

GG 2019-2020 Email #8 to State Points of Contact

30 March 2020

Current Status of Applications Review

As most of us are now sheltering in place and most non-essential businesses are closed, including the National SAR Headquarters in Louisville, the Genealogy Staff, is also closed down. The Director of Operations has requested that applications that are currently ready for review, not be submitted by the various State Registrars to the NSSAR until further notice. National will advise us when the staff will be able to once again begin reviewing the applications but in the meantime, we don't want mail to pile up at National.

In the meantime, this is a good time for the members to take advantage of their idle time to work on their genealogy using available online sources. Today, Ancestry.com announced that they are opening up their collection of National Archives records for free access to the public. Many digitized records can also be found at Familysearch.org (see the information below on how to search for FHL records). Digitized searchable PDF images of many out-of-print books, including family and local histories, can be found at Archive.org using their search capability. Archive.org and Familysearch.org are both free sites.

2020 Spring Leadership Meeting

The meetings of the various committees were held on 28 Feb 2020.

Legal Advisory Committee and the Status of Using DNA Evidence

The suspension of the use of DNA evidence remains in place awaiting some guidance from the Legal Advisory Committee on the privacy issues involved with DNA evidence and recommendations from the Genealogy Committee. Prior to the meeting of the Genealogy Committee, the Genealogist General made a presentation to the Legal Advisory Committee to provide them with an understanding of what the SAR Genealogy Staff would need in the form of a DNA evidence to build a proof argument if we allow use of DNA. It was explained that the DNA evidence we would need would not involve any specific genetic information. For autosomal DNA, we would only need the segment data (starting points and ending points for the shared segments of DNA on each chromosome). The segment data doesn't provide any information regarding any specific gene within those segments. For Y-DNA, we would need the number of repeats for the markers tested. The number of repeats does not provide any genetic information has been considered as "junk" DNA although there may be some, as yet, unknown value. For mitochondrial DNA, we would also need the marker information but the mitochondria provide the nutrients for cells and do not contain any genetic information. The bottom line is that the SAR would not be collecting any specific genetic data. However, what would be needed in a DNA proof argument is proof of the lineage of each match who is used in the argument to verify the relationship predicted by the testing companies to the common ancestor shared with the applicant. That would include the same types of evidence that an applicant would use to prove his own ancestry. It would require the consent of the match to use their records as well as their records, including birth certificates and other records of any other living persons in their lineage. This is an area of privacy concern since we would need to see documents such as birth or marriage certificates of living persons other than the applicant for SAR membership. The question becomes how we can protect the privacy of those other living persons, and what we need to maintain in our files. The Legal Advisory Committee indicated they will study the issue and make their recommendation in the next several weeks. The impact on the Genealogy Staff is another area the needs to be considered since the time involved in reviewing a DNA proof argument requires not only verifying the applicant's documentation to his ancestor(s) and but also the documentation for every match from that match relation to the common ancestor.

Genealogy Committee Meeting

The meeting of the Genealogy Committee was held following the Legal Advisory Committee Meeting. Several items of interest to the State Societies and Chapters were decided:

A new section was added to the Genealogy Policy Manual.

Sec. 3.4001: Inferred Information. 3.4001. Inferred Information. Certain information about relationships may be inferred by contexts without being explicitly stated. Examples include but are not limited to:

- *1850, 1860 and 1870 Census records that show a family unit without explicitly stating the parent-to-child relationship. Unless there is information tending to argue against this assumption, it should be accepted as proof of lineage*
- *Burial information. Many families used a common cemetery or contiguous plots within one cemetery. This together with other information could be used to infer lineage.*

Section 3.5001 of the Genealogy Policy Manual was modified:

*Sec. 3.5001 Only information for which a proof is given ~~is to be stated~~ **should be listed** on the application. If a proof is found to be insufficient, the reviewing staff genealogist will bracket the claim on the application.*

Sections 6.5002 and 6.5003 of the Genealogy Policy Manual were modified to clarify who could file appeal and how the appeal should be processed:

Sec. 6.5002 Review of Adverse Decision by Genealogy Staff:

An applicant with the concurrence of his state's registrar, genealogist, point of contact or president has the right to request that the Genealogist General review an adverse decision or decisions made by the Genealogy Department staff under authority delegated to it by the Genealogist General. ...

