

While those who engage in genealogical research clearly are in search of their direct ancestors, many researchers neglect to dedicate attention to the study of entire families. Certainly genealogy includes the study and knowledge of an entire family – from the lowliest peasant to the most illustrious king and everyone in between.

In a way, we are spoiled by having so many early American families already comprehensively researched, so that now many of us never pursue the exploration of the family as a whole in order to identify our distant cousins. Even 10th cousins twice removed are relatives, and often it is these people who are our “famous” or “infamous” kin, if, indeed, we are not famous or infamous ourselves.

The very recent past has seen an awakening, however, and now, more and more, people are beginning to explore their illustrious connections to not only kings and queens, for example, but also to notables like Ernest Hemingway and Humphrey Bogart and Lizzie Borden. This brings us to the fundamental purpose of the REGISTRY OF INFAMOUS & FAMOUS RELATIVES IN AMERICAN FAMILIES, which takes the acronym RIFRAF. We exist to encourage research, discovery and recognition of our notable kindred.

Criteria for Joining

In order to join RIFRAF, one must find a common ancestor with a person of fame or infamy. We call this person the Propositus. The common ancestor must have been living by 1550 or later, but may or may not have been on American soil. The Propositus must be an American, and must be deceased. So, for example, Henry Fonda would qualify as a Propositus, but Jane Fonda would not.

There are nine categories of interest explored by RIFRAF, as follows: 1) **inventors**; 2) **visual arts** – e.g., painters, sculptors, etc.; 3) **theatrical arts** – e.g., actors, dancers, directors, producers, etc.; 4) **musical arts** – e.g., singers, musicians, conductors, composers, etc.; 5) **literary arts** – e.g., writers, poets, playwrights, etc.; 6) **hard sciences** – e.g., chemistry, physics, medicine, biology, etc.; 7) **sports** of national concern – e.g., football, baseball, hockey, tennis, basketball, etc.; 8) **Americana** – persons who contributed significantly to American culture or history, but whose contributions do not fall into one of the previous categories – e.g., Betsy Ross, Clara Barton, Susan B. Anthony, etc.; and 9) **persons of infamy** of national note – e.g., Lizzie Borden, Jesse James, Ma Dalton, Benedict Arnold, John Wilkes Booth, etc.

There are, of course, individuals who qualify for more than one category. Benjamin Franklin, for example, could be considered for Americana, inventors and the literary arts. However, a Propositus may be used for only one category, and no Propositus may be used more than once. Therefore, in the event an applicant's Propositus qualifies for more than one category, the applicant should consider carefully which category to use for that Propositus.

In the event a Propositus is not obviously identifiable as famous or infamous, the applicant will have an opportunity to make a case for consideration of eligibility of that Propositus. To do so, the applicant should include whatever documentary evidence he or she wishes to have considered that illustrates the Propositus' notoriety. All such cases will be automatically reviewed by the Tribunal of Beldams and Gaffers. All decisions of the Tribunal will be communicated.

How to Apply

Our application process is unique. Individuals who are interested in joining RIFRAF must complete a Propositus Form and return it, along with all appropriate documentation, to the Pooh-bah of the Registry. The lineage through which the applicant claims kinship to a RIFRAF Propositus must have been used to join another lineage society. The applicant's lineage, therefore, has already been approved. A record copy of that approved lineage, bearing all approval signatures and membership numbers, must be submitted with the Propositus Form. It then remains for the applicant only to prove his or her claimed kinship to the RIFRAF Propositus. This is done, of course, through standard genealogical source materials, but applicants should be aware of recent compilations that are also acceptable to RIFRAF. Among them are the *Notable Kin* volumes by Gary Boyd Roberts, which contain a multitude of very interesting connections.

Dues and Fees

There are no dues.

Applicants pay a \$40 registration fee per application, which must be remitted with the Propositus Form and accompanying materials. The fee covers the cost of registration, a certificate and a pin. The pins and certificates are different for each category of qualification. Checks and money orders should be made payable to “RIFRAF.”

Supplemental Applications

RIFRAF does not have supplemental applications. Once a category has been satisfied by an applicant, that category is closed. It is then desirable for the applicant to register for the remaining categories.

Application Process in Sum

- 1) Complete a Propositus Form.
- 2) Provide a record copy of an application to another lineage group that contains the ancestry shared with the RIFRAF Propositus.
- 3) Provide definitive genealogical documentation, back to the common ancestor, for the RIFRAF Propositus.
- 4) Include a check or money order for \$40 payable to RIFRAF.
- 5) Mail the entire package to the Pooh-bah of the Registry, whose address is on the back panel of this pamphlet.

A Cautionary Word

Applicants should please take note that it is inappropriate to consult directly with the Tribunal of Beldams and Gaffers when uncertainty exists about whether a propositus qualifies. All necessary communication with the Tribunal will be initiated by the Pooh-bah, who will present all such cases in a fair and impartial manner.

Annual Meeting

The Registry will not hold annual meetings. Approximately every three years, it is anticipated that the Registry will hold a social function, free of business, free of elections, free of obligations, and free to members!

Age Limitation

There is no age limitation for membership. Anyone who is a member of a lineage group through a qualifying ancestry may also join RIFRAF, provided the additional requirements previously outlined are met by the applicant.

Objectives of the Registry

The objectives of the Registry are:

1. to identify kinship with Americans of fame or infamy;
2. to promote genealogical research;
3. to collect and preserve records, documents and relics pertaining to the genealogy and history of famous and infamous Americans;

4. to produce and distribute publications of all kinds relating to the genealogy and history of famous and infamous Americans, and

5. to have FUN!

Our Emblem

Our emblem is comprised of a representational image for each of the nine qualifying categories, as follows:

Inventors – light bulb

Visual Arts – pallet

Theatrical Arts – comedy & tragedy masks

Musical Arts – gramophone and notes

Literary Arts – quill

Americana – flag and fireworks

Infamy – jolly roger

Hard Sciences – relativity equation

Sports – volleyball and net

The Registry's pins are also representational of each of these categories.

For a Propositus Form, please write the Pooh-bah of the Registry. When doing so, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope:

Alexander Bannerman
Pooh-bah of the Registry
1716 Bigley Avenue
Charleston, WV 25302-3938
AlexNBannerman@aol.com
304/340-0200

(revised 12-10)