Pennsylvania Ancestors Lineage Society (PALS)
The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania (GSP)
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PALS Policies and Procedures FAQs

The following FAQs provide information about application policies, procedures, and documentation requirements. For additional questions, please contact Pals@genpa.org.

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PALS and GSP Membership:

1. **Do I have to renew my PALS membership every year?** *No. Once your application is approved, you and your ancestor become a permanent part of PALS. However, you must be a member of GSP when your application is submitted. For applications submitted after 1 Jan 2026, you must also be a member of GSP when your certificate of approval is signed by the President of the Genealogical Society of PA.*

2. **I am a current member and want to complete an application for my children and grandchildren. Do they also need to be members of GSP?** *Yes, according to the program rules, they do.*

Identifying Qualifying Ancestors

3. **May I name more than one ancestor on a single application?** *Yes, you may identify up to three ancestors for recognition on one application as long as each one is part of the direct line between the applicant and the earliest ancestor named and they all fall into the same time period. An application may name as qualifying ancestors, for example, the qualifying ancestor, his child, and his grandchild. From the sample application:*

   John Jones 1825 Montgomery Co., PA
   Elizabeth Madison 1828 Philadelphia Co., PA
   James Madison 1800 Montgomery Co., PA

4. **Does the FAQ statement that three generations "must fall into the same time period" mean that, if the generations fall into two separate PALS categories, a separate application is required?** *Not necessarily a separate application, but an additional fee is required. Let's say you want to honor your ancestors in the same lineage in the First Families time period and in the Keystone Pennsylvanians period. You could submit one application with the complete lineage and documentation. But you would need to submit the $75.00 fee for both time periods for a total of $150.00.*

5. **Can I add the qualifying ancestor's spouse in the same application, similar to how one would add a second or third generation (as they are part of the same family unit) or must a second application be submitted?** *This depends. If the spouse is the biological parent of the child through whom the lineage ascends, then yes, the spouse can be added. However, it is necessary to prove that the spouse is actually the mother or father of the child. For example, just because a woman's tombstone has the words "wife of X" does not mean the woman is the mother of any of his children. You can also name both the mother and father as qualifying ancestors at any point in the lineage. For example, let's say you have documented the lineage back through Henry Wertman to his father Michael Wertman and then to Michael's father George Philip Wertman. There is nothing to prove the mother of Michael Wertman. But you can prove that Henry Wertman's mother and Michael Wertman's wife was Catharine Flack. Therefore, George Philip Wertman (1720-1781), Michael Wertman (1742-1817), and Catharine Flack (1742-1815) all qualify for the First Families time period because all three are documented in Berks Co., PA before 1790 and all three are in the direct lineage. All three of their names could be on your certificate and you would receive the PALS – First Families pin shown on the right.*

6. **Do the ancestors named on my certificate have to be a direct, unbroken line in PA? My ancestors lived in PA, moved to New Jersey where their children were born, and then had a grandson move to PA. Can I name the parents and the grandson on one certificate?** *As long as all ancestors are in the same ancestral line and time period and were documented as residents of PA, it is possible to skip a generation and have the names on the same certificate*.

7. **Does my qualifying ancestor have to be my earliest ancestor in PA?** *No, you can name any of your PA ancestors as your qualifying ancestor. In fact, you could begin by submitting an application for your most recent ancestor who resided in PA and then submit additional applications for individuals in PA father back in your lineage.*

8. **If my ancestor appears in the Ancestor Index, do I have to submit documentation for the generations I share with the verified application?** *Generally, you do not have to submit documentation for the generations that you have in common when you share a lineage with a previously verified ancestor. However, acceptance also depends on whether the existing documentation meets current genealogical standards for documenting a lineage.*

   For the source of information on the application form for any generations that were previously approved, simply write App. (the name of the applicant): (name of the ancestor on the approved application). For example, if you are using the information on the application of your cousin Louise Bachman for your common ancestor Benjamin