Sec. 6.5003 Appeals to the President General:

An applicant with the concurrence of his state's registrar, genealogist, point of contact or president has the right to appeal an adverse decision of the Genealogist General under the provision of Bylaw No. 9.

Miscellaneous Items

Application fees – At the Excom meeting held on Feb 27th and the Trustees meeting held on February 29th, an analysis of the full costs incurred by the Genealogy Staff in the review of new and supplemental applications by was presented showing that the current application fee, which has been in place for several years, is not recovering the current actual costs adequately. This will be an issue to be brought up to the delegates at the next Congress to consider raising the on-time application fees for both new and supplemental applications.

IT Status – The new website and membership module has been implemented. We are being asked, as we use it, if we should run into any issue, to notify Mike Scroggins and Mick Pitzer, identifying exactly where the problem came up including the path that was used to get to the problem area. I would note that this effort has not addressed the online application system. I've received several complaints that the problems with the application system are still not fixed. The application system was not part of the initial effort undertaken by the

vendor. The next phase, if funding is approved by the Trustees, will undertake that portion of our Member Management System. The Genealogy Committee is refining the specifications for what fields need to be included and how they should be formatted and positioned, agreeing to produce a list of data that are needed for applying for SAR membership and for maintaining the Patriot Records and Genealogical Research System. The Genealogist General suggested to the Excom that there by a public side using a worksheet function that can be shared with the local Registrar, sponsor, and/or the point-of-contact and only when ready, can the worksheet automatically be read into the member side of the online application system.

Using Familysearch.org – The Family History Library in Salt Lake City is no longer loaning microfilms to their branch libraries but instead is in the progress of digitizing their microfilmed records and putting most of them online for access by the public. The best way to access these records is to use the “Search” / “Catalog” selection rather than the “Search” / “Records” selection. The “Records” search only looks for the records that have been indexed but there are many unindexed records that have been digitized and can only be found using the “Catalog” search. In the search window that is provided by the “Catalog” page, enter the name of the county or city of interest (most records are at the county level) and a choice of possibilities is provided. Select the appropriate possibility. A list of all of the record types for that location are then provided.

The most useful categories are “Probate Records”, “Vital records”, “Land and Property”, and “Court records” but there are other categories such as “Church records”. “Cemeteries” or “Voter records” that may also be useful. By selecting one of those categories a listing of all of the records pertaining to that category that are in the possession of the FHL is provided. Some are books that are only available at the SLC main library but others that have been microfilmed are shown with an icon to the right of the entry. If the icon is a camera icon, that film contains digital images that can be viewed at home. If the camera icon has a key above it, that means that it must be viewed at a branch or main library due to copyright restrictions. If there is only an icon that looks like a text page, that means that only an abstract of the records is available. Some camera icons will have a magnifying glass icon next to the camera icon which means that a search capability is available. If the icon is a reel of microfilm, that film has not yet been digitized and currently unavailable.

The Patriot Research System – a major effort is going on in the Patriot Research System to enter the lineage information from approved membership applications. This lineage information for those Record Copies already entered can be viewed at <https://sarpatriots.sar.org/>. For privacy concerns, the most recent three generations are not shown to the public, however, they have been entered. Currently, searches can be made by entering a member name or number, or by entering the name of a patriot ancestor. On the PRS home page, in addition to the Member and Patriot search capability, there is also a Descendant search selection. That search capability has not yet been fully implemented. The information in the PRS will become part of a full Genealogical Research System (GRS) similar to that provided to the public by the DAR. The data entry work is being accomplished by volunteers in each State Society. There is still a need for volunteers so if you are interested, contact your State point-of-contact or the chairman of the Patriot Records Committee. This is something that can be done at home in your spare time and is an opportunity to qualify for the Lafayette Volunteer Service Medal.

GG 2019-2020 Email #9 to State Points of Contact
22 May 2020

Current Status of Applications Review

In spite of the COVID-19 restrictions, our Genealogy Staff have continued to work on applications from their homes while sheltering in place and occasionally going to SAR Headquarters to check on incoming mail and scanning application packets so they can be reviewed by other staff online. During the period 16 March through 22 May 2020 the staff has approved 500 new member applications, 66 supplemental applications, and 5 memorial applications. The current wait time for new application in the queue is 8 weeks, and for supplemental applications, 19 weeks. I congratulate the efforts by the staff under these trying circumstances. THANK YOU STAFF!!!!

