

What is service?

The term *service* is commonly used by the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution to describe what an ancestor might have done during the American Revolution.

Typically, ancestors born between the 1710s – in their sixties at the start of the War – and 1766 – a teenager at the end of the War – fall within the right age to have “service.” Ancestors normally served where they lived.

The Daughters of the American Revolution identifies four types of “Qualifying Service.” These categories are also a helpful way to discuss sources and our ancestors’ likely behavior during the American Revolution.

They are:

- Signers of the Declaration of Independence
 - The National Archives has a list of signers at “Signers of the Declaration of Independence,” *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/signers-factsheet>).
- Military Service: Service in the Continental Army or Navy; state Navy; or state or local militia.
 - With rare exceptions, ancestors with this service were generally between the ages of 16 and their late 40s. Men in their 50s and 60s may have been called out for attacks but typically would not serve for extended period.
 - Landed men generally served in the militia and not the Continental Army. Continental Line enlistments were much longer - 3 years was common – which would have been difficult for farmers without help.
 - Men of color did serve. Some units were integrated.
- Civil Service: Holding an office in the American government on the local, state, or national level (which was considered treason, as it was open support of the Americans).
 - With rare exceptions, most office holders were white males between the ages of 30 and 70. Some were in their late 20s.
 - Office holding was tied to the ability to vote, which was determined by sex, race, and property holding.
- Patriotic Service: All other forms of public support for the cause.
 - Common examples:
 - Payment of taxes in support of the cause.
 - Donation of supplies.
 - Swearing an oath.
 - Preaching a sermon in support of the cause.
 - Patriotic service is not restricted by age, gender, or race. However, service should be reasonable for the ancestor’s profile. In most cases, a woman would not pay taxes nor would a child.

Is your ancestor's service – or lack of service – already documented?

- Some ancestors ended up supporting the British instead of the Americans. The reasons were complex, including strong ties to England or a belief that Independence may have been too far.
 - The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada hosts a "Loyalist Directory" at <https://uelac.ca/loyalist-directory/>. Information was provided by applicants and may not be sourced. The Loyalist Directory can provide hints as to how an ancestor may have supported the British side of the American Revolution.
- The Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution both maintain public databases indicating the sources of service for specific ancestors provided by their members. Keep in mind that older applications often do not meet standards of genealogical proof and may not be sourced.
 - For the Daughters of the American Revolution, go to <https://www.dar.org>, click on GRS, and use the "Ancestor" search. If a source of service is listed, the DAR already has information on that service on file. If needed, you can use the source information to locate a copy.
 - For the Sons of the American Revolution, go to <https://sarpatriots.sar.org/> and fill in the search information. Use the abbreviations under "sources" to locate an ancestor's service.

How do I document service?

Federal level sources:

- Military Service:
 - Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR): These index cards list the service of anyone who served on a federal level (Continental Army/Continental Navy) during the American Revolution. This information was transcribed from muster and other rolls. The cards have been digitized and are available on *Fold3*.
 - Pension files: These files include documentation of both militia and federal service as part of soldiers' attempts to file a pension. Not every soldier was eligible, so be sure to review pension laws closely. Pension files have been digitized and are available on *Fold3*.
- Civil Service:
 - "Journals of the Continental Congress," *The Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/century-of-lawmaking/articles-and-essays/continental-congress/journals-of-the-continental-congress/>).
 - "Continental Congress – Papers," *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/publication/63/us-continental-congress-papers-1774-1789>).

State level sources:

- Resource guides:
 - For a list of commonly reviewed sources by state, visit Debbie Duay, "Revolutionary War Service," *Learn Web Skills* (<http://learnwebskills.com/patriot/revservice.htm>)

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- The Daughters of the American Revolution offers a “Patriots of Color” database to share more about those who participated in the War and who have been identified as people of color. That database is available at “Patriots of Color,” *DAR* (https://services.dar.org/members/DAR_Research/search_poc/?Tab_ID=14&Tab_ID_Sub=8&Action=search).
- The Sons of the American Revolution hosts resource guides on Revolutionary War taxes that may be considered qualifying service due to funds being directed towards the Army or the War effort. To access the guides, go to “Revolutionary War Tax Research,” *SAR* (<https://www.sar.org/revolutionary-war-tax-research/>).

Do I have the right ancestor?

Ancestors typically served where they lived, so establishing your ancestor’s residence during the War can help confirm that the service you’ve located is theirs. Here are a few common ways to confirm service:

- Vital or church records may show that the ancestor married or had children during the War. (Use the *FamilySearch* catalog as a starting point for finding appropriate records.)
- Land records may show the purchase or sale of land. (Use the *FamilySearch* catalog as a starting point for finding appropriate records.)

May I join a lineage society?

Many of us have heard that we qualify for *DAR*, *SAR*, or another organization that decides membership based on the qualifications of an ancestor who lived during the American Revolution.

There are six societies that admit members based on their ancestor’s support of the American cause during the American Revolution. Each has their own definitions of qualifying service and their own requirements for membership. Visit their websites to learn more.

- The Daughters of the American Revolution: dar.org
- The Sons of the American Revolution: sar.org
- The Sons of the Revolution: sr1776.org
- The Children of the American Revolution: nscar.org
- The Society of the Cincinnati: societyofthecincinnati.org
- The Daughters of the Cincinnati: daughters1894.org

Be aware that an ancestor’s membership does not guarantee yours. Membership standards have changed dramatically in the last ten years.

How do I find more help with my research?

- If you’re interested in membership in the Sons of the American Revolution or the Daughters of the American Revolution, ask about research assistance. Both societies offer it.
- Reach out to local organizations, such as historical societies, to learn more about their public history projects. With the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution begun, many are launching new research projects and making new resources available.

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