Bashore, in the source column for the shared part of your lineage you would write: App. Bachman: Bashore. For more information, contact the PALS office at pals@genpa.org

9. **A close relative has already had our joint lineage approved for PALS or the previous First Families program. Do I have to complete the entire application form?** *You may use the documentation from a previously submitted application. However, you must submit a completed application form that shows the descent from the ancestor to yourself. You would need to submit documentation only for the generations that differ from your relative's lineage. However, acceptance depends on whether the existing documentation meets current genealogical standards for documenting a lineage. See FAQ #7 for additional information.*

10. **I know my ancestor was in Pennsylvania by 1732. Why isn't his name on the PALS list?** *The only names on the PALS list are those for approved applications to First Families of Pennsylvania (previous program name) or to PALS. Apply to PALS to have your ancestor's name added to the list.*

11. **I'm of African American descent, so I can't document my family back far enough to join PALS, right?** *Of course, you may be able to join! Remember that there are 4 time periods for membership in PALS. While African Americans have a rich heritage in all four time periods, it may be easiest to locate your ancestors in the more recent Pennsylvania Proud period which runs from 1866 until 1900, or Centennial Pennsylvanians which runs from 1901 until 100 years before the date of the application.*

    However, there are a number of excellent records available for both enslaved and free people of color in Pennsylvania going back into the 1700s. One early example is the 1772-1790 papers of manumissions from the Quaker Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting. Explore the Family History Resources – African American (under Public Resources and Collections) on the GSP website for links to these manumissions and a wide variety of resources to help you in your research.

Time Periods

12. **Can I select the dates that I use for my ancestor on my application? I'd like to get the Centennial Pennsylvanian pin. My grandfather was born in PA in 1864 but he was on the 1910 Census in PA. Can I use the 1910 date?** *The application form clearly states: "date of earliest known residence in Pennsylvania." Therefore, an applicant cannot pick a later time period if the ancestor was documented in PA before the dates of that time period. All PALS reviewers must use the earliest date of residence as shown in the submitted documentation even if those dates differ from the dates written by the applicant on the application.*

13. **What's the cut-off year for joining PALS? My ancestors came in 1923.** *The cut-off date for eligibility for Centennial Pennsylvanians is a moving date of 100 years before the date of your application. Your ancestors who came in 1923 are eligible and you could receive the Centennial Pennsylvanians certificate and pin.*

Completing the Application

14. **On the Direct Ancestor Lineage Chart, what do you mean by "Document to link to the next ancestor in lineage"?** *The Direct Ancestor Lineage Chart is an **optional** form that many applicants find helpful. The link between the generations is the document that you use to prove the relationship between the two generations. For example, the link may be the birth certificate of Herman Smith showing that Peter Smith and Elizabeth, maiden name Jones, are his parents. It is up to you whether you complete the Direct Ancestor Lineage Chart and submit it.*

15. **What should I do if I can't find exact dates?** *Sometimes you will not be able to locate an exact date for event but you may be able to locate records to give you an approximate date. For example, Joseph Schlough appears in the 1850 census but not in the 1860 or 1870 census, and you've checked to see that he hasn't just moved to another location or that his name wasn't misspelled in the census. It is reasonable to assume that Joseph died before 1860 or between 1850 and 1860. In another example, letters of administration for the estate of Jacob Resch were granted on 21 Sep 1764. Thus, you know that Jacob died before 21 Sep 1764 because a will is only probated after a person dies.*

    Some simple abbreviations to use with dates are:

    Abt. = About a given date
    Bef. = Before a given date
    Aft. = After a given date
    Bet. = Between two dates

Submitting an Application

16. **May I submit my application via email or online.**
    Since application forms must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation, they would be too large to submit by email. Currently all applications must be submitted by mail.