One issue that the staff have raised is the inclusion of small fonts for the input fields on some of the incoming applications. These are difficult to read, especially looking at the scanned applications online. It has turned out that the most of these applications with small fonts were produced by the PDF version of our application form which is downloaded from the NSSAR website. Our Chief Technology Director, Mick Pitzer, looked into the problem and has concluded that the problem is occurring if the browser used by the applicant or his proxy is not Chrome or if the PDF reader used is not Adobe. Other browsers and PDF readers may alter the results of the inputs into the automated form. His recommendations to make the PDF application form working properly are:

1. Open the application form in Google Chrome (the form doesn't like Edge, Safari, etc.)
2. Download the form to your local PC.
3. Make sure it is opened with Adobe Reader and not a third party PDF Application such as foxitpdf.
4. Fill out the form and ensure it is set to legal before printing or the font will be much smaller.

The staff has also indicated another issue that they are having with some applications using DAR Record Copies. When a DAR Record is used as a reference document, do not underline the names, dates, and/or places listed. The Application Preparation Manuel advises underlining the pertinent information in red on reference documents to draw attention to it. However, on a DAR Record copy, it is obvious what is to be used. Underlining makes it difficult to read and see the DAR's verification marks. The printed Record Copies are reduced from legal size to letter size, so the print and spacing is smaller. The additional underlining can cover the verification marks.

Also regarding use of DAR Record Copies, there are still several applications being unnecessarily pended because a DAR Chapter Copy was submitted rather than the Official Record Copy downloaded from the DAR GRS. Another problem is printing of the DAR Record Copy, which defaults to legal size, on letter size paper without first adjusting the paper size for the printed output. This cuts off the bottom of the Record Copy pages. Make sure the default is changed to letter size before printing.

GG 2020-2021 Email #10 to State Points of Contact

14 September 2020

DNA Moratorium Lifted

At the NSSAR Executive Committee meeting held via teleconference on 28 August 2020, the Chairmen of the Genealogy and the Legal Advisory Committees presented, as a recommendation to lift the moratorium on the use of DNA evidence in the preparation of membership applications. This recommendation addressed the concerns regarding privacy and staff workload regarding the use of DNA evidence which had previously resulted in the Executive Committee placing a moratorium on any DNA until recommendations by both committees were provided.

The recommendations provided to the Excom include a requirement that signed consent forms be submitted with the membership application when DNA evidence is included in the proof of lineage. The Consent Forms stipulate that the information submitted by both the Applicant and any matching relative whose DNA analysis and other evidence which is provided to the SAR becomes the property of the SAR. This proposal was the recommended solution to handle the privacy issue and was accepted on the condition that the Legal Advisory Committee and the Chancellor General review and OK the consent forms.

The second part of the proposal addressed the additional workload that the genealogy staff will have in reviewing DNA evidence and verifying both the applicant's lineage and the lineages of those whose matching relationships to a common ancestor were submitted. The interim resolution was to constrain the relationships to be proven to only the link from the applicant to his biological parent in situations such as adoptions.

To submit an acceptable DNA proof argument, the applicant must fill out the "Applicant's Consent Form" and also have any matches whose DNA and traditional evidence proving their relationship to the claimed common ancestor, fill out the two-page "Match's Consent Forms". The match must, in addition to his/her DNA analysis showing the proposed relationship, also include documentation in the form of vital records, affidavits, or other traditional proofs to establish the lineage to the common ancestor. The Consent Forms and documents establishing matching relationships must all be submitted as part of the evidence included with application.

There are currently some pended SAR applications which can now use DNA evidence, along with vital records and affidavits by matching individuals, to prove the applicant's relationship to their biological parent used in the bloodline. For those applicants, the consent forms and the additional information to resolve the pended status of their applications, can now be submitted.

For now, under current policy, applications that propose the use of DNA evidence to prove a more distant relationship will remain unacceptable. Pended applications that used DNA evidence to support those more distant relationships will remain pended.

The Consent Forms are posted on the NSSAR website under "Genealogy/Genealogy Resources".

