Revolutionary War Lineage Societies

Connecting with the Founding Generation

"My father joined the Sons of the American Revolution during the 1976 Bicentennial. My mother used a commercial pattern to sew a period uniform for him. I later joined the SAR and inherited the uniform. As a member of the color guard and a national officer, I wore the uniform at meetings across the U.S. and on several SAR tours of Europe. The threads gradually deteriorated, so my wife created a new uniform from an identical pattern. I intend to wear it during the 2026 anniversary."

—Ralph D. Nelson, Jr., Durham, North Carolina

Commemorations of Revolutionary-era milestones began in earnest last year with the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 2023. Next year, we will remember the first battles in the War of Independence. In 2026, the "Semiquincentennial" will mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776—a pivotal moment that defined the nation's journey towards independence and self-governance. These anniversaries—which will stretch through the end of 2033—will provide many opportunities to engage with the past. In anticipation of many milestone events to come, we examine Revolutionary War lineage societies and the resources they've generated—which can be very useful whether or not you are contemplating membership.

Joining a lineage society offers a unique way to honor and celebrate one's ancestral heritage. These organizations provide a tangible link between past and present, connecting individuals to the founding days of American independence. These lineage societies can contribute to a broader understanding of American history and reinforce the value of preserving cultural and familial traditions.

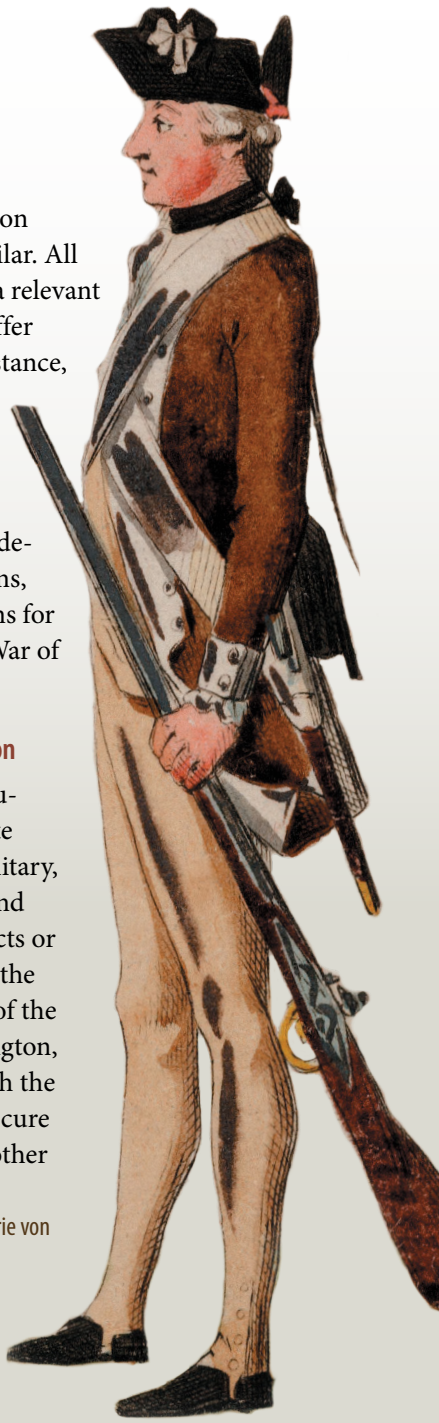
Lineage societies provide a platform for members to explore their genealogical backgrounds, fostering a deep sense of identity and continuity across generations. By maintaining detailed records and celebrating historical milestones, lineage societies help to ensure that the stories, achievements, and struggles of those who helped shape the nation are preserved and not lost to time.

While each lineage society's application process is different, many steps are similar. All involve establishing and documenting a relevant ancestral line. Societies can generally offer some genealogical and application assistance, so visit the organization's website for information and resources before beginning the process.

We asked representatives from five Revolutionary War lineage societies to describe the missions of their organizations, requirements for membership, and plans for marking the 250th anniversary of the War of Independence.

The General Society of Sons of the Revolution

The General Society, Sons of the Revolution (GSSR) was instituted to perpetuate the memory of the men who, in the military, naval and civil service of the colonies and of the Continental Congress, by their acts or counsel, achieved the Independence of the country, and to the proper celebration of the anniversaries of the birthday of Washington, and of prominent events connected with the War of the Revolution; to collect and secure for preservation the rolls, records and other



D. Berger and Daniel Chodowiecki, "Regulaire Infanterie von Pensylvanien," Yale Library Digital Special Collections.



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documents relating to that period, to inspire the members of the Society with the patriotic spirit of their forefathers, and to promote the feeling of friendship among them.

GSSR has 26 state societies and a membership of 4,400. The purpose of the GSSR is to engage with state societies in activities which further the education of the general public (especially America's youth) about the American Revolution and the United States Constitution and about the Patriots who supported those worthy causes during the period of 1775–1789. These activities include publishing articles and participating in public patriotic ceremonies and events.

— Casper L. Sigmon II, Assistant to the General President

Spotlight on the Massachusetts Chapter of the General Society Sons of the Revolution (GSSR)

The GSSR is a very distinctive and distinguished organization, and I am proud to be a member and President of the Massachusetts Chapter. I love the story of American independence and the Revolution. I think it's such a fascinating subject. The GSSR is important to my family; my great-great-grandfather Ash P. Fitch joined the Sons of the Revolution in the late 1800s. I have his original membership medal, and I wear it to meetings. I'm a fifth-generation member, and I've sponsored my nephews' memberships—that makes six generations in our family.

The Massachusetts society has a number of events planned to commemorate the anniversary of the American Revolution. An event this fall will honor Doris Kearns Goodwin with our John Adams medal. Our members and officers are planning for the next several years by purchasing Revolutionary War attire. During the 250th commemorations, we will wear our Revolutionary garb at not only our own events but at other activities and parades. It's a fun way to engage our membership while also engaging the public.

— D. Brenton Simons, President

National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was founded to preserve the memory and spirit of the men and women who secured Independence for our nation during the Revolutionary War. DAR is a nonprofit, nonpolitical women's service organization consisting of almost 190,000 members in close to 3,000 chapters across the country and around the world.

The DAR provides opportunities to give back to our country, to preserve historic sites, to provide scholarships to children, and to support our nation's veterans and active service personnel, among so many other initiatives.

Most DAR volunteer efforts and activities occur at the grassroots level with chapters supporting their local communities.

DAR also maintains a premier repository for genealogical records and resources in Washington, D.C. Through our renowned DAR genealogical records, we preserve family histories and celebrate our Revolutionary War ancestors' service to our nation.

A great way to learn more about joining the DAR is to become connected with a local chapter that can help with the process as well as the research. Visit dar.org/membership to learn how to begin your research, find a local chapter, and to fill out a prospective member form. Great genealogy resources are available at dar.org/genealogy.

Our E Pluribus Unum Educational Initiative (dar.org/EPU) focuses on increasing awareness of Patriots of Color, and our website provides resources, an online exhibit, profiles of Patriots, and a searchable online database that includes more than 6,700 names of Black and Indigenous Patriots of the American Revolution.

DAR members have been gearing up for the 250th anniversary of our nation for quite some time. Our America 250! Committee is sponsoring many initiatives, including an American Revolution Experience traveling exhibit in partnership with the American Battlefield Trust and the new Honoring Our Patriots website (dar.org/HonoringOurPatriots) that presents profiles of little-known or underrepresented Patriots of the Revolutionary War.

— Pamela Wright, President General

National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) honors our Revolutionary War Patriot ancestors by promoting patriotism, serving our communities, and educating and inspiring future generations about the founding principles of our country.

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Three values are paramount in our organization: Remembering Our Past by honoring those who served or assisted the colonies during the Revolutionary War, Promoting Core Values by protecting our Constitution and perpetuating American ideals and traditions, and Shaping Young Minds by educating our youth about the Constitution and those who developed the American ideals and traditions.

If you've ever been curious about joining the SAR, we encourage you to get involved. Whether participating in the color guard, grave markings, historic commemorations, or community service, the SAR offers a great way to meet some fantastic people while showing a great love for our country and its founding principles.

We have members who would be happy to help assist you in identifying your Patriot ancestors and filling out your application. To find a chapter near you, visit SAR.org and click the "Join Now" button at the top of the page. From there, you can find your state contact and be connected with a local chapter.

In Louisville, Kentucky, we are building a world-class education center and museum perfectly situated on the city's historic Museum Row. The museum will feature interactive exhibits and artifacts dating from the American Revolution. The SAR Education Center and Museum is set to open on July 4th, 2026—the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. To learn more, visit sarfoundation.org.

— Drew Hight, Marketing and Public Relations Manager



Order of the Founders & Patriots of America

The Order of the Founders and Patriots of America (OFPA) was founded in 1896 with the unique requirement for continuity between a Founder who arrived in the colonies within the first 50 years after the Jamestown landing and a Patriot in the same male line who supported the cause of liberty during the American Revolution.

The principal objectives of the Order are to bring together those who share this common heritage; promote patriotism and respect for the character and heroism of the Founders and Patriots of America; discover, collect and preserve the records, documents, monuments, and history of the first colonists and their descendants; and promote educational, historical, and patriotic programs.

Our Associates value the fact that membership in the OFPA is challenging by design. With the need for both a Founder ancestor prior to 1657 and a Patriot ancestor, the Order is considered one of the most exclusive lineage societies one can aspire to join. As such, membership in the OFPA is considered "a badge of double honor."

We encourage any man eligible for membership to join one of our 21 state Societies or At-Large if in a state without a Society. Eligibility requirements are shown on the OFPA website (ofpa.org). The website has a searchable database of all proven Founders who have been accepted by the Order, as well as links to other genealogy resources to identify proven Patriots.

Our America 250 Committee will lead each of our state Societies to get involved with the 250th activities in their state. Our 2026 General Court will be held in Philadelphia in order to participate in the 250th activities there. Restoration projects funded by our John Quincy Adams Foundation include the flags flown on Admiral Dewey's flagship USS *Olympia* at the Independence Seaport Museum, an historic mural at Washington's Crossing Park, and a memorial at Princeton Battlefield commemorating the burial place of American and British soldiers who fell at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777.

— Thomas Allen Smart, Governor General



The Society of the Cincinnati

The Society of the Cincinnati strives to cultivate and teach popular understanding of and appreciation for the ideals and achievements of the American Revolution, as well as for the stories of the men and women who fought for them.

Our members hold a palpable pride in their direct connection to the people who rose up against tyranny and formed a new government built upon personal freedoms and liberties. Our members still benefit today from the "mutual friendships" and "cordial affection" noted prominently in our 1783 charter. Our educational mission is fulfilled through a wide array of programs ranging from support for K–12 teachers and students to scholarly research—all of which emanate from our National Historic Landmark headquarters building and museum in Washington, D.C.

Those interested in joining should focus on the state (or states) where their ancestors fought. The individual constituent societies—one in each of the original thirteen American states and one in France—are the best sources of information for the men who represented them in the Revolution. If you find the name of an

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officer ancestor you think may have been eligible, contact the appropriate constituent society and inquire as to your ancestor's eligibility, and, importantly, whether he is currently represented. In most cases, only one descendant of a qualified officer can be a hereditary member.

Application to our society can be a challenge, but we urge you to not give up easily. We welcome new members. Many of our applicants employ the services of professional genealogists—and there are often more officers in a family's history than can be found at first glance.

Several special initiatives have been launched or are being planned. We recently unveiled a new book, *Freedom: The Enduring Importance of the American Revolution*. Every anniversary year from 2025 to 2033, we will present a temporary museum exhibition highlighting key battles, moments, or people during that year of the Revolution. Our 2025 exhibition will focus on the key first year of the war, and the 2026 theme will be the many "voices of revolution," men, women, families, African Americans, and citizens of other countries.

— F. Anderson Morse, Executive Director

American Ancestors Revolutionary War lineage society resources

Resources on AmericanAncestors.org

Applying to Revolutionary War Lineage Societies (video)

Chief Research Officer Lindsay Fulton offers a step-by-step look at the lineage society application process and includes tips on finding necessary vital records. The following societies are discussed: the Boston Tea Party Descendants Program, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, Sons of the Revolution, the Order of the Founders and Patriots of America, and the Society of the Cincinnati.

Americanancestors.org/video-library/applying-revolutionary-war-lineage-societies

Come Join the Revolution: Applying to the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (video)

Genealogist Kathy Kaldis describes the NSDAR membership application process from start to finish.

AmericanAncestors.org/video-library/come-join-revolution-applying-national-society-daughters-america

Connecticut: Society of the Cincinnati (database)

This database, drawn from *Biographies of Original Members and Qualifying Officers—Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Connecticut* (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2023) contains 715 fully cited genealogical and biographical sketches of all qualified propositi of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati, referencing 36,049 records and 35,831 names.

Daughters of the American Revolution: Patriots of Color, 1712–1888 (database)

This database features more than 6,500 names of individuals of African, Native American, Iberian, Latin American, and multiracial descent who played significant roles in the American Revolution.

Massachusetts: Society of the Cincinnati (database)

This database includes information on Massachusetts officers eligible for membership in the Society of the Cincinnati.

Manuscripts at American Ancestors

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 from Washington to American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society. The collection consists of 77 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 a muster roll for the Continental 17th Regiment of Foot commanded by Colonel Moses Little, 1775.

Massachusetts Society Sons of the American Revolution (MASSAR)

MASSAR placed nine linear feet of "applications, minutes, and miscellaneous books and records of the Society" on permanent deposit with American Ancestors/NEHGS in 2011. The collection contains materials documenting the operation of the Society, including Board of Manager meeting minutes, bulletins, chapter records, member applications, member and officer lists, and member biographies. The holdings document the MASSAR's diverse activities, such as its Revolutionary War grave survey and marker projects. Permission was granted for American Ancestors members to view and save this material and copy it into applications.

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Five major lineage societies for Revolutionary War descendants

Organization	Application Notes	Eligibility	Website
General Society Sons of the Revolution	Application approved by State Society Registrar or the General Society Registrar.	Any male person of good character, and lineal descendant of who assisted in the establishment of American independence by services rendered during the War of the Revolution.	sr1776.org
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	Membership through a chapter or as a member-at-large within a state. Applications are reviewed and submitted through a local chapter or state. Applications are then reviewed and approved by staff genealogists at national headquarters in Washington, D.C.	Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion, or ethnic background, who can prove lineal descent from a patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. In applying for DAR membership, women must document their lineage back to an ancestor who aided the cause of American independence. These efforts may come through military, civil or patriotic service and must occur during the period between 19 April 1775 (Battle of Lexington) and 26 November 1783 (withdrawal of British troops from New York).	dar.org
National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution	Applications are reviewed and submitted at the local chapter and sent to the national headquarters in Louisville, Ky. The applications are reviewed by a staff genealogist.	Men with proven descent from a patriot of the American Revolution (not limited to military service).	sar.org
Order of the Founders and Patriots of America	Membership through state Society or At-Large if in state without a Society. Applications approved by State Registrar and/or Registrar General.	Men 18 years or older with proven descent from an ancestor who settled in the colonies before 13 May 1657, and whose ancestor (in the same line) adhered to the cause of American Independence between April 19, 1775, and September 3, 1783. The candidate must prove this connection through particular male lines. See the diagrams at https://ofpa.org/membership/.	ofpa.org
The Society of the Cincinnati, Inc.	Applications are approved on the state level (14 constituent societies). Members submit their application with the state in which their ancestor served in the Continental line, not the state of their current residence.	Direct (preferred) or secondary male descendants of officers who served in the Continental Army or Navy and met the respective state society qualifications. Current representation is generally limited to one member per original officer or eligible officer.	societyofthecincinnati.org americanrevolutioninstitute.org

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