    However, we now have a pilot program to provide for the paperless submission of application materials. Contact PALS at: pals@genpa.org *for additional information about paperless submissions to see if you qualify.*

17. **I think I have all of the documents that I need to apply to PALS. Can you look it over before I apply and give me feedback?** *Currently, there is not a preliminary review process for PALS. However, once the actual review process begins, reviewers do provide feedback about any additional materials that may be required and may suggest places to look for information.*

Submitting Additional Materials

18. **What happens if I need to submit additional materials? How long do I have?** *You may continue to add documentation to your application as long as it is active. Applications that are more than two years old from the date of receipt at GSP are considered inactive. If, at a later date, additional information becomes available to document the application, you may resubmit the application with the additional documentation. You must be a member of GSP at that time and must pay the application fee in effect at that time.*

    If PALS has reviewed your application and notified you of any problems in a timely manner (no more than 45 days from the date the application was scanned at GSP), and acceptable documentation to prove the lineage is submitted within the 2 year time limit, for applications submitted after 1 Jan 2026, you must be a current member of GSP at the time that the PALS certificate is signed by the GSP president.

19. **May I submit any additional materials that are requested by email?** *This depends. A single document may be submitted as a pdf. However, if more than one document is necessary, the copies should be sent by mail to the address on the application form. Exceptions are made for individuals in the pilot paperless submission program.*

Supplemental Applications

20. **May I submit more than one application?** *Yes, you may submit as many applications as you wish. A nonrefundable application fee of $75 must be submitted with each individual application. However, before submitting several applications at the same time, it is recommended that you submit one or two, have them reviewed and verified, and then submit applications for additional ancestors. This can eliminate problems if questions arise about the documentation of a lineage.*

21. **If an additional generation is added after the original application is approved, is another complete application with documentation and fee required?** *Once the application has been approved, adding another generation would require an additional application and fee. But the only documentation that would be needed would be for the new generation(s) and the link between the previously approved generation and the new one(s). You would reference the previous application when submitting the new one. See FAQ #8 for more information.*

22. **Must the same documentation be resubmitted with each application if it is the same family line?** *There is no need to resubmit documentation. You just need to reference the previously approved application. Remember, however, that documentation for a previously approved application must meet current genealogical standards. See FAQ #8 for information on how to cite a previous application.*

Verified Applications

23. **What will happen to my completed application form?** *Approved and incomplete physical applications are kept in a secure area at the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania which is accessed only by staff going through 2 locked doors. Newly received applications which are under review are kept in a locked drawer in a locked staff office. All applications are scanned as they are received. Reviewers have access only to this scanned copy of the application which is in a secure folder on a file sharing site. Access to that site is secure and limited to only essential individuals.*

    GSP plans to preserve the complete application and supporting materials in digital form as part of its mission to preserve genealogical materials. An index to applications (excluding individuals in the first 3 generations or those, in earlier generations, who are still alive) is part of the plan for the future on the GSP web site and scanned applications (following the same restrictions) may appear in the Members Only portion of the web site in the future as access and copyright issues are resolved.

    Although members may request a copy of a verified application, the requester is sent a redacted application excluding information on individuals in the first 3 generations or those, in earlier generations, who are still alive.

24. **How are the submitted applications kept?** *To maintain security and privacy, all applications are kept in locked storage in a locked area of GSP that is not open to the public. Reviewers do not have personal copies of any of the application materials.*

Adoptions

25. **What about adopted children?** *The PALS program is only open to those who can prove blood line (biological) descent from the claimed ancestor.*

DNA Evidence

26. **Can I use my autosomal DNA matches to prove my lineage for PALS?** *PALS has established guidelines and developed analysis forms to ensure the responsible use of autosomal atDNA testing in the documentation and analysis of family relationships within the first four generations of a lineage: the applicant, their parents, grandparents,*

and great-grandparents. The goals are to ensure accuracy in proving a lineage, protect the privacy of all participants, and maintain professional integrity in genealogical research involving genetic evidence. Applicants to PALS who intend to use autosomal DNA evidence should review the "Ethics and Standards" of the Board for Certification of Genealogists" regarding the protection of people who provide DNA samples at: Ethics and Standards - Board for Certification of Genealogists. Anyone who is thinking about using autosomal DNA evidence for a PALS Application should request a copy of the PALS Guidelines for the Use of Autosomal DNA in the First Four Generations of a PALS Application and the detailed PALS Autosomal DNA Evidence Analysis form by emailing Pals@genpa.org.

