 years ago—and all documentation. Each application includes a four-page form detailing the

applicant's lineage from a *Mayflower* passenger, as well as supporting materials that prove the line of descent. In 2020 this searchable database will be available on AmericanAncestors.org, allowing researchers to connect with more recent generations of *Mayflower* descendants.

Other lineage society databases

Hereditary Societies with Functional Websites (hereditary.us/list_date.htm) offers a comprehensive list of all known societies with active websites. (If you think that you don't have ancestry that qualifies for a lineage society, you might be surprised. Lineage society membership is possible for almost everyone.)

DAR Genealogical Research System (services.dar.org/public/dar_research/search/?tab_id=0) is a free collection of databases provided by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution to aid general genealogical research and assist with the DAR application process.

U.S., Sons of the American Revolution Membership Applications, 1889–1970 (search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2204), a database on Ancestry.com, contains 145,000 applications with 1.2 million records.

Previous page: John Trumbull (1756–1843), *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 17 June, 1775*, after 1815–before 1831. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © 2018 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. *Below:* Members of the Daughters American Revolution at the 2016 NEHGS Summer Dinner, including NEHGS Councilor and *Genealogy Roadshow* host Mary Tedesco, NEHGS Councilor Diana E. Warren, and NEHGS Genealogist Kathleen Kaldis (last row, from middle to right).



Lineage Society Webinars

These one-hour webinars are free to NEHGS members and guests. Find the recordings in our video library (AmericanAncestors.org/education/learning-resources/watch) and log in using a member or guest account.

How to Apply to Lineage Societies: Tips from NEHGS

This presentation includes step-by-step information on the application process, tips for when you can't find vital records, and a case study from our research services team.

Tracing *Mayflower*

Lineage: Resources at AmericanAncestors.org

Discover the databases and online resources at AmericanAncestors.org that can help you make a *Mayflower* connection. Learn how to use key genealogical resources, including scholarly journals, compiled genealogies, and study projects.

NEHGS experts review Colonial Wars applications

In October 2017, an agreement between NEHGS and the General Society of Colonial Wars authorized members of our Research Services team to perform the final review of new and supplemental applications submitted by Colonial Wars state societies. This arrangement ensures that Colonial Wars applicants follow a clear and consistent process with uniform methods of verification based on NEHGS's rigorous scholarly standards.

NEHGS reviews each new and supplemental application for completeness

and adherence to the standards of eligibility and documentation established by the General Society. If an application has gaps or raises questions, the state society will be notified directly by NEHGS about specific issues that may require corrective action. NEHGS will not perform research to fill those gaps or make corrections; the state society can work directly with the candidate to resolve any problems. NEHGS completes reviews within 30 days of receipt.

The Research Services team has now reviewed more than 180 applications from prospective and current members and approved an impressive number of them—over 75%. For more about the General Society of Colonial Wars, visit gscw.org.

Society of the Cincinnati project

The Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Connecticut has commissioned NEHGS to research, write, and produce a publication on the 686 men identified by that organization as “qualified propositi.” Male descendants and kinsmen of these men—commissioned officers of the Continental Army or Navy who meet the Society's criteria—are eligible for membership. An NEHGS expert will oversee original research and the creation of fully documented genealogical and biographical sketches. Typical sketches, probably two to three pages, will include information on the officer's birth, marriage(s), and death; military service; children's birth dates and

places; biographical notes; and references. We estimate that this work will be likely be published in three volumes (approximately 2,200 pages) in 2022.

Lineage society manuscripts at NEHGS

Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy

Founded in 1933, SDCC has had 3,100 members over the past 85 years. Applicants for membership must have a proven lineal, lawful descent from a clergyman who was regularly ordained, installed, or settled over a Christian church within the thirteen colonies prior to July 4, 1776.

NEHGS will soon be entrusted with SDCC's member applications (from 1933 to the present). These four-page completed forms outline the member's descent from a colonial clergyman.

For every generation from ancestor to applicant, names, dates, and places are listed for births, marriages, and deaths, with corresponding sources. (No copies of actual source documentation are included.)

Anyone listed in Frederick Lewis Weis's four-volume series on colonial clergy (found in the NEHGS Library or online at hathitrust.org) is probably a qualifying ancestor. (A few men listed by Weis do not qualify, and some who did not appear in the original volumes are eligible.) Supplementals—forms submitted by members for additional qualifying ancestors—are also in this collection.



Join us in Washington, D.C. for Hereditary Society Community Week

To commemorate Hereditary Society Community Week in Washington, D.C., NEHGS President and CEO Brenton Simons will speak on “Treasures of the New England Historic Genealogical Society” at the Metropolitan Club on Monday, April 8, 2019, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. For information or to register, contact Jenna LaRiviere at Jenna.LaRiviere@nehgs.org or 617-226-1215.