GG 2020-2021 Email #11 to State Points of Contact

24 October 2020

Continued Incorrect Submissions of DAR Record Copies

The Genealogy Staff continues to receive, and pend, applications that are based on references to DAR Record Copies which are improperly submitted or not even submitted at all. Many are submitted on letter sized paper but are setup to print on legal size paper, thus cutting off portions of the page. It is a requirement that the SAR only accept official DAR Record Copies which have been obtain from their website and contain the information on the bottom of the document that they are an official DAR Record Copy. We cannot accept personal or Chapter Record Copies. A DAR RC should be printed so all portions of the page are included; either on legal size paper or reduced to fit on letter size paper.

Use of DNA to Support a SAR Application

As explained in the last Genealogist General's Email #10, the moratorium on using DNA as part of a proof argument was lifted, but its use is constrained to only be part of a proof showing the link between the applicant and his biologic parent. The revised policy regarding acceptance of DNA is now posted in the Genealogy Policy Manual (**Sec.5.4006**) on the National SAR website. The policy also requires submission of consent forms to use the DNA evidence by both the applicant and any matches used to prove that relationship. The required Consent Forms are posted on the NSSAR website under "**Genealogy/Genealogy Resources**". There are two different forms; one for the applicant and one for any match whose DNA is used.

Since the testing companies began offering the tests several years ago, many people began submitting their DNA to see if they could find relationships to others and possibly break walls in their genealogical research. Many adoptees looking for the identity of their own birth parents have submitted their DNA to a testing company in hopes that they might discover their biological parent(s). Some have been successful using autosomal DNA which measures the percentage of common DNA between test takers to predict relationships. Others have taken court recognized paternity tests where both the father and son have agreed to take the test. Finding a parent requires at least two test takers who are closely related through DNA to have previously, and voluntarily, submitted their DNA to a testing company and discovered a relationship.

The testing companies provide back to their customers a report listing individuals who have also submitted their DNA to the company with results showing potential match and the amount of common/shared DNA between them and including a prediction of how closely they may be related based on the percentage of shared DNA. The predicted relationships may be a parent/child, or up to 5th-8th cousin relationship based on the amount of DNA shared.

The relationship of an applicant to a biological parent can be discovered by finding a match to a parent, a half-sibling, grandparent, aunt or uncle, or a niece or nephew who share between 20% and 50% of their DNA in common. [by inheritance, a child receives exactly 50% of his/her DNA from each parent. A child receives between 20%-30% of his DNA from each grandparent (for a total of 100% from all four grandparents). Likewise, a child would have between 20%-30% of shared DNA from a half-sibling, an aunt/uncle or a niece/nephew. A full-sibling would share

somewhere between 20%-50%. These relationships can only be discovered if both parties have previously submitted DNA to the testing company. The SAR does not make the predictions.

What the SAR is allowing under this policy is that if an applicant who has been adopted or has no other record establishing his birth parent, and has discovered a close relationship, as listed above, by submitting his DNA to a testing company, then he can submit the testing company's DNA results report showing that predicted relationship if 1) he has the consent of the match to submit the report, and 2) the match also submits documentation and an affidavit proving the match's relationship to that common parent. That is where the consent forms are required.

The Application Preparation Manual (APM), now posted on our National SAR website (**pages 20-25**), has an updated section with some examples of testing company reports that would show the amount of shared DNA. The APM also has a chart prepared by Blaine Bettinger that shows the percentage ranges of shared DNA based on a tabulation of known relationships discovered in a large database of test takers. At this time, the SAR is limiting the use of autosomal DNA to just the applicant to his biologic parent in the lineage to a patriot, so only very close relationships with matches are acceptable. Since autosomal DNA can come from any ancestral line, it is necessary to use traditional evidence (the match's birth certificate or other vital records) to prove which line has the common ancestor. For an applicant to parent, proof of which parent is needed. The staff will have to verify the proofs submitted in the applicant's lineage based on the match's relationship to him and proof of the match's link to the applicant's parent.

Appeal Process – Genealogy Policy Manual, Sec. 6.5001 & 6.5002

At the last teleconference meeting of the Genealogy Committee on September 23, 2020, the Committee modified the Policies on the Appeal process. The revised policy allows six months rather than the previous 45 days to appeal decisions on approved or pended applications.

Appeals on approved applications are limited only to correcting errors made by the Genealogy Staff or findings by the staff that statements made were not adequately proven and then bracketed. Additional information can be submitted to the reviewing staff to fix these issues.

Once the six-month period is over, the approved application can no longer be altered by subsequent information.

Before an appeal is made to the Genealogist General, any additional information not previously provided to the reviewing staff member, must first be submitted to that staff genealogist for consideration. An applicant with the concurrence of his state's registrar, genealogist, point of contact, or president has the right to request that the Genealogist General review an adverse decision or decisions made by the Genealogy Department staff under authority delegated to it by the Genealogist General.

GG 2020-2021 Email #12 to State Points of Contact

31 December 2020

DNA – Limited Use & Requirements

Since the last Genealogist General's email, there have been questions regarding the limited use of DNA evidence and what is required to use that evidence.

At this time DNA evidence is only accepted for situations where an applicant is trying to establish his own biologic parentage. DNA matches found through autosomal DNA tests such as FamilyTreeDNA's FamilyFinder testing, AncestryDNA testing, other similarly recognized testing companies must be closely related to the applicant within two biological generations; parent, sibling, half-sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew. Autosomal test results for matches in those close relationships would show a minimum of 20% shared DNA. Most of the testing companies test about 6800 DNA locations on the 22 chromosomes (not including the sex chromosome). The measurements of common DNA on segments of these chromosomes is measured in centimorgans (cMs). A parent-child match would be exactly a 50% DNA match or about 3400 cMs. A grandparent, half-sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew match would vary from about 20% to 30% match and a full-sibling match could be 20% to 40% match. More distant relationships would be less than 20%.

In addition to providing the testing company's report showing the matching data, the applicant and his match must also provide evidence of the connect to each other through the common parent. That means that there must be evidence proving the matches relationship to the claimed parent.

Because of the privacy concerns of using another person's DNA evidence, both the applicant and the match must also include in the application, signed consent forms indicating that they are all aware of the how the DNA will be used and are providing informed consent to use their DNA as evidence. The Consent Forms are posted on the NSSAR website under "Genealogy/Genealogy Resources".

The SAR will also accept reports of results of a paternity test provided by a court recognized paternity testing company when the report provides 99%+ likelihood of the paternity. Again the consent forms must also be submitted.

Tips on using Fold3

Not all Revolutionary soldiers filed pension applications but their names may appear in the pension files of other pensioners, especially those who were part of the chain of command or who provided an affidavit indicating service at the same time. I have realized that some members are unaware of an easier way to locate the entry of that name in a lengthy pension file without reading every page, mostly in early American handwriting, to find the name. When opening a pension file note that information about the file is presented on the page with the actual image. At the top of the file information there are two buttons, "Info" and "Contributions". The default in "Info" so click on "Contributions". That will change to a listing of all names that might appear on the page (if the only name on the page is for the pensioner, a message will say that there are no contributions to this page). Since the name of interest was

listed for the pension file, it has been contributed. No moving page by page through the file, the left side-bar will include the list of all names contributed by either Fold3 staff or others so it is easy to find the name of interest. Once the name of interest is found, click on it in the side-bar and it will highlight that name on the digital image so you can see if it provides valuable evidence of another patriot's service.

Using unit rosters can sometimes be useful in determining the likely residency during the Revolution for a patriot listed on that roster. Check the names of others listed on the roster to see if they have pension files or other records that might show where they lived or enlisted. This can often be helpful in situations where there were multiple men with the same name.

Webinars Aid in Research

Although this is a subscription site (\$49.95 annually), LegacyFamilyTree.com offers many webinars that cover topics in genealogical research ranging from beginning basics to expert level topics. Their webinar library currently has over 1400 webinars on subjects ranging from general methodology and skills to in depth subjects including research in specific locales or record types, DNA, legal aspects in research, etc. The presenters are expert researchers and include some of the top genealogists in the world. Recently two webinars of particular interest in researching patriot ancestors were recommended by the genealogy staff:

- John Jacob Kramer: Case Study of Mistaken Identity Among Revolutionary Soldiers
- Separating and Merging Identities of Same-Named Men

There are several webinars relating to research during the Revolutionary War regarding loyalists, Hessians, Quakers, etc.

The webinars are a great source for education in genealogical research and highly recommended for those interested in the field