Requesting Research Assistance

27. **I'd like to join PALS. I have a family tree that my uncle completed. Could you provide the information to document that?** *PALS cannot do the actual research for individuals who wish to join PALS. That would be a conflict of interest because we will be reviewing your application. You can read the Research Guide on Documentation or these FAQs for more information about the documentation that is required. In addition to the resources at the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, there are a number on online resources as well as bricks and mortar places like public libraries, courthouses, and historical societies that can help you in your search. You can also contact a genealogist from the list maintained by organizations such as the Board for Certification of Professional Genealogists or the Association of Professional Genealogists*.

28. **I don't know much about the county that my ancestors lived in so I don't know where to find the records or even if records exist. What should I do?** If the location is in Pennsylvania, begin by checking the resources on the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania website. You will find maps, repository guides for individual counties, and a wide variety of links to sites with information about PA. The members only section of the website has resources including access to the 16 volume John T. Humphrey collection of Pennsylvania birth records taken from early church records.
For other states, use the Search tab on FamilySearch.org to locate the Research Wiki for the location. Typing the name of the state on the FamilySearch Research Wiki homepage should take you to a map of the state. Just click on the county you are interested in searching to find complete information on the types of records that exist and where to find them. The Research Wiki will even tell you if there is any known record loss at the county courthouse.

    Don't forget to check the websites of any libraries or historical/genealogical societies in that location. Groups such as Random Acts of Genealogy Kindness have volunteers who can often assist you. Check out local history and genealogy groups on Facebook.

29. **I just can't find the information I need. It's not out there! What should I do?**

Sometimes genealogy researchers hit what's called a "brickwall." Unfortunately, the farther back we go, the more difficult it can be to locate records to support our research. Sometimes, we just have to admit that we've reached the end of the line, at least for the present time. But remember that new information can be found, a family Bible can be located, or a long-lost church book may materialize in an attic. So never give up the search!

In other cases, genealogists write an analysis, proof summary, or proof argument . This is a more advanced research strategy in which you need to use multiple documents and all three types of evidence to reach a conclusion when there is no direct evidence, especially of a parent-child relationship or when there is conflicting information such as several people with the same name in the same location at the same time. You start with a research question or a statement that you are trying to prove; indicate all the sources you've consulted without finding the information; list the sources that you are using to answer your research question; analyze and interpret all of the information that you found in a logical order; and explain your conclusion. But before you begin writing one of these, be sure that you have done a "reasonably exhaustive search" for the information that you need.

For more information on genealogical proof, consult:

- Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. National Genealogical Society, Arlington, VA, 2013.
- Jones, Thomas W. "Proof Arguments," Chapter 20, pp. 477-479 in *Professional Genealogy Preparation, Practice & Standards*. Elizabeth Shown Mills, ed. Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD, 2018.
- Little, Barbara Vines. "It's not that hard to write proof arguments," *OnBoard* 15 (Sept 2009), 20-23. Online at: gcgcertification.org/skillbulding-its-not-that-hard-to-write-proof-arguments
- Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "QuickLesson17: The Evidence Analysis Process Map." Online at www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-17-evidence-analysis-process-map
- Norris, Michelle. "Proof Summaries." *Vita Brevis"* 17 Jul 2019. Online at vitabrevis.americanancestore.org/2019/07/proof-summaries
- Rose, Christine. *Genealogical Proof Standard; Building a solid case*. 4th ed. Rec. CR Publications, San Jose, CA, 2014.