Our Research Services

Applying to lineage societies can be intimidating—each society has its own requirements and procedures. The experts at NEHGS can help you navigate the application process by performing exhaustive searches, compiling and organizing documentation, and writing persuasive scholarly proof arguments. Our experts are experienced in preparing applications for hundreds of lineage societies, including the most popular—General Society of Mayflower Descendants, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, and Society of the Cincinnati. Are you looking for a specific ancestor, or would you like to outsource the application process entirely? Whether your requests are limited or extensive, our Research Services team is ready to help you! Contact us at research@nehgs.org or 617-226-1233.

Helpful lists of sources for eligible ancestors are on the “Research” section of the SDCC website at ColonialClergy.com. Qualified applicants are encouraged to contact the Registrar General, Linda Wetzel, at wetzelinda@gmail.com.

Scots’ Charitable Society

In December 1650, the ship *Unity* arrived in Boston with about 150 Scottish prisoners of war captured by British forces during the Battle of Dunbar (September 3, 1650). In 1652 the *John and Sara* arrived with 272 Scottish prisoners captured at the Battle of Worcester (September 3, 1651). All of the Scottish men were sent as indentured servants, to fulfill terms between six and eight years. About twenty men served at a sawmill in Berwick,

Maine; more than sixty worked at the iron works in Lynn and Saugus; Massachusetts; and the remainder worked for local merchants.

The Scots Poor Box Society was founded in Boston on February 6, 1657, by a group of twenty-eight Scotsmen concerned with providing assistance within their community. The group was incorporated as the Scots’ Charitable Society on March 16, 1786, making it the oldest private charitable organization in the United States. For more on the organization, see Scots-Charitable.org. Membership in Scots’ Charitable is by invitation only.

The Scots’ Charitable Society deposited the first six volumes of their records at NEHGS in 1898, with additional records deposited in later years. This collection includes a constitution; by-laws; assessment books; cash books; member lists; minutes, including treasurer’s accounts and quarterly payments; proposed members (1879–1903); and a photograph album of past presidents. Most of this collection was microfilmed and researchers must use the microfilmed records; scholarly access to the original records requires a written letter by the President of the Scots’ Charitable Society. The first volume of the records was shown on the Jon Cryer episode of the television show *Who Do You Do You Think You Are?*, filmed at NEHGS in December 2017 and first aired May 21, 2018.

Massachusetts Daughters of the American Revolution Collection, MASS DAR SG 307

In 1954, the Massachusetts Daughters of the American Revolution brought a collection of “original papers sent from Washington to be deposited with some

Society for safe keeping” to NEHGS. The collection consists of seventy-seven documents created between 1744 and 1908. About sixty percent of the records are deeds for land sales in Blandford, Dorchester, Hadley, Ipswich, and Otis, Mass. Other materials include school records of instructor Ebenezer Perry of Beverly, Mass., 1824, and a muster roll for the Continental 17th Regiment of Foot commanded by Colonel Moses Little, 1775.

Massachusetts SAR Records

The Massachusetts Society Sons of the American Revolution (MASSAR) placed nine linear feet of “applications, minutes, and miscellaneous books and records of the Society” on permanent deposit with NEHGS in 2011. The collection contains materials documenting the operation of the Society, including Board of Manager meeting minutes, bulletins, chapter records, correspondence, meeting announcements, member applications, member and officer lists, member biographies, newspaper clippings, and treasurer ledgers. The holdings document the MASSAR’s diverse activities: Color Guard, Constitution Day, Good Citizen awards, Memorial Day service, Patriot medals, the Revolutionary War bicentennial, and Revolutionary War grave survey and marker projects. Permission was granted for NEHGS members to view and save this material and copy it into applications.

Come to a lineage society program in Boston!

The Paul Revere Chapter of the DAR, in partnership with NEHGS, will offer a program on lineage research on Wednesday, September 5, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Representatives from DAR, SAR, and other groups will give brief presentations on joining their organizations and provide guidance on finding vital record substitutes. Everyone is welcome to attend; RSVP to education@nehgs.org.

Popular National and Regional Lineage Societies

There are hundreds of national and regional lineage societies. Each one is unique in its bylaws, purpose, and application process. Some of the popular societies are:

