

Applying to an OGS Lineage Society

By Amy Johnson Crow, CG

One of the many benefits of being a member of the Ohio Genealogical Society is the ability to apply for membership in OGS' three lineage societies: First Families of Ohio, Society of Civil War Families of Ohio, and the brand-new Settlers and Builders of Ohio. Each of them provides a special way to honor Ohio ancestors as well as recognizing your efforts as a genealogist.

First Families of Ohio, the oldest of the OGS lineage societies, is for OGS members who descend from someone who lived in present-day Ohio by the end of 1820. Settlers and Builders of Ohio, which will have its first group of inductees at this year's OGS conference, is for OGS members who descend from someone who lived in Ohio between 1 January 1821 and 31 December 1860. A point of clarification for SBO – if you have already proven an ancestor for FFO, you cannot apply for that same ancestor for SBO.

Qualifications

The qualifications for the Society of Civil War Families of Ohio are based upon Civil War service, coupled with Ohio residency. Membership in SCWFO is open to OGS members who descend from someone who served in the Civil War (Union or Confederate) and who was born, lived, served, or died in Ohio, or who served in an Ohio unit. For example, a man who served in the 4th West Virginia Infantry is eligible if he ever lived in Ohio. A man who lived his entire life in Indiana is eligible if he served in an Ohio unit. SCWFO membership can also be attained through descent from a sibling of such a person.

The deadline for each of the OGS lineage societies is 31 December for induction at the next year's annual conference. If you are interested in joining one of these societies, now is an excellent time to begin working on your application.

Getting Started

You may want to start a file folder to gather photocopies of all your documentation. Do not send original documents or your only copy – only send things you can part with. Your application, complete with all of its documentation, becomes the property of OGS for preservation purposes.

Some confusion surrounds what constitutes an acceptable copy. Plain photocopies are perfectly fine to submit with your application. The only copies that must be “certified copies” are those from documents that cannot be photocopied. For example, if a probate court will not make a photocopy of a marriage record because the book is too fragile to handle, the “copy” the court gives you must be certified.

An additional word about copies – please have all copies on 8.5” x 11” or 8.5” x 14” paper. Larger paper is very hard to work with and smaller paper is easy to lose.

As you are filling out your application form, work from your documents rather than from family group sheets or ancestor charts. Not only will this help eliminate carrying through typographical errors from when it was entered into the genealogy software, but it forces one more look at each document. If it isn't on the document, don't include it on the application. If all of the documentation states the ancestor was born in Ohio, put

The image shows a form titled "Settlers and Builders of Ohio Application". At the top, it says "Settlers and Builders of Ohio Application". Below the title, there is a section for "Name of Applicant" with fields for "First Name", "Last Name", and "Middle Name". There is also a section for "Address" with fields for "Street", "City", "State", and "Zip". Below that, there is a section for "Date of Birth" and "Date of Application". The form also includes a section for "Ancestor Information" with columns for "Name of Ancestor", "Date of Birth", "Date of Death", and "Place of Birth". There are several checkboxes and text boxes throughout the form, and a section at the bottom for "Signature" and "Date".

Example of the Settlers and Builders of Ohio Application form.

“Ohio” on the application, rather than “Fearing Township, Washington County, Ohio.”

What You Need to Prove

The heart of any lineage society is proving descent from a qualifying ancestor. This means that each step from one generation to another needs to be proven – including proving yourself to your parents.

It is not possible to list all of the things that can and cannot be used to prove relationships. The rule to keep in mind is that the document *must actually state* what it is you are trying to prove.

Original records created at or near the time of the event, such as civil or church birth records, are best. Be certain to review the rules of evidence for each society for what is and is not considered acceptable proof.

An example of something that is not acceptable is an undocumented family history written long after anyone would have had firsthand knowledge of the people and events involved. This includes pages printed from a genealogy web site and family group sheets.

Common Mistakes

A common mistake is submitting pre-1880 censuses to prove relationships. Censuses before 1880 did not state relationships. Remember the rule – the document *must actually state* what it is you

are trying to prove. Minors living in a household are not necessarily the children of the adults living there.

Another common mistake made by applicants is pruning half of the family tree. Both people in each generation need to be documented. This includes the females.