Also, don't forget to check out the many face-to-face as well as online genealogy courses, webinars, and lectures. GSP has a number of their Third Thursday webinars available on the members' website. There is often a PALS breakout room on the GSP Gatherings Zoom held on the 15th of most months for GSP members. Also FamilySearch.org offers free 20 minute online research consultations in their Help Center.

Documentation – General

30. **What are the best types of sources to use?** *Ideally, the information contained in government issued vital records for birth, death, and marriage; government records for wills, probate files, deeds, etc.; court records; and church records is considered reliable. Remember, you are looking for original sources and primary information whenever possible. See the PALS list of acceptable sources on the website.*

31. **Why aren't the family trees on websites such as Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, etc. acceptable sources?** *Many of the family trees found online are not documented. In other words, no one has checked the information contained in them for accuracy. That's not to say that they are incorrect and you should ignore them. Rather you should use the information that they contain as clues to do your own research and locate the sources that have information to construct your family tree*.

32. **I listed Ancestry as my source in a citation. Why isn't that acceptable?** *Using Ancestry.com to locate information is fine in many cases. But Ancestry like many of the online websites such as FamilySearch, MyHeritage, Newspapers.com, etc. is a collection of databases as well as user created family trees and databases made up of information from those user created trees. User created trees are not accepted but can be used as clue for research.*

    Looking only at the databases and excluding the user created trees and databases created from them, it is important to identify the specific source on Ancestry (or any other large online website) that the information came from. Evaluate that database the same way you would evaluate any source. Be sure to read the description of the database.

    Sometimes one database like the PA and NJ Church Records database contains information from a number of different sources. You need to cite the specific source and/or the database that you are using as well as the online website such as:

    Montour Co., PA. Wills. Vol 1, p. 887. In PA, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1683-1993, Ancestry.com, Image 513 of 519.

    Burials by A. P. Pfleuger, Zion Lutheran Church, Turbotville, Northumberland Co., PA, page 359. In PA and NJ, U.S. Church and Town Records, 1669-2013. Ancestry.com. Image 120 of 147.

33. **I know I'll have more questions about sources that I want to use. What should I do?** *Contact Pennsylvania Ancestors (PALS) using the email on the website. While we cannot do the research for you (it would be conflict of interest because we will be reviewing your application), we may be able to answer your question about possible sources. Sometimes, we can't answer a question without reviewing the documentation and that can come only after the application for PALS has been submitted.*

Documentation – Citing Your Sources

34. **What format should I use to cite the sources for my application? (NOTE: As of July, 2026, PALS has a new application form that changes the information on documentation.)**

For applications on the July 2026 Application form, the complete citation is placed in two places. One is on the document itself. The other is on the "Documentation Used as Proof In This Application" page at the end of the application. This allows you to reference the document number as you complete your application. Further instructions about numbering your documents are on that page.

For each document that you submit, you want to provide a complete citation. This citation will appear on the document (use the back of the page if necessary) and on the Documentation page at the end of the application.

Pennsylvania Ancestors does not require a specific bibliographic format for identifying the source of the information that you provide. The important thing to ask yourself is: Could another researcher easily find this source with this citation? For example, you should provide the author, title, publisher, place of publication and date of publication for published works as well as including a copy of the title page and the reverse of the title page if it includes the date of publication or copyright that is not on the front of the title page.

For government documents such as wills, deeds, and court records, include the county, state, type of record, volume, and page. If the information comes from an online source, include the online repository, the name of the database, film number if applicable and image number in addition to the specific source information such as: Montour Co., PA. Wills. Vol 1, p. 887. In PA, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1683-1993, Ancestry.com, Image 513 of 519.

There are several online sites that provide information on citing sources. One is the "Cite Your Sources" Research Wiki by FamilySearch.org (www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Cite_YourSources_(Source_Footnotes). Another excellent source for models of citations is the Evidence Explained website of Elizabeth Shown Mills (www.evidenceexplained.com) where she provides "sample Quick Check Models" for a variety of sources.

