

Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of Arizona
(aka the Arizona Mayflower Society)

What Documents Do I Need to Prove My Lineage?

General Society reviewers are looking for the best possible proof of the parent-child relationship linking each generation from the Pilgrim to yourself. The less paper used, the better, so look for “long-form” birth, marriage, and death certificates for *each* ancestor (and each marriage.) The best records are birth, marriage, and death certificates. These are known as “vital records.” If you have them you may need nothing else for that event. (“Long-form” means the document names the parents. Seeing the same parents on each record shows the ancestor was one-and-the-same person throughout.)

Not everyone lived in a place & time that issued vital records. There is a “pecking order” for substitutions allowed, *determined by the General Society, not the applicant.* “Second tier” documents are still contemporary, meaning made during the person’s own lifetime and with legal standing. They include:

- * Wills and probate records that indicate the parent-child relationship
- * Land records, transferring property and specifying relationships
- * Military pension files, which include vital records and witness

If none of the above exist – or the time and place of an event is yet unknown - the Historian may instruct you to look for “third tier” evidence. *They may lead to vital records that you would then send for.*

- * Histories of a family, town, or county
- * Censuses
- * Obituaries
- * Gravestone photos

You may note such items on your draft application if you believe no vital records exist, but *do not send third-tier documents to the Historian unless instructed to do so.*

You may be required to demonstrate that no vital record exists by showing *written proof* that you checked with the Clerk of the Town, County, or Court, or the state department of vital records. Such proof is sent to the General Society with the application. An email to the town, county, court, or state may be sufficient. *Phone calls are not written proof.*