The Collections *and* Publications *of the* DAR Library, Washington, D.C.

by Eric G. Grundset

Since its inception in 1890, the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution has collected a large quantity of genealogical material. The organization was founded during the upsurge of interest in early America which followed the nation's Centennial in 1876. This fascination also found expression in the Colonial Revival movement and sparked an effort to preserve the rapidly vanishing stories, records, and artifacts of the Revolutionary War. In the DAR's early decades, 767 women joined who were the actual daughters of Revolutionary soldiers and patriots, who were known as Real Daughters.

Among the DAR's primary goals are the support of historic preservation, education, and the encouragement of historical study. As the nation's largest lineage society, genealogical research and the preservation of genealogical materials naturally occupy a major place in this effort. After over a century of collection development, DAR has made major strides to preserve its own records for use by present and future generations.

When the Daughters of the American Revolution is mentioned, many researchers think of the DAR Library. Founded in 1896, the Library houses one of the country's most important genealogical collections, covering all four centuries of American history. The Library has been open to the public since 1900. The book collection is extensive and includes thousands of family histories that were usually printed in small quantities. Many titles are not found in other libraries, including the Library of Congress. The DAR Library's holdings cover many facets of the history of the American Revolution: both governmental and private records and sources, microform materials, and file and manuscript collections. The Americana Collection, part of the Office of the Historian General (located in the same building), also contains many manuscripts relating to the Revolution, its participants, and their descendants.

Online resources

Membership applications and supporting documentation constitute some of the DAR's most used genealogical sources. For decades, access to the information contained in the DAR files could be obtained only by searching the original materials. With the advent of microfilm and microfiche in the mid-twentieth century, DAR applications were reformatted. Today, a major project to digitize huge quantities of paper, index collections, and make more genealogical information available to researchers has largely been completed.

An important recent development has been the debut of the DAR Genealogical Research System (GRS) online at *www.dar.org*. Several databases are included and a detailed guide to GRS content is available on the website.

First is the "Ancestor Database." Any woman over eighteen who can trace and document her lineage to someone who supported the American Revolutionary war effort as a soldier, sailor, or patriot is eligible for DAR membership. Many researchers will be familiar with the printed *DAR Patriot Index*, a list of the established ancestors of DAR members, last published as a three-volume set in May 2003. The set summarized the contents of a large card file once maintained at DAR headquarters. The card index listed the Revolutionary ancestors and national numbers of women who joined, or who filed a supplemental application, based on that ancestor. One of the first stages of the digitizing project was the creation of an Ancestor Database that incorporated the Patriot Index cards and related sources into one integrated, online source of information.

Next is the "Member Database." To maintain the privacy of DAR members, this database is restricted on the public site to deceased members. But sensitive to the need to share genealogical data, the DAR will doubtless change the way some information is provided, and procedures will continue to evolve.

The "Descendants Database" is the result of thousands of hours of indexing by volunteer members. The goal is to index all names in every lineage on every DAR membership application or supplemental appli-

cation. The project is approaching completion; papers associated with national numbers above 275,000 are already indexed and work is progressing quickly on the earlier ones. (In the near future, 900,000 women will have joined the DAR since 1890.) When the Office of the Register General becomes aware of a problem with a particular paper or lineage, notations are placed in the electronic record warning researchers that concerns exist. As a result, the 166-volume set of *DAR Lineage Books* is now obsolete in many ways, but still useful for finding clues.

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Documenting the applications are materials that formerly filled 300,000 files, including Bible records, wills, deeds, genealogical notes, and cemetery transcriptions. All of these records have been digitized, but can be viewed only at the DAR Library. The DAR Library Search Service must be engaged when a researcher would like information from this supporting material checked and copied. The Library Copy Services Office processes orders for copies of the applications themselves, or one may order online.

Since the 1990s, work has been underway on an every-name national index for the DAR Library's *Genealogical Records Committee* (GRC) *Reports*. The GRC *Reports* contain unpublished genealogical records (primarily Bible and cemetery transcriptions) collected by DAR members from the 1910s to the present. About 20,000 volumes of these typescripts are in the DAR Library, and previously the contents were largely unindexed and inaccessible. A volume from any given state may contain records from multiple states because the materials often come from members' families. A member from Idaho, for example, may have submitted a Bible record from Vermont, but that record would only appear in an Idaho volume. About three-fifths of this project is now complete, with hundreds of DAR members working on the remaining volumes. DAR employees merge each index into the GRC National Index, available through the GRS. Currently, search results provide a state, series, volume number, and page for the associated name. Researchers may view the specific volume at the DAR Library or order copies through the Library's Search Service. While all 20,000 *GRC Reports* have been digitized, one may view these images only at the DAR Library.

Recent Publications

In the past few years, the staff of the DAR Library has written some important publications to assist researchers. The second edition of *American Genealogical Research at the DAR, Washington, D. C.* (2004), the only guide to the wealth of materials housed in DAR collections, should be studied before visiting the DAR Library or corresponding with the Library's Search Service to have research done for a fee.

Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War (2008) is an extensive guide (nearly 800 pages) to the service of almost 7,000 individuals of African, Native American, and mixed ancestry, and the sources for documenting their participation. *Forgotten Patriots* received the American Society of Genealogists' prestigious Donald Lines Jacobus Award for 2009.

In 2010, the DAR Library will publish another massive work: *America's Women in the Revolutionary Era, 1760–1790: A Bibliographic Guide*. While not focused specifically on the Revolutionary War service of individual women, this new publication provides a bibliographic overview of printed (and some online) materials about the lives, work, and experiences of American women and girls. This compilation is designed to lead researchers to material already published and identify areas that have not been well studied.

Conclusion

The DAR's public website, *www.dar.org*, contains more information on the holdings and services of the DAR Library, including the online catalog of books and materials available in person or through the Library's Search Service. The collections of the DAR Library are not only focused on the period of the American Revolution — there is something for everyone with ancestry in the United States from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. Plan a visit when you're next in Washington, D.C., or contact the DAR Library Search Service for assistance by mail. ◆

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