A final word of advice about citations. Try not to worry about the format. Remember, you want another researcher to be able to find the original item that you used.

Whether you use a comma or a semicolon is not as important as whether you include all the information that is needed.

Documentation – Vital Records

35. **I don't have a birth certificate for my grandmother but I have a family Bible record, death certificate, and another document instead of a birth record**. **Can I use them instead of a birth certificate?**
If you have an official death certificate that states the birth date and the parents, PALS accepts that without additional documentation. The only time PALS would require additional documentation would be if there was conflicting information in other sources. For example, if you have other documentation that proves the information on the death certificate is incorrect.

36. **I've seen things like the Pennsylvania Births and Christenings, 1709-1950 database on FamilySearch.org. Is that a reliable source?** *Whenever you are using a collection type of database, try to determine the source of the information contained in that database. If you look at the description of this database on FamilySearch, you will find the following: "As this is an index of records compiled from various sources,* ***it is strongly recommended that you verify any information you find with original records"*** *(bold in the original description). Some databases such as this one were compiled from user submitted information and pedigree charts without any checking of the accuracy of that information.*
A similar database on Ancestry.com is the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, U.S. Mennonite Vital Records, 1750-2014. Many of the records in that database are taken from undocumented family histories and pedigree charts. If you check the individual cards in that database (see the images on Ancestry), you should be able to determine the source of the specific information and locate that source to evaluate it.

Documentation – Indexes and Abstracts

37. **May I use an index or an abstract or should I find the original record?** *Whenever possible, find the original record. You may find that there is more information in an original record than in the abstract or in the index. Because some indexes rely on OCR (optical character recognition) or artificial intelligence, you may find that the computer confuses dates and "reads" the newsprint incorrectly. Ancestry even notes in the U.S. Obituary Collection, 1930-Current: "The facts in this collection were found using artificial intelligence technology and may contain errors." There's a great example of OCR picking up a military enlistment date for the birth date. If you have questions about a specific index, you can always contact Pennsylvania Ancestors .*

Documentation – Marriage Records

38. **What happens when I can't find a marriage record for some of my ancestors?**
While you should be able to locate a marriage record for more recent generations, there are other documents that you can use to replace a marriage record in the earlier

generations. And, if parentage is proven (i.e. in a birth or death certificate or baptismal record), a marriage certificate or marriage record is not required. PALS does not require proof of legitimacy. You are proving a biological lineage so you may not need an actual marriage document if you have other proof of parentage.

In some cases, you may need to provide several documents to establish when a couple married or was together and the maiden name of the mother. Death certificates of children often provide the maiden name of the mother. Searching online for "marriage record alternatives" should provide useful links. But remember, just because a woman is named in the will does not mean that she is the mother of any of the children.

The important thing is to ask yourself: "Does the lineage go back through the male or female?" If it goes back through the male line, it is not necessary to provide the maiden name of the female. If it goes through the female line, you must prove the maiden name and that this female is the mother of the specific child in your lineage.

Documentation – Census

39. **May I use early U.S. Federal census records to prove family connections in families when vital records do not exist?** *Before 1880, there is no relationship stated in the U.S. Federal Census. Before 1850, only the head of the household was listed. Therefore, census records before 1880 can only be used in conjunction with other records to establish relationships.*

Documentation – Bibles, letters, diaries

40. **What about using things like Bibles, or family letters and diaries?** *The record pages in a family Bible can be an excellent source as long as the information provided on them was current with the event or provided by someone who had firsthand knowledge of the event. For example, the information in a family record in a Bible that was published in 1875 would not be considered as proof for events that happened in the 1700s unless it can be shown that the person providing the information had direct knowledge of the events. Bible records are considered on a case-by-case basis.*

    To use Bible records as documentation, include a photographic copy of the handwritten pages as well as title page or other pages showing the date of publication of the Bible. Provide the history of the Bible chain of ownership if known. Transcriptions without copies of the original pages are not acceptable as the sole documentation of events and are strictly evaluated based on other supporting information submitted with the application.

