

Registry of Famous and Infamous Relatives in American Families

(rev. 7/23)



Founded 2005

Information and Instructions

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. Genealogy includes the study and knowledge of an entire family – from the lowliest peasant to the most illustrious king and everyone in between, including our uncles and aunts and our cousins.

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 find out who our cousins are. Even 10th cousins twice removed are relatives, and often it is these people who are our “famous” or “infamous” kin.

The recent past has seen a great genealogical awakening, 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 kin.

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 of fame or infamy the Propositus. The common ancestor must have been *living* by 1550 or later, but may or may not have been on American soil, however within one or two generations, the line from which you descend must have been American. The Propositus must be an American, and must be deceased. So, for example, Henry Fonda would qualify as a Propositus because he is deceased, but Jane Fonda would not because she is still living.

There are nine categories of interest explored by RIFRAF, as follows: (1) **inventors** (persons who invented things with which most people are familiar); (2) **visual arts** – e.g., painters, sculptors, architects, &c.;

(3) **theatrical arts** – e.g., actors, dancers, directors, producers, &c.; (4) **musical arts** – e.g., singers, musicians, conductors, composers, &c.; (5) **literary arts** – e.g., writers, poets, playwrights, &c.; (6) **hard sciences** – e.g., chemistry, physics, medicine, biology, astronomy, statistics, &c.; (7) **sports** of national concern – e.g., football, baseball, hockey, tennis, basketball, &c., and this category also allows for recognition of any deceased individual who represented the United States in any World Olympics; (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, &c.; and (9) **persons of infamy** of national note – e.g., Lizzie Borden, Jesse James, Ma Dalton, Benedict Arnold, John Wilkes Booth, &c. These people might be serial killers, mass murderers, political assassins, counterfeiters, terrorists, &c.

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 claim 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 that Propositus’s eligibility. To do so, the applicant should include whatever documentary evidence he or she wishes to have considered that illustrates the Propositus’s notability. All such cases will be reviewed by our *Tribunal of Beldams and Gaffers*. All decisions of the Tribunal will be communicated and are final.

Who we DO NOT Recognize

Many lineage societies exist to recognize a multitude of genealogical connections. For this reason, we do not recognize people who fall into certain categories. The following groups of people are not recognized by RIFRAF as qualifying Propositi: Presidents, First Ladies, notable Military personnel (such as William Tecumseh Sherman), Signers of the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, or other important

documents (such as Roger Sherman and other statesmen), other American political figures (such as Congressmen, Senators, Supreme Court justices), and other similar figures who would not fall specifically into one of our nine categories outlined above. Likewise, those who are recognized will be known to the masses (or in the case of inventors, for example, while the Inventor may not be known to the masses, the Invention will be). So keep in mind that the individuals you choose for your Propositi must have a significant impact and not be recognizable for establishing membership in another society. If you are not sure whether a person qualifies, ask the Pooh-bah of the Registry, whose contact information is below.

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 cost per category, and the payment process are outlined below. Please follow these instructions carefully. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the approval process.** 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. In the event you have not specifically used your common ancestor for joining another society (he/she does not appear on an application you completed to join another society), but the lineage is almost completely the same as on the record copy you're submitting, then RIFRAF will accept **up to two generations of evidence** in order to make the connection from your common ancestor. Having established this requirement, 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 two *Notable Kin* volumes, *American Ancestry and Cousins of the Princess of Wales*, and *The Mayflower 500*, all by Gary Boyd Roberts, which contain a multitude of very interesting connections. Additionally, the RIFRAF officers regularly develop documented lineages