

# NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS

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In a recent telephone call with Lindsey Brock, past Florida President, we had a discussion of New Member Recruiting: in particular how the Daytona-Ormond Chapter is handling their new member applications.

As we all know, handing a prospective member a worksheet and the pamphlet on how to fill out his lineage and then prove it usually means that it's the last ever heard from that prospect.

The Daytona-Ormond Chapter, FLSSAR has evolved a procedure that seems to work, at least for us. We man a desk at the Daytona City Island Library each Friday afternoon to provide a contact point for prospective members. Three Chapter Members are in this group of SAR volunteers, including the Chapter Registrar and Genealogist with at least one being present each Friday and, more usually, all three. We have been doing this for some years now, with the result that the Library Staff feels very comfortable in referring anyone who inquires about the SAR (or DAR, Mayflower, etc.) to stop by the Genealogy Room on Friday afternoon. In addition the Library permits us to have racks with SAR brochures along with Mayflower, DAR and other lineage Societies – we all work together. Fairly often we have a “newbie” just starting out in genealogy overhear our conversation and inquire about membership.

Once a prospective member shows up, we start with the usual basic information: name, address, telephone number and, very important, his e-mail address. We have found that, as a practical matter, if a person does not have an e-mail address they tend to be more difficult to work with, particularly as we use a computer based approach. We don't push these men out the door, but the success ratio is far lower. On the other hand we find a lot of men (those with e-mail addresses) come in expecting that all the information they have found on the Web is the gospel truth and is therefore all the documentation they need.

The first step is to establish whether the prospective member has a blood relative that was ever in the SAR or DAR. If so, that is the obvious place to start; although many, if not most, applicants would like to trace back to a Patriot Ancestor with their own surname. We work hard to encourage them to start with an established line and then add their direct lineage as a Supplemental. If they don't have a SAR or DAR blood relative, we find that they usually have some idea of who their Patriot Ancestor may be – it may not be the right one, but it is usually a good clue.

The next step we take (other than the applicant who is the son or grandson of an existing SAR or DAR member where all that is needed is a birth certificate or two) is to create a lineage on our computer using one of the various SAR Application computer programs. We happen to use Bill Bristor's Word Template, but there are a number of others. By starting with the filling out of the application form, with the prospect looking over our shoulder supplying the information, he gets a feeling of immediate involvement rather than the turnoff of being handed a worksheet with instructions to fill it in.

The application is completed as far as possible with very little talk of documentation – that comes later! The applicant can usually take us back to his grandparents although with lots of dates and locations missing. The next step is to go on-line to Ancestry.com (available at the library) and check the U S Census for his immediate ancestors. The censuses provide dates, locations, etc. and allows us to talk in an unthreatening way about documentation. (We print out the census pages for “documentation”). Usually we can get the applicant back to the 1850s using various censuses.

At this point we shift to RootsWeb.com, searching on the name of the oldest person we have entered on the application. In most cases this provides a “framework” lineage on which we can start building proof. We are fortunate in having a fair sized genealogy section in our Library (to which our Chapter regularly contributes additional books each year that will help with applications). These library books are our first step in documentation, with the second step being accessing HeritageQuest.com on-line. Heritage Quest claims over 20,000 books in their on-line library, the search is fairly easy and appropriate pages may be printed to accompany the application as proof.

Along the way we have indicated to the applicant that he will need to get birth/baptism, death, marriage certificates for the first three generations. Not all are needed but enough to prove his blood line. Much of our approach here is that the applicant should have them for “his records” in any case. Here we help with the “where to write for” books that are available in the library or on-line.

In those cases where an applicant has no good leads to a Patriot Ancestor we use a slightly different approach. Rather than start by filling out the actual SAR application, we open a new PAF computer file. We use PAF because it is easy to explain and, when we are done, we can give the file to the applicant with instructions on how to download PAF for free so he can continue his genealogy (obviously any of the many genealogy programs can be used). Opening the PAF file permits us to easily research multiple branches. Many times we can check names in the 1850 era to the SAR Patriot Index CD and find a proven Patriot Ancestor.

This approach is a far cry from the time that a lot of us came into SAR. Then we did all the work ourselves or we didn't get in, or we were lucky enough to find someone to guide us through the process. Why does our Chapter go this way? Mainly because new applicants have more and more generations between themselves and their Patriot Ancestor. Gone are the days when an applicant's Patriot Ancestor was great-grandfather Jones! Now an application with the Patriot Ancestor being the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> generation is not unusual! In addition, there is the current desire for instant gratification – people are no longer willing to work for a couple of years to assemble all the data needed for an application and, with the advent of computers and the Web, that's no longer necessary. In addition, most applicants do not have the necessary genealogy knowledge or Web skill to put together the lineage and proof needed for an SAR Application, so it is up to the local Chapter to provide it.

The following is a brief synopsis of what the Daytona-Ormond Chapter has put up on the Web at

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fldocsar/ResearchingNewApp.htm>

This is a tough URL to copy from this article – a simpler way is to Google “Daytona Ormond SAR Researching” (don't include the quote marks). We refer our members to it for help with Supplementals, but we don't necessarily point prospective members to it unless they are pretty deep into genealogy. We feel doing so would be like giving the prospect a worksheet and telling him to come back when he has all the work done!