

First Families of Freedom

Become a Member of the First Families of Freedom

Who is eligible to join?

How do I join?

Who is eligible to join?

Membership in the First Families of Freedom is open to anyone who can prove direct descent from a person living in any part of Tennessee before or by 1870. Residence of the ancestor and each generation of direct descent must be proved by acceptable records. There is a one-time membership fee for each application submitted.

How do I join?

To join, applicants must complete an application form and line of decent chart and submit acceptable documentation to prove an ancestor's residence and generation-by-generation descent from the ancestor. There is a one-time application fee of \$25.00. FFF members will receive a handsome certificate featuring the state seal, along with the applicant's name and the name of the applicant's free ancestor. The information furnished by applicants as proof of lineage is housed in the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Collection in various Libraries around the state. This valuable documentation of the state's freed African Americans and their families provides a wealth of research materials for present and future historians and genealogists. To join FFF today, download a copy of the application form (www.TNCHPS.org) and mail it, along with your application fee and copies of your documentation (if you cannot download the application form and would like to have one mailed to you, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above) to the address above. For additional information or questions about FFF e-mail

nbaker2_midsouth1@comcast.net. (Note: TNCHPS cannot process e-mail queries or perform research assistance.)

First Families of Freedom
c/o TNCHPS
673 E Parkway South, Suite 1
Memphis Tennessee 38104

Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society

First Families of Freedom

Application

In 2009, on the eve of the 150 anniversary of the Civil War, the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society is launching a new African American lineage organization, the First Families of Freedom (FFF).

ELIGIBILITY: To qualify for a First Families of Freedom certificate, the applicant must directly descend from an ancestor who was living in the state of Tennessee prior to 1870. The applicant must be able to prove descent from the ancestor (male or female) by an official record or records for each generation, including proof for the applicant. Current Tennessee residence is not necessary.

INSTRUCTIONS: The FFF application consists of four pages. Page 1 and 2 asks for information about the applicant and the FFF ancestor; page 3 and 4 is the line of decent chart. Please complete both to the best of your ability. If you have more than one FFF ancestor, a separate application is required for each. Only one ancestor will be inscribed on a certificate, except when the ancestor and spouse both are proven to qualify.

PROOFS: Applications must be based on credible genealogical research. For a list and explanation of suggested primary and secondary sources, see "Specific Sources of Proof".

If your application is based on a previously approved application (such as a parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, cousin, etc) it is not necessary to resubmit documentation for overlapping generations. You need only to send proof of decent for generations needed to link you to the previously approved applicant. It is still necessary to fully COMPLETE the FFF application and line of decent chart for ALL applications. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Applications are required only to submit proof of decent for each generation and proof of residence by 1870. Additional material is strongly encouraged, such as family group sheets, biographies, newspaper articles, photos of people, homes, and tombstones, and other material that may be of interest to future researchers.

SUBMITTED MATERIALS: All applications and documentation becomes the property of the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society and the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Collection. No original documents should be sent. Send a photocopy or other facsimile of pertinent materials.

Eligibility shall be determined by a committee appointed by the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society. The committee's decision shall be final.

Incorrect or incomplete application will be returned for corrections and additions, and the application will be encouraged to resubmit.

HELPFUL HINTS:

1. Certified copies are required.
2. Copies of original records are encouraged but are not required. Give exact source citations.
3. Published abstracts and transcripts are acceptable; include a copy of the title page.
4. You **must complete** the application page and line of descent chart **for each and every GENERATION.**
5. **A family history is acceptable proof for ONLY ONE generation of decent.**

Applications and photocopied proofs, along with a \$25.00 money order payable to the Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society, should be mailed to:

First Families of Freedom
c/o TNCHPS
673 E Parkway South, Suite 1
Memphis Tennessee 38104

Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society

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Specific Sources of Proof

PRIMARY SOURCES are defined as contemporary and/ or government records made at the time of the event by the parties involved. These records are deemed acceptable sources in proving relationship from one generation to another.

1. **BIRTH RECORDS** Tennessee birth and death records have been kept statewide since 1914. Birth and death records also were kept for the period 1908-1912, but these are often incomplete and do not show relationships. Some of the metropolitan areas, such as Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville and Memphis, recorded births and deaths as early as 1881, but these records are fragmented and often cover only a few months or years.
2. **MARRIAGE RECORDS** Tennessee marriage records are available from the County Court Clerk in the county where the marriage took place. Marriages after July 1, 1845 are also available at the Office of Vital Records Tennessee Department of Health and Environment. Cordell Hull Building Nashville, TN. 37147.
3. **CENSUS RECORDS** Although Tennessee Federal census records are available beginning in 1820, the 1870 census is the first to name free African Americans and every person in the household and to include age and birthplace.
4. **WILL/ESTATE RECORDS** Wills/estate (testate: with will); (intestate: without a Will); guardianships, lists of heirs and relationships, name changes, and sometimes transfer of real estate. Wills and estate records are kept in the County Court Clerk's office.
5. **LAND RECORDS & PLATS** Purchases or sale of property often shows residency and marital relationship. Available from the county where the land was owned. Records are maintained by the Register of Deeds.
6. **TAX RECORDS** Taxes were paid on property on a yearly basis. Records may be located in the Register of Deeds and/or Tax Assessor's office in the county where the land was located.
7. **MILITARY RECORDS** Records include muster-in and muster-out, pay vouchers, pension papers and military bounty land warrants for WWI (1914-1918); Spanish- America War (1898-1899); Civil War (1861-1865); and the Indian Wars (1816-1898). Records are available from

- the National Archives and Records Service, 8th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington DC 20408.
8. CHURCH RECORDS Church records often contain birth, death, marriage and funeral information or their membership.
 9. COURT RECORDS Civil, criminal, divorce, and naturalization records begin from formation of the county and be located in the circuit court or superior court where the event occurred.

SUPPLEMENTAL OR SECONDARY SOURCES are any sources in print that do not come from a contemporary or governmental record. These records will be evaluated as documentation on a case-by-case basis. The inclusion of these records is encouraged. Photocopies of these materials will provide valuable material for future generations in using this permanent file:

1. FAMILY HISTORIES/COUNTY HISTORIES PUBLISHED A published family history/genealogy or county history will be accepted for proof of decent for ONE GENERATION ONLY. When submitting this type of material, include a copy of the title page, photocopies showing direct ancestral decent and location of the book.
2. BIBLE RECORDS Dated and/or undated. Include a photocopy of the page showing the publisher, date of publication and the actual pages showing names, dates, and events. Identify current owners of the Bible when know.
3. OBITUARIES Dated and identified, when known, name of newspaper and location. Most libraries have copies local newspapers.
4. NEWSPAPERS Give name and location of the newspaper. Clippings may include anniversaries, biographical sketches, awards, marriage notices, reminiscences, etc.
5. BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORIES/ SKETCHES, PUBLISHED May Tennessee Counties have at least one history with biographical sketches.
6. PERSONAL PAPAERS Unpublished written data include letters, diaries, journals, reunion records and manuscripts. Please include dates when known.
7. TOMESTONE INSCRIPTIONS Submit photographs or transcriptions of the stone. Also include the name and location of the cemetery. Tombstones do not often indicate parentage.
8. FUNERAL HOME RECORDS Local funeral home records, when available, often give birth and death information, as well as names of parents and other relatives.

FIRST FAMILIES OF FREEDOM

Tennessee Cultural Heritage Preservation Society

TNCHPS use only

APPLICATION

Instructions to applicant: Fill in all blanks. Type or print all information.

Money orders for \$25.00 **must** accompany the application.

A. Applicant's Name:

(As it will appear on the certificate)

(Street address)

(City, state, zip)

To whom should the certificate be mailed? _____

B. Name of ANCESTOR _____

(Name of qualifying ancestor who was in Tennessee in 1880 or before, **as it will appear on the certificate**)

Birth _____ Death _____

(date)

(place)

Married _____

(date)

(place)

(by Rev. J.P & Name)

ANCESTOR'S SPOUSE: _____

FILE NUMBER _____

NAME: _____

(ANCESTOR)

DATE Rec'd _____

DATE COMPLETED _____

DATE CERTIFICATE ISSUED _____

COMMENTS _____

(Name)

(maiden, when applicable)

Spouse's Birth _____ Death _____

(date)

(place)

(date)

(place)

C. County in Tennessee where ancestor first lived or settled? _____

Where did the ancestor live before coming to Tennessee? (if known)

(county)

(state/country)

Earliest date of Tennessee residence: _____

Source of proof for residence: _____

(Example: 1870 County Deed Book)

Frequently used sources for proving 1870 residence:

- A. Land Grants**
- B. Census**
- C. County Records (Deeds, Wills, Court Minutes, etc.)**
- D. Church Records**
- E. Petitions**
- F. Civil War Pension Applications**

LINE OF DESCENT CHART

1. I (name) _____ was born on (date) _____
a (place) _____ (county) _____
(state) _____ married to (spouse) _____.

2. Child of _____ married to _____
Born _____ Place _____
Married _____ Place _____
Died _____ Place _____

3. Child of _____ married to _____
Born _____ Place _____
Married _____ Place _____
Died _____ Place _____

4. Child of _____ married to _____
Born _____ Place _____
Married _____ Place _____
Died _____ Place _____

5. Child of _____ married to _____
Born _____ Place _____
Married _____ Place _____
Died _____ Place _____

6. Child of _____ married to _____
Born _____ Place _____
Married _____ Place _____
Died _____ Place _____

7. Child of _____ married to _____

Born Place

Married Place

Died Place

8. Child of _____ married to _____

Born Place

Married Place

Died Place

9. Child of _____ married to _____

Born Place

Married Place

Died Place

10. Child of _____ married to _____

Born Place

Married Place

Died Place

REMINDER: EACH STEP MUST BE PROVED!

List Sources of proof as to descent by generation (please number photocopies proofs to correspond to generation numbers).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

(Signature of applicant/ submitter)

(date)

(address if different from page 1)