



First Families of Titusville, Pennsylvania area

The First Families of the Titusville, Pennsylvania area is a lineage society dedicated to honoring the early residents of the Titusville, Pennsylvania, area and preserving the family history of their descendants.

Applications are due by 30 November to be considered for the year.

Please email the First Families of the Titusville Area Chair, Kathryn Newson, at titusvillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com if you have any questions about the application process or if you have submitted an application and would like an update.

Qualifications:

- ☐ The applicant must be a member of the Titusville Historical Society. Not a member? **Join now!**
- ☐ The First Family ancestor must have been a documented resident of the designated area by 31 December 1858.
- ☐ The applicant must provide proof of bloodline descent (birth, marriage, death, and relationship) for each generation to the First Family ancestor. See **Rules of Evidence** for more information.

First Families of Titusville area is for the following geographical areas:

- ☐ **Crawford County:**
 - City of Titusville
 - Borough of Centerville
 - Borough of Hydetown
 - Borough Spartansburg

- Borough of Townville
- Athens Township
- Oil Creek Township
- Rome Township
- Sparta Township
- Steuben Township
- Troy Township
- **Venango County:**
 - Borough of Pleasantville
 - Allegheny Township
 - Cherrytree Township
 - Oil Creek Township
 - Plum Township
- **Warren County:**
 - Borough of Enterprise
 - Grand Valley (unincorporated place in Eldred Twp.)
 - Eldred Township
 - Southwest Township

How to Apply

If you believe that your ancestor qualifies you for membership in First Families of Titusville, Pennsylvania area, please:

- Download and complete the **application** and assemble your documentation according to the **Rules of Evidence**.
- Include a non-refundable check made payable to the Titusville Historical Society in the amount of \$25 for an initial application or \$10 for a supplemental or immediate family member short form.
- Mail your completed application, documentation, and application fee to:

First Families of Titusville Area
Titusville Historical Society
P. O. Box 739
Titusville, PA 16354

Short- Form Application

A short-form application may be completed by an existing First Families of the Titusville, Pennsylvania area member for a supplemental application or by a direct family member of an existing First Family of the Titusville, Pennsylvania area member.

- ❑ A direct family is defined as: children, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt and uncle, and great aunt and great uncle. If your relationship falls into one of those categories, then you may use the short-form procedure.
- ❑ You must be a member of the Titusville Historical Society and you may submit a completed **application** form that describes the descent from the ancestor to yourself. However, you need to submit documentation only for the generations that differ from your relative in First Families of the Titusville, Pennsylvania area member's lineage.
- ❑ At the most recent generation that appears on both applications, you should note "See application of [name of relative], First Family of Titusville, Pennsylvania area."
- ❑ A non-refundable \$10 application fee must accompany your application.

Judging

Applications are evaluated according to our **Rules of Evidence**. You may be asked to provide additional documentation for an application, but there will be no extra fee for that documentation. Be sure to check out the additional **Tips for a Successful Application**.

Tips for a Successful Application

Applying to the First Families of Titusville is a way to honor your ancestor(s) and test your genealogy skills. We hope the application process will be enjoyable, and we provide these tips to give you the best chance of success.

- ❑ Neatness counts. If a document or citation is not legible, it will be returned. If the document itself is difficult to read, include a transcription.
- ❑ Print labels or just print your name and address on the back of each physical document submitted.
- ❑ Family Search had county level research wikis, showing in what year birth, marriage, and death records began and where to obtain them. The research wikis are not perfect but are an excellent place to start to determine if a record "should" exist and where to obtain them.
- ❑ If an exact date is not known, acceptable entries would be: Between 1 Feb. 1889 - 15 Feb. 1889 (i.e. writing and proving of will); Bef. 1889; Aft. 1889; Circa 1889.
- ❑ Underline or draw attention to (preferably with red pencil, ink, or font) to the relevant portion of a document. Do not highlight.
- ❑ Many documents are online. Many are not. If a document, such as a birth, marriage, or death certificate is known to exist, it must be included in the

application. Such records may need to be obtained/purchased from the recording county or entity.

- ☐ Don't fret about writing perfect citations. A proper citation should allow another reader to find the exact information that you used. Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence Explained Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (Baltimore: GPC, 2017) provides countless examples and models for writing citations.
- ☐ A layered citation is needed when the information you viewed is not the original medium. For example, a digital image of a county will book found on Ancestry must cite the original information (county, volume, page, etc.) and the digital information (record set, online depository, image number).
- ☐ The name and address of the repository where you found this record should be included in the citation.
- ☐ One document may include multiple types of evidence from multiple informants with varying degrees of knowledge. Each item of information must be analyzed to determine credibility. For more information, see the "Evident Analysis Process Map" on the inside cover of Mills, *Evidence Explained*, 2017. For example, a death certificate may include:
 - a. A spouse, identified as the informant, provided primary knowledge as to the address and marital status of the deceased.
 - b. The doctor provided primary knowledge as to the date and the cause of death.
 - c. The spouse provided secondary knowledge as to the date of birth and parents of the deceased.
 - d. The address of the deceased could provide indirect evidence for the relationship to a family member who lives next door.
- ☐ Supplemental documentation must be provided for any item that is secondary information or indirect evidence. Applications that do not include supplemental documentation for secondary information or indirect evidence will be returned. Using the example above, a record listing the age and names of parents could be submitted as proof of birth in conjunction with the death certificate.
- ☐ The closest census record after the year of birth as supplemental documentation for birth.
- ☐ Census records that do not name the individuals in the household can still be used as evidence in conjunction with other records, especially if writing a proof summary. The identification of all likely members of the household is necessary.

