

Steps to Join the SAR

Introduction. Our History is the Nation's History - JOIN US! We are a living, breathing, and ever-evolving organization that invites Americans to connect to their personal past and civic history. We are called to make our mark on society and ensure that the stories of our nation's struggle and our ancestor's triumphs are remembered and shared with current and future generations. Someone once said, *"To be in ignorance of one's ancestry is to be a tree without a root, a river without a source."*

The first step is to determine if you are eligible to join. This can seem like a daunting task! In order to join the SAR, you must be descended from a person who provided support to the American Colonies during the Revolutionary War. A common misconception is that the ancestor has to have actually been a soldier. This is not the case! Some examples of non-military service include farmers who provided food or supplies, men or women who donated money or goods to support the cause, nurses who provided care, and ministers who promoted patriotic acts. You not only need to prove your lineage back to that ancestor, which is usually 7-9 generations, you also need to prove that they provided some kind of service. In addition, the lineage has to be a direct blood-line meaning there can be no adoptions, no step-parents, no uncles, etc. However, you do NOT have to follow one surname all the way back. You can jump from paternal line to maternal line and back again as much as needed. Since most Patriot Ancestors are 7-9 generations back, many of you have anywhere from 64 to 128 ancestors who potentially provided some kind of service. This gives you a lot of options to find a Patriot.

Find and contact the SAR Chapter closest to where you live. While the SAR is a National Heritage organization, you must join through a chapter. It is recommended that you contact a chapter early-on in the process because they will assign someone to your case, provide guidance about what is needed for your application, and help you prepare your application for submission.

Collecting and organizing your documentation is step three. Once you've determined which lineage path you will use for your application, you'll need to collect all the required documentation to prove your lineage back to your Patriot Ancestor. The chapter genealogist-registrar can tell you what kind of documentation they want to see for each generation on your application. While this step can also be a daunting task, it's not always as bad as it sounds. Both the SAR and the DAR keep databases of proven lineages submitted by other members. If your Patriot has already had his service proven by someone else, you can purchase a copy of that application with its accompanying documentation and use it for your own application. It's even better if the member who submitted the application shares common early generations with you, because then you'll receive documentation for those generations as well, and you won't need to collect as much documentation of your own. Do keep in mind that this process can involve some trial and error. You might identify a Patriot Ancestor and start working on documenting all the generational links back to that person, only to get stuck with not enough acceptable documentation to prove ONE link, and you'll have to start over with looking for a different Patriot Ancestor. While this can be frustrating, with enough persistence you can usually find a successful lineage path to a different Patriot.

The final step is to fill out your online application. The SAR has special watermark paper for the application and the application includes block areas to write your source citations in that prove your lineage. It is fairly common to submit your proofs and have it come back stating that you need additional documentation for certain generations. Don't get discouraged! This can be a good thing, because it gives you an idea of how close you are to being accepted, and what kind of documentation they are still looking for. Your application and each of the generation's proofs are always submitted to the local chapter genealogist-registrar first, and he will take care of forwarding them to the State and National level. There are different fees associated with applying to each level (local, State, National). Your chapter genealogist-registrar will help you determine how much you need to pay, and to whom. After that, the only thing left to do is wait! Applications can take anywhere from a five to eight weeks to be reviewed and accepted. Your chapter genealogist-registrar will contact you as soon as they hear back.

Celebrate! Once you are accepted to the SAR, you can give yourself a huge pat on the back! Not only have you proven you are descended from a Patriot who helped make the United States the amazing place it is today, but you'll have learned a lot of history and details about your family in the process, and that information is priceless. It's a heritage you can pass on.

The SAR is the Premier Men's Heritage Society in America. Your proven lineage will not be forgotten for generations to come. You have in essence memorialized each generation of grandparents by listing their full birth names and dates and places for their births, marriages and deaths. You can now point to a proven lineage and say; it's been judged, recognized, and certified. You are leaving a legacy for your children, grandchildren and extended family.