Tips from the Registrar General

(Summer 2026)

When you are collecting documents for an application (not only for ADEAW but for most lineage societies), there are certain things your should look for.

1. The best way to get started in documenting your lineage is to start with what you know. Whether with a piece of paper or on the computer start with Generation 1 - YOU. Put in your full name, date of birth and place of birth. This information should match your Birth Certificate (BC). If you are married, add the information about your marriage date and place from your Marriage Certificate (MC) or Marriage License (M Lic). Include your Husband's BC and if deceased his Death Certificate (DC). If divorced include sufficient paperwork to document your current surname.

   Next, go to Generation 2. Start with your father's information and then your mother's information (father comes first as you share a surname). Include BC, MC, and DC as appropriate. Keep doing this for each generation till you get to the accused witch ancestor.

   Remember the most important thing is to prove your lineage from generation to generation. The "proof" is found in one of these vital records or other acceptable documentation.

2. You must provide proof (vital record, census, Bible record, obituary, tombstone picture, etc.) for each stated date and place of birth, marriage, and death. Remember that documents must be included for each person in the generation (dad and mom), regardless of which side the line goes through. If you only have proof of a year for the event, only use that. If you only have the county or the state for an event, only use that. If only the month or year is given only include that information. If different records have conflicting information, use the information from the official (church, government) record closest to the date of the event.

3. For at least the first three generations (you, parents, and grandparents), government issued documents are preferred. However, if you have a complete obituary (with full birth & death dates and places, and parents and children being included in the write up) that will suffice. If you have a death certificate for the people in these and even

earlier generations, but they were born before birth records were required, the death certificate can be used for birthdate and place and parents (if included).

4. If the document, Bible record, headstone image, etc. that you are sending as proof is difficult to read, please provide a transcript (especially if it is faded or a blurry copy (sometimes records weren't checked as they were microfilmed)) of the pertinent information and / or an enlargement. I am competent at deciphering 17th, 18th and 19th century writing, but do not have Superman's X-ray vision powers!

5. Copies of the actual record have to be submitted. An index page for a document will not be sufficient by itself. Example: If you use the 1880 census for a document and it is hard to read, you can include the transcription page, but you must also send the original.

6. When using Find A Grave photo as your proof, please include the Memorial # and the name and location of the cemetery. Memorials are not acceptable as proof if there is no tombstone or if the stone is illegible. A headstone photograph with full death date and full birth date or full death date and age at death is acceptable. Memorials where the stone is illegible can only be used if citations are provided for the information (for example, transcription of headstone information or burial record from church or cemetery). If there is an obituary or death notice within the memorial, you can use those but **ONLY IF** there is a citation on which paper, with date, it was originally printed in.

7. Only use a family genealogy or town history when a vital record, church record, probate record, headstone image, etc. is not available. Whenever possible use a primary source. Town record books (i.e. Vital Records of _____ Massachusetts to 1849) are considered primary sources and can be found on sites like Ancestry and Family Search. Make sure you include the title page and page number in the Proof line on the application.

8. It is often difficult to read a record for many reasons (e.g., 18th century handwriting, documents in poor condition), make sure that the dates, places, and/or names are correct. If the dates or places do not make sense within the context of the rest of the proof, then verify the information with another record or by looking at the entire document. For example, in an application a 3 was written rather than the correct 8 for a year. Upon closer examination the date in the entry before and after the entry

made it clear the last number was an 8. The woman would have been under 13 at the time of her marriage and given the timeframe that was unlikely.

9. ADEAW instructions state that we do not return proofs, so please do not include original documents. After your application has been reviewed and approved the proofs are shredded. Your approved application is scanned and the original filed. If your application is reviewed and additional information is requested, the package is filed until the necessary information is received. Checks are not deposited until after an application is approved. If your application is reviewed and your lineage not approved, your application, check, and proofs are shredded.

10. When researching your lineage, it is easy to grab the first piece of information as fact (e.g., date, place, name) and accept it. Be cautious of doing this. Many of the records are transcriptions or abstractions, not the original record and may have errors. Also, there are often several people with the same name, in the same place, and about the right age as your ancestor. How do you know you have the correct person? Town histories and genealogies are often filled with errors, they are written based on what is available at the time they were written. They rarely include citations, so the information needs to be compared to more reliable records (e.g., birth, marriage, death). Genealogical principles require us to conduct "a reasonably exhaustive search." That includes gathering every available record, assessing each record, comparing to other records, and eliminating conflicting or contradictory information. We all have researched the wrong person or line thinking they are ours.

11. ADEAW **does not** take other lineage groups' applications as documentation but the documents that were included in those applications can be used… you must submit copies of those documents with your ADEAW application. Similarly, books published of members of another group (for example the DAR Lineage Books, Signers of the Declaration of New Jersey, etc.) cannot be used. These are transcriptions of applications and do not contain the documentation used for proving the lineage.

Completing the Application

1. Applications **MUST be typed**. We now have a fillable PDF version of the application that will make this easier for everyone (especially those who work on Macs). Use the TAB key rather than RETURN when entering information and going from one field to another. Print on regular 8 ½" x 11" copy paper. Please try and print them back-to-back so that the 4 pages of the applications are on 2 sheets of paper. This helps with space issues for our records storage.

2. Type in only what is on the document you are using for proof… If there is no city listed, but just the county and state, only include that info (even if you know what town they were born or died in). Same goes for a certificate that only lists the city and state. Don't include the county. If all three are included on the document, please include all three on the application.

3. If the name only gives a middle initial (i.e. Charles R. Sackett) don't add the full name (even though you know his middle name is Raymond). Type only what is on the document. Initials are allowed on the lineage pages, but full names must be given on page 1. If one document has an initial, and another gives the full name, include both documents to show the full name.