- ☐ Conflicting information often exists. Some conflicts are minor (like the age between census records being off by a year or two in subsequent decades), and some are major (like a marriage license application and death certificate giving a different name for mother). Major conflicts must be addressed and resolved through a statement including how a conclusion was reached. For example, a marriage license gives the name of Patricia's mother as Jane Smith, but Patricia's death certificate gives the name of her mother as Mary Johnson. A statement such as, "Patricia completed her own marriage record application and would have known the name of her mother. The informant on the death certificate was Patricia's son-in-law, who only knew Patricia's stepmother, Mary Johnson. Therefore, the marriage application is the more credible source." Of course, documentation of Jane Smith's death and the remarriage of Patricia's father to Mary Johnson would only help to solidify the case.
- ☐ Retain a copy for yourself of the entire application prior to submitting it.
- ☐ If additional documentation is requested, documentation may be submitted by Nov. 30 of the second year following the request. If additional documentation is not submitted, the application will be closed.

The Titusville Historical Society is a non-profit and tax-exempt educational organization that includes amateur family historians and genealogists.

Rules of Evidence

1. Official civil issued records of birth, marriage, and death are required for each event/person when such document exists.
 - A. Short form birth certificates are not acceptable.
 - B. Marriage license applications with the return are required. (If a female applicant uses her husband's name, she must submit a license application if she uses her husband's name)
2. A church record or marriage certificate is acceptable if no marriage license is available.
3. In addition to the documentation required for those listed on the application, documentation must be included for every event that changes a person's name or states a relationship other than what is listed on the application. For example, if a death certificate lists a second spouse or different name after remarriage, proof of the second marriage must be submitted.

4. All evidence submitted shall be sufficient to prove that the applicant is directly descended from the claimed ancestor(s). Adopted children do not qualify as a step in the lineage.
5. DNA evidence may be considered on an individual basis. Please contact the First Family chair at titusillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com to discuss prior to completing the application.
6. The evidence must prove residence of the ancestor(s) in the designated area (cities, boroughs, and townships) as given by 31 December 1858 and be sufficient to differentiate between any two persons of the same name residing in the same area at the same time.

Tax records are frequently used to establish residency. Real property (real estate) taxes prove that one owned land, but not necessarily that one lived on the land. Chattel (personal property) tax records do establish residency.

7. A female ancestor living in the designated areas before 31 December 1858 must be identified by her maiden name. In the event that the woman was a Native American or otherwise not born with a surname, an application may still be submitted, pursuant to all other standards.
8. Quality of evidence is more important than quantity. However, even quality evidence from a credible source can be wrong. If a major conflict among sources is found, include a statement to address and resolve the conflict.
9. Primary (first-hand) information that directly states a fact or relationship is preferred. Examples of acceptable documents containing primary knowledge and direct evidence include:
 - A. Government-issued certificates
 - B. Death certificates are rarely a primary source for the date of birth or names of parents. A death certificate must be supplemented with additional documentation when used as proof of birth or parentage.
 - C. Legal records such as wills and deeds. Such records must state the relationship (a document that names an heir is not proof of relationship).
 - D. Church records such as baptism, marriage, and death.
 - E. Bible records, if events dates are contemporary with the publication date of the Bible. A copy of the title page must be submitted. The current owner and location of the Bible should be given.
 - F. Letters, diaries, and family records, if they state facts that the writer would have known first-hand. The identity of the writer and the date of the document is necessary. The current owner and location of the document should be given.

10. In the absence of sources containing primary knowledge and direct evidence, other types of evidence and information may be submitted. Multiple sources will be necessary to corroborate evidence, as one document in these categories rarely provides sufficient evidence on its own. Examples include:
 - A. Census records. Pre-1880 census that do not state relationships are not sufficient on their own as proof of a generational link.
 - B. Newspaper accounts (including obituaries).
 - C. Authored works.
11. A short paragraph should be written in the event that it is necessary to use four or more sources to prove an event or relationship (“proof summary”), or to resolve conflicting evidence (“proof argument”). The proof summary or argument should be considered your source document and be included numerically with the rest of your numbered documents. All underlying source documents should be included as subsequent pages of this source (or cross-referenced if already included).
12. Many types of records are useful but should be treated as finding aids to original records and not submitted as proof. Examples include:
 - A. Published County Histories
 - i. Biographies published in county histories will not be considered proof of a generational link (as they are rarely verified).
 - ii. The authors often used tax records, land records, and other primary documents to write their narrative. Every attempt should be made to attempt to submit those original documents. In the event the original documents are no longer available, the county history may be submitted.
 - iii. Biographies may be used as proof of marriage for the subject of the biography if other marriage documentation is not available.
 - B. Lineage papers from other societies will not be considered as documentation.
 - C. A database or index will not be considered as documentation.
13. Submit only the most credible documentation necessary.
14. If a conflict of evidence cannot be resolved or documentation is not sufficient to prove an event or relationship, the application cannot be approved.