Organization	Application Notes	Eligibility	Website
The Baronial Order of Magna Charta (BOMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Applications approved by BOMC genealogist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone with proven descent from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of 25 Sureties who signed <i>or</i> - One of the 5 counselors of King John 	magnacharta.com
Colonial Dames of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Approved by CDA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women with proven descent from an ancestor who, between 13 May 1607 and 19 April 1775: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Held public office <i>or</i> - Served in the armed forces 	cdany.org
General Society of Colonial Wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application approved by Registrar General • Membership at state level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men with proven descent from an ancestor who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Held office during the colonial period <i>or</i> - Served in the military from 1607 to 1775 	gscw.org
General Society of Mayflower Descendants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application approved by Historian General • Membership at state level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone with proven lineal descent from one of the passengers of the <i>Mayflower</i> (with proven descendants) 	themayflowersociety.org
National Society, Sons of the American Revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application approved by Registrar General • Membership by local chapter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men with proven descent from a patriot of the American Revolution (not limited to military service) 	sar.org
Jamestowne Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Application approved by Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the website, jamestowne.org/qualifying-ancestors for a full list of membership requirements. 	jamestowne.org
The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Membership at state level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women with proven descent from an ancestor who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resided in the American colonies before 1750 <i>and</i> - Rendered efficient service before 5 July 1776 	nscda.org
National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Membership at state level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women with proven lineal descent from an ancestor who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resided in the American colonies before 1701 <i>and</i> - Served during the colonial period 	colonialdames17c.org
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By invitation only • Approved on national level • Membership at state level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women with proven descent from a patriot of the American Revolution (not limited to military service) 	dar.org/natsociety
Order of the Founders and Patriots of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application approved by the Registrar General • Membership through constituent state society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men 18 years or older with proven descent from an ancestor who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Settled in the colonies before 13 May 1657, and whose ancestor (in the same line) served in the American Revolution. The candidate must prove this connection through particular male lines. See the diagram at founderspatriots.org/join.php. 	founderspatriots.org
The Society of the Cincinnati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application approved on the state level (14 constituent societies) • Members often submit their application with the state in which their ancestor resided, not their current residence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male descendants (or, in some cases, kinsmen) of commissioned officers who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Served in the Continental Army or Navy (or their French equivalents) to the end of the war or who had resigned with honor after a minimum of three years' service as a commissioned officer. [Representation is often limited to one current member per eligible officer.] 	societyofthecincinnati.org

Reflections of Lineage Society Members

Gladys Boice Tolbert of Denver,

Colorado: I belong to the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, to honor two ancestors forced to leave New York for serving in the Kings Royal Regiment, 2nd Battalion, New York. One of them was jailed for six weeks because he would not sign the Articles of Association of Dutchess County, and was then sent further west, where he "could not aid and abet the enemy." Both ancestors settled in Cataraqui, Upper Canada. I am not a Canadian citizen. I explain that the UELAC is the equivalent of the DAR (which I am also eligible to join). In the U.S., United Empire Loyalists "don't get a lot of respect." With my membership, I feel I am honoring these ancestors and reminding family members that the two ancestors were not traitors. I think these men were courageous to maintain their beliefs.

William A. Brewer of Rochester, New

York: I joined the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) to preserve my connection to my patriot ancestor, Samuel St. John, who enlisted May 8, 1775, less than a month after Lexington and Concord. I have always been interested in history and my activities with the SAR have greatly enriched my understanding of the period. Using genealogical sources, my great-grandmother's DAR application, and information published by the state of Connecticut, I reconstructed my ancestor's service during his initial enlistment and the April 1777 Danbury, Connecticut, raid. To give the public a more personal view of a Revolutionary soldier, I assembled an outfit that represents a member of the local militia transitioning to service with the 5th Connecticut Regiment in the early days of the war. This effort inspired other members of my local SAR chapter to portray their patriot ancestors. We march in parades, fire military salutes at grave re-dedications, and give presentations at local schools.

Rebecca Smith of Rehoboth,

Massachusetts: When I delved into genealogy seriously, one pleasant surprise was finding that I'm descended from a number of *Mayflower* passengers. I've always found the Pilgrims fascinating, love visiting Plimoth Plantation, and I've become quite interested in the religious and political upheavals of seventeenth-century England. I enjoy seeing where my family fits into this history. I applied to the Mayflower Society because it was meaningful to me, and to see if my research would stand up to scrutiny—which it did. I think that learning about our ancestors is valuable, and these societies help with that research and remembrance.

Kathleen Lomax of Short Hills, New

Jersey: I apply to lineage societies as validation of my genealogical research. I have joined thirty-three lineage societies and have four more applications pending. NEHGS research has been pivotal for almost all my applications, including the Colonial Dames (NSCDA), Mayflower, and Jamestowne Society. It's interesting to see how my relatives react to hearing they can join these societies—most are uninterested, but even those who don't seem to care much perk their ears up when they hear I joined the Flagon and Trencher Society (for descendants of colonial tavern keepers)!

Andrea Hajducko of Emmaus,

Pennsylvania: My aunt got me started by providing me with nearly all the documentation I needed to apply for membership in



DAR, Newbury, Vermont, 1953. Verner Reed Archive at Historic New England. Courtesy of Historic New England.

the Daughters of the American Revolution through Captain Pelatiah Fletcher of Westford, Mass. Since then, I have verified 22 supplemental ancestors, of which 11 were newly verified (not previously documented). I joined the Order of First Families of Maine, through Thomas Bradbury and his wife Mary (Perkins). I also used Mary for membership in the Associated Daughters of Early American Witches, then provided a supplemental through Rev. George Burroughs of the Salem witch trials, who I also submitted as a supplemental for the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy; my original qualifying ancestor was Rev. Christopher Toppin of Newbury, Mass., a pastor of a church there for more than 50 years. Finally, I joined the Winthrop Society through Thomas Dudley. ♦