4. DO NOT put UNK or Unknown if you do not know a date or a place. **Please leave blank.**

5. In a generation if someone is living DO NOT put Living in the place to put death information. **Please leave blank**.

6. When typing the date, use the following format: 17 Nov 1867. For a single digit date, type as 4 Jun 1764, NOT 04 Jun 1764.

7. If a member of your family (mother, grandmother, sister, aunt or close cousin is already a member, you may use her application as your proof for common generations. Fill out the lineage as is listed on the original application, making sure you include any changes by the Registrar General. In the proof section for a generation add, for example, "Application of Jane Doe Smith #3000", on each generation for which you are using the original proof. If new information is being provided indicate this by saying NEW INFORMATION then what is being added (i.e. DC).

8. You do not need to submit a copy of the original application. The Registrar General has access to a copy in the Society files. The Registrar General will NOT research old applications and send you one to use. You must have a copy in your possession obtained from the original applicant.

9. While other lineage groups have online databases to search people included in older applications, ADEAW does not. If requesting that the Registrar General look to see if a line has been used, remember that this will take quite a bit of time as it has to be done manually (especially when the accused "witch" has many descendant members). Please limit the request to the child and grandchild generations.

10. PLEASE underline pertinent information on each document in RED. This will make it easier for the Registrar General to locate and verify what is on the document and match it to the application. Add the generation number to the top of the page with a citation where the document is from. Example: On a Birth Certificate or Birth Record, underline the name of the child, parents of the child, date of birth and place of birth. Then put Gen # ____ at the top right on the front, and the citation: Birth Record (or BR), WV Digital Archive, wvculture.org / MA US Birth Recs 1620-1988, Ancestry / Essex Co MA Births 1665-1871 (name of town), Family Search. This citation then also goes on the application.

11. In the Proof section of the application, since space is limited, you will need to use common abbreviations such as BC (birth certificate), DC (death certificate), MC (marriage certificate), bpt rec (baptismal record), and such (see page common abbreviations page below). You do not need to state who the proof is for. If you have additional notes for the reviewer, do not include on the application form. Provide a separate page and include with the proofs with generation indicated or note on the proof document. If all proofs don't fit on the proof lines on the application, use a separate sheet and indicate which generation they go with. This will be added to your application in our records.

12. Send one (1) copy of each proof. If a proof is more than one page, please indicate clearly (p. 1 of 3). If a document is used for more than one generation, it is not necessary to submit it for each generation. At the top of the document, write for example, Gens. 4,5,6, and put the document with the most recent generation. But make sure to include the citation in the other generations as well. If using the Vital Records of _____ Massachusetts to 1849, for example, you only need to send a single title page for each town. Just let the Registrar General know which generations it is used for, then put those generations on the page they are located

on. Provide only one proof for a fact on your application, unless a second proof provides additional information required to prove that date or place or relationship. For proofs from a book (e.g., Family Bible, genealogy, town history) include the title page including the date of publication.

13. If your ancestor has already been proven (i.e., their name is on the current ADEAW Ancestor List shown on the ADEAW website), it is not necessary to provide proof of his / her accusation. Just state on the first page in the section for accusation (ADEAW Ancestor List, Nov 2022, or if you have a copy of ADEAW Roll of Ancestors 2nd edition (2022), you may cite that with the page number of your ancestor – check with the Registrar General if you have questions).
14. Put only one ancestor on page 1, even though you may have several (including some husband/wife ancestors who were accused together), each ancestor has to have their own application. You can submit a supplemental for the other spouse if you wish.
15. Make sure you write the check or money order out to "ADEAW" for the correct amount. Currently the fees are $50 for the application fee and $150 for the Life Membership, for a total of $200. You have one year to complete the application from the time the invitation is sent by the President General. ADEAW does not have ways to send the fees electronically at the present time.
16. When you are ready to send the application packet in, please email the Registrar General at the address on the instruction sheet, so she knows it is on the way. Please also send via a service it (USPS, FedEx or UPS) that you can track the package (especially as it contains documents and a large check).

When preparing the packet to mail Please remember the following:

Don't use staples, tape or sleeve to keep generations together. If needed, use a sheet of paper, a folded post-it note, or paper clip to keep each generation separate from the next. Checks may be paper clipped to the application (or put in an envelope added to the packet).

➢ Include signed Check for correct amount
➢ Include your Complete Zip Code + four

Also, please don't forget to add how you want your certificate to read on page 1.

Common Abbreviations for Lineage and Proof / Reference Lines

c.	circa (about)
a.	ante (before)
p.	post (after)
bur.	buried
BC	Birth Certificates
BR	Birth Record
Bapt	Baptismal Record
MC	Marriage Certificate
MR	Marriage Record
M Lic	Marriage License
DC	Death Certificate
DR	Death Record
Obit	Obituary (include name of paper, date of paper, page & column numbers, and where you found it, i.e. Newspapers.com, Genealogybank, NewspaperArchive, etc.)
TS photo	Tombstone Photo -- if Find a Grave, include Memorial # If personal photo, state personal TS photo
Probate	Wills, Administrations (include the citation)

Census Records (examples)

1880c Town, County, State (US Federal Census)
1855 MAS cen Town, County, State (Massachusetts State Census)
1892 NYS cen Town, County, State (New York State Census)

Bible Rec	Bible Record
Fam Rec	Family Record (use for scrapbook, letters, funeral card, etc.)

Remember, on the document itself, please write what the document is and where you found it, along with the generation at the top:

Examples:

MA US Town Clerk Recs & VR's 1620-1988, Ancestry: (Town name) Gen 5

Essex Co MA Wills & Probates 1710-1810, FHL # (film number) image ___ of ____
or v. ___ p. ____ Gen 10