

IN-GENIOUS!

LINEAGE SOCIETIES: THE SAR

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About three years ago, I was marching in a local parade as part of the Indiana Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (INSSAR) Color Guard. Each of us was wearing a replica of a Revolutionary War Continental line or militia uniform. As I marched past a young man, he turned to someone (his father, I presume) and asked, "What uniforms are those?" The father responded, "I don't know. Civil War, I guess." The following is an attempt to set the record straight.

WHAT IS THE SAR?

The SAR is a historical, educational, and patriotic non-profit, United States 501(c)(3) corporation that seeks to maintain and extend:

- * the institutions of American freedom
- * an appreciation for true patriotism
- * a respect for our national symbols
- * the value of American citizenship
- * the unifying force of *e pluribus unum* that has created, from the people of many nations, one nation and one people.

This is done by perpetuating the stories of patriotism, courage, sacrifice, tragedy, and triumph of the men who achieved the independence of the American people, in the belief that these stories are universal ones of

man's eternal struggle against tyranny, relevant to all time, and will inspire and strengthen each succeeding generation as it, too, is called upon to defend our freedoms on the battlefield and in our public institutions.

ORIGINS OF THE SAR

In 1876, there were many celebrations commemorating the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. As part of this patriotic fervor, a group of men in the San Francisco area who were descendants of those involved in the American Revolution, formed an organization called the Sons of Revolutionary Sires. Their objective was to create a fraternal and civic society to salute those men and women who had pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the battle for independence from Great Britain.

From the Sires grew the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (NSSAR), which was organized on April 30, 1889—the 100th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration as our nation's first president. We have been using the acronym SAR to identify ourselves for more than 100 years.

The SAR was conceived as a fraternal

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and civic society composed of lineal descendants of the men who wintered at Valley Forge, signed the Declaration of Independence, fought in the battles of the American Revolution, served in the Continental Congress, or otherwise supported the cause of American independence.

The National Society was chartered by an Act of Congress on June 9, 1906. President Theodore Roosevelt (who was himself a member of the SAR) signed the charter, which authorized the granting of charters to societies of the various states and territories, and authorized the state societies to charter chapters within their borders.

Today the SAR, which has its national headquarters located in Louisville, Kentucky, consists of over 27,000 members in 50 state societies (including the District of Columbia), and over 500 chapters, plus overseas societies in France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and Switzerland.

The SAR is a lineage society. This means that each member has traced his family tree back to an ancestor (designated a "Patriot Ancestor") who supported the cause of American independence during 1774-1783. Since our founding, over 165,000 descendants of men and women Patriot Ancestors of the American Revolution have been admitted as members.

SAR members include presidents of the United States, generals, admirals, presidents of colleges and universities, ambassadors, justices of the Supreme Court, and members of Congress. Members come from

all walks of life, including businessmen, doctors, lawyers, teachers, farmers, elected officials, and government employees, all of whom have a deep affection for America, its heritage and institutions.

WHAT DOES THE SAR DO?

The SAR:

- * honors individuals for outstanding and unusual patriotic achievement on a national, regional, and local level.
- * honors members of the United States Congress for outstanding service to the nation.
- * honors outstanding high school students, JROTC and ROTC cadets.
- * honors law enforcement, fire safety and emergency medical personnel for outstanding service.
- * selects outstanding Eagle Scouts annually at the chapter, state and national level (the latter of whom receives a college scholarship).
- * assists veterans in veterans hospitals.
- * conducts essay, oration and poster contests for young people.
- * provides free educational materials to schools.
- * sponsors Boy Scout troops and chapters of the Children of the American Revolution.
- * commemorates Revolutionary War Patriots and events with appropriate ceremonies.
- * participates in swearing-in ceremonies for new citizens.
- * cooperates with the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), Children of the American Revolution (NSCAR) and other hereditary organiza-

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tions in the promotion of patriotism.

WHO CAN BECOME A MEMBER?

Any man over eighteen years of age who is a citizen of good repute in the community and is a lineal descendant of an ancestor who was at all times unflinching in loyalty to the cause of American independence, and who rendered acceptable service by documented overt acts of resistance to the authority of Great Britain, is eligible to apply for membership in the Sons of the American Revolution.

WHAT IS "ACCEPTABLE SERVICE"?

Some examples of acceptable service are if the ancestor:

- * was a signer of the Declaration of Independence or other specified declarations.
- * a member of any of the Continental Congresses.
- * fought in the Battle of Point Pleasant, October 10, 1774.
- * fought at Fort William and Mary, December 14/15, 1774.
- * performed military or naval service or civil service for the American colonies from April 19, 1775, to November 26, 1783, inclusive.