Citing Sources

Committee members for all three lineage societies are well aware of the fact that Ohio did not require civil birth or death records until 1867. This does not mean it is impossible to document pre-1867 birth and death dates. Tombstones, church records, estate records, guardianship files, and pension papers are just some of the sources that can be used. At the very least, an estimate can be based on the census, such as "born circa 1847 per the 1850 through 1870 census" or "died after 1860 per the 1860 census."

This is one thing all of your documentation must have in common – source citations. Either in the margin or on the back of the photocopy, include the source citation, such as "Fairfield County, Ohio, marriage book 5, page 174."

Making It Easier on Yourself

Compiling a lineage society application can be time consuming. There are several ways you can make the process easier on yourself.

Consolidate proofs so you send only one copy of a needed item. If you are proving two lines – for example, one from your great-grandfather and the other from your great-grandmother – you need send only one set of proofs for the generations those lines have in common. (Including an ancestor chart in your application is helpful in such cases.)

If you and a sibling are applying, only one of you needs to send in the complete documentation. The other one can send his or her documentation showing he or she is a child of the same parents. (Your lineage society committees would appreciate a note stating there are siblings applying together, as sometimes applications become separated from each other.)

With the exception of using a run of the census to establish pre-1821 or pre-

The rule ...is that the document *must actually state* what it is you are trying to prove.

1861 birth in Ohio, it is very rare that it is necessary to include every census an ancestor appeared in. Also, there is no need to send a copy of a published census abstract and a copy of the actual census. The copy of the actual census is sufficient. (The copy of the actual census is preferred because abstractions do not contain all of the information and every step away from the original increases the chance for error.)

If one document proves several different facts, there is no need to copy it multiple times. For example, a page from a book of cemetery readings may show dates for more than one person on the application. It is not necessary to include a separate copy for each ancestor.

Microfilming the Application

After an application is accepted, it is microfilmed. This means all staples and paper clips must first be removed. If each page contains a source citation, there is no need for staples or paper clips. (Please – save your OGS volunteers hours of extra work and leave the staples and paper clips in the desk drawer!)

Microfilming brings up two other ways you can make the application process easier on yourself – avoiding notebooks and highlighters. Applications cannot be microfilmed (or even stored safely and easily) while bound in notebooks. Although notebooks can make a visually pleasing presentation, the lineage society committees must remove all papers from binders, notebooks, and individual plastic sleeves, which slows down the review process. The important part of the application is the documentation, not the notebook.

Highlighters may seem like a genealogist's best friend, but they are in-

sidious for preservation purposes. Some highlighters do not photocopy or microfilm well. There are several myths surrounding highlighters, such as "pink ones are okay to use." It depends upon the brand of highlighter, the color, the opacity, and even the paper. Be safe – don't use them. What you highlight may end up as a black bar on microfilm, obscuring the very information you wanted to show.

If you have a long document and want to draw attention to a particular part, use a red pen or pencil and draw an arrow, dot or bracket in the margin. This is just as effective, and does not hinder microfilming or photocopying.

Another way to make the application process easier on yourself is by starting early and turning in your application long before the 31 December deadline. This will allow you more time to obtain additional documentation if it is needed.

Help is Here for the Asking

All three lineage society committees want to help as many people as possible honor their Ohio ancestors. We are happy to answer questions from applicants and potential applicants. While it is nearly impossible by e-mail or by letter to say whether a specific piece of documentation is sufficient, we do our best to provide guidance in the application process. You can direct questions via e-mail to Amy Johnson Crow (for FFO) at amy@amyjohnsoncrow.com, Sunda Peters (for SBO) at sunda@prodigy.net, and Jocelyn Wilms (for SCWFO) at treeseek@zoominternet.net.

On behalf of the FFO, SBO, and SCWFO committees, I would like to say thank you for your interest in the OGS lineage societies and we look forward to receiving your applications.

Thanks go to Sunda Peters, Jocelyn Wilms, and Kay Hudson for their assistance with this article. **OGN**

Amy Johnson Crow is a certified genealogist, lecturer, writer, 3rd vice president on the OGS Board of Trustees and chair for the First Families of Ohio