    The same applies to family letters and diaries. The writer should have had firsthand knowledge of the events. For example, if Anna Hershey noted in her diary for 14 Apr

1835: "Brother Joseph and his wife Barbara had a baby yesterday and named her Mary," this could be used as documentation for the birth of Mary Hershey, daughter of Joseph Hershey and wife Barbara, on 13 Apr 1835.

Documentation – County Histories, Family Genealogies, etc.

41. **May I use county histories, family genealogies, family group sheets, pedigree charts, or other history books?**

    County histories: *In these, you may find a variety of types of information and no indication of the source of any of it. Usually, information (birth, marriage, parents) on people who are living at the time the book was published is accepted on a case-by-case basis when original records do not exist. For earlier generations, you can use the other information as clues for additional research in original documents.*

    Family Histories and Papers: *The big question to ask here is: "Is the information contained in these books or on these papers well documented?" If so, you should be able to locate the original documents to use in your application. A few books are so well documented and researched that the information is accepted without further research. However, when no documentation is included, family histories are not accepted. Family papers may be accepted if the source of the information is noted and acceptable. For example, the letter of a person who lived with their grandmother may contain acceptable information about the grandmother.*

    Don't ignore these books and papers. Use the information in them as clues for your own research. For example, knowing the possible name of a father may make it easier to locate a will, deed, or probate record showing a connection between a father and a child.

Documentation – Tombstones

42. **I found a complete biography on Find a Grave. May I use that?** *Find a Grave is excellent for locating pictures of tombstones. Sometimes there is even a scan or photo of an actual newspaper obituary attached to person's record. If you are lucky, the source for that newspaper clipping will be given so you can find the original.*

    Unfortunately, most of the biographies on Find a Grave and similar websites are not documented and thus are not acceptable sources for PALS. We do not know who provided the information and where they got that information. However, there may be clues on Find a Grave that will lead you to the original information. Transcriptions of newspaper obituaries on Find a Grave are not acceptable without a copy of the appropriate part of the original newspaper as well as the paper's name, location, and date.

43. **May I use a photograph of a tombstone to show birth and death dates?** *Absolutely! In the absence of other records such as government issued vital records, church records, obituaries, and probate records, tombstones can be very helpful. But remember that the stone should be an original marker placed at or near the time of death and not a modern replacement or one added by a family association. You should provide a clear picture of the stone as well as a transcription of the inscription on the marker. Be sure to include the name and location of the cemetery.*

    Find a Grave is an excellent source for pictures of tombstones. If you use a picture from Find a Grave, indicate that in your citation with the transcription, cemetery information, and memorial number if any.

Documentation – Transcriptions and Translations

44. ***Are translations of the early Pennsylvania German church records acceptable?*** *Yes! Rev. Frederick Weiser and other experts have published translations of many of the early Pennsylvania German church records. John Humphrey used these translations to publish a series of volumes on Pennsylvania births by county which are available online at the GSP website for members. The information in these translations and compilations can be used to prove a lineage. One caveat: Be sure that the translator has not added additional information or comments that do not appear in the original. To determine this, you should read the introduction and/or preface to the volume. Beware of information added in brackets in the translation.*

    While you are looking for the early church records, don't forget to look for the early Pennsylvania German birth and baptismal certificates known as Geburts und Taufschein. Like the current vital records, these are a wonderful resource. There are many published collections with translations as well as online collections available from several libraries and museums.

45. **I paid to have an early German newspaper article on the marriage of my ancestors translated. Can I use that?** *Yes, you can use the translation of foreign language documents including things like newspapers articles as long as the original item meets the requirements of PALS. Other examples are the early PA German frakturs, and Bible records. For each translation, you should include a copy of the original document, the translation signed by the translator, and a brief description of the qualifications of the translator. For specific questions about translations, contact PALS.*

Documentation from Another Lineage Society.

46. **I'm a member of another lineage society. Can I just send in a copy of my application and certificate for that society for approval in PALS?** *PALS does not accept "record*

copies" from other societies. Different societies have different standards for what is acceptable documentation and those standards may have changed over time. Even the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution will no longer accept some of the lineages found in their earlier applications and published in their lineage books such as the 1918 volume titled Lineage Book NSDAR because they do not meet the current standards for proof of a lineage.

In addition, the acceptance of derivative sources or authored narratives such as family genealogies or county histories varies from society to society. Thus, PALS does not accept a "record copy" or approved application from another lineage society. What this means is that you should use the other application and locate the actual documents that were submitted to that society. Evaluate those documents to see if they meet PALS's current standards for genealogical evidence, and, if they do, use them for your application.

Documentation – Residence

47. **My ancestor's name is on a list of ship arrivals for 1732. Can I use that date on my application for his first residence?** *"Landing" or arriving at a port in Pennsylvania is not residence. The date of residence must be established by an acceptable source such as a tax list, land record, will, court proceeding, military residence such as Valley Forge, church record, etc. To be considered for PALS, an individual had to be in Pennsylvania long enough to create at least one document proving residence.*

Documentation – Indirect Evidence and Analysis

48. **Could you explain about using indirect evidence?** *There are times when you do not find the exact information you need. When this happens, you should try to piece together the answer from a variety of sources. Here's a more detailed look at the example of fictional Elizabeth Wertman who is listed in the evidence chart in the PALS Guide to Documenting Your Ancestor. Read that Guide for more information.*

Let's say you are trying to place Elizabeth with her mother. The official PA Death Certificate for Elizabeth Wertman shows she was born in 1836 and died in 1907. In the space for maiden name of mother, the informant listed "don't know" and gave the father's name as Philip Wertman. There is no known marriage record for Philip Wertman. However, you can examine the rest of the names shown on the 1850 census with Philip Wertman. The 1850 census does not show relationships, but, using those names, you locate a PA Death Certificate for one of the people shown in the household. Born 1831 and died 1906, Esther Wertman's death certificate shows her mother as Maria Kroom and father as Philip Wertman. Turning to a local church book, you find a baptism record that contains the 1840 baptism of Catharina Wertman, daughter of Phillip and "Anna Maria born Croom." This shows Philip was married to Anna Maria

Croom/Kroom by at least 1831 and still married to her in 1840. Thus Elizabeth, born in 1836, was Anna Maria's daughter.

When using indirect evidence to link generations, you may need to use an analysis. PALS has a specific form that you can request to complete the analysis.

General Questions About PALS

49. **Why did First Families of PA change to PA Ancestors Lineage Society?** *The name of the program changed to better reflect the scope of the program and the four time periods. Before, people thought First Families was only for ancestors who came when PA was a colony and that their ancestors were not eligible because they arrived in PA in the 1900s or 1800s. In the new PALS program, each time period has a unique certificate and a unique pin for the specific period of a recognized ancestor. Samples of the new pins are found throughout these FAQs.*

50. **I'm a member of First Families of PA, the program that existed before PALS. Am I eligible for the PALS pin?** *As a member of the former First Families Program, you would be eligible to purchase the pin(s) and the certificate(s) for the appropriate time period for your recognized ancestor(s). For example, if your ancestor was approved for the former Pennsylvania Proud time period 1866-1900, you would be eligible to purchase the new certificate and the Pennsylvania Proud pin shown on the right. The PALS pin is reserved for individuals who have recognized ancestors in all four time periods. You must be a current member of GSP when you apply for any new pin(s) or certificates(s). Contact GSP for complete details and prices.*

Unanswered Questions

51. **I have questions that are not covered in these FAQs. What should I do?** *Email your specific question to* pals@genpa.org. We are here to help you.

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