Also included is patriotic service performed by men or women during the Revolutionary period which furthered the cause. Patriotic service includes the following: being a member of committees made necessary by the war; signing any pledge to support the cause of the colonies; accepting obligations or acting under direction of the provisional and new state governments, or rendering material aid. Some examples of material aid: furnish-

ing supplies with or without remuneration; physicians, surgeons, nurses, or others rendering aid to the wounded, and ministers known by their sermons, speeches, or actions to express sympathy with the colonies.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE A PATRIOT ANCESTOR?

If you're not sure whether any of your ancestors lived in the United States during the Revolution, don't lose heart. Many people who never set foot in the United States supported the American colonists in their struggle against British domination—for example, the King of Spain. Many Patriot Ancestors (or their descendants) moved to foreign lands and their descendants later returned, not knowing that their ancestors had been here before. Many French, German, and Spanish soldiers and sailors fought in support of American independence and returned home without making their descendants aware of their participation in gaining American independence.

If you already know that you have a Patriot Ancestor, then you may want to go straight to the membership section of the SAR website. However, I would also recommend that you contact an SAR chapter in your area or, if no chapter is convenient, your state society's website, and contact one of their officers for assistance.

WHERE SHOULD YOU START?

The first thing to do is to determine which branch of your family tree leads you by bloodline (not through adopted children) to a

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Patriot Ancestor. Keep in mind, you don't need to know your entire family tree, just a single line back.

The SAR application requires a listing of your lineage and must be accompanied by copies of documents that support this lineage. This means that you have to find documents linking parents to children for seven to nine generations or more.

The task can be made simpler if someone else in your family has already done the research. If the information is already on file with the SAR or DAR (from an earlier application) you need not submit it again, but can simply refer to the earlier application.

In the last century, many SAR and DAR members have submitted documentation for lineages from their Patriot Ancestors to themselves. If your great-aunt or your second cousin (or a person you may not even know) is or was a member of the SAR, they may have already submitted the documentation you need to cover some of the generations from your Patriot Ancestor to yourself. You can request a copy of the individual's approved SAR or DAR application from the appropriate society.

Researchers, take heart: the general public can also request a copy of an application (the cost recently increased to \$10 per copy). You can also request a copy of the supporting documentation for an application—the cost will vary, depending on the number of pages that have to be copied.

The SAR has many volunteer helpers to guide prospective members in their devel-

opment of a lineage to a Patriot Ancestor. If you already have all the information together and are ready to file your SAR application, a New Member Helper can assist you through the process. One of the requirements for membership in the SAR is that you join one of our state societies (or one of the international societies if you reside outside the U.S.). With this in mind, please check out the New Member Helper page on the SAR website and choose a helper in the state where you live. A New Member Helper can look into the SAR and DAR records to see if there has already been some information submitted relative to your lineage.

A New Member Helper may also be able to contact a researcher in the area your family was from, who may be able to help you get the information you need for a modest fee.

HOW IS SAR MEMBERSHIP DETERMINED?

If someone in your family tree was a member of the SAR or the DAR, the documentation from his or her application has already been accepted as accurate and can be used to document the appropriate section of your application. For example, my mother was in the DAR and I applied for SAR membership based on descendancy from her Patriot Ancestor. Her application had proved her line of descent, so all I needed to submit was Mom and Dad's marriage certificate, Dad's birth certificate and my own birth certificate. Of course, it's not always that simple.

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The SAR may also accept copies of application papers from Founders and Patriots, The Mayflower Society, and The Society of Colonial Wars. Applications from these societies will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if they can be used as proof of lineage for SAR.

Tracing and documenting your lineage back to your Patriot Ancestor may appear to be a daunting task, but it isn't impossible. However, you must always remember – documentation! Family data pages may contain the information you need, but is the source cited? Family tradition in regard to the service of an ancestor or the line of descent is not acceptable as documentation. On the other hand, one should not automatically ignore family data pages that do not contain source information. They may provide a “road map” that may lead you to the source.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further and more detailed information, I would recommend you visit the “For Members” tab of the NSSAR website (www.sar.org) and download the following from the Forms section:

- * SAR Application Worksheet
- * General Information and Application Requirements (Form 0910)
- * To Help Preserve a Precious Heritage (Form 0911)
- * Requirements for Preparation of Applications (Form 0912)
- * SAR “Whats” (Form 0913)

* NSSAR Search/Record Copy Request Form

You can also contact:
National Headquarters NSSAR
1000 S. Fourth St.
Louisville, KY 40203
Phone: (502) 589-1776
www.sar.org

For assistance or information within Indiana, please visit the INSSAR website (www.inssar.org) and do not hesitate to contact either a state officer or an officer of a INSSAR Chapter near you.

I should also mention that much of what I've said regarding researching and documenting your ancestors can be applied equally to women who wish to join the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. For further information regarding their organization, you should contact:

NSDAR
1776 D St. NW
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 628-1776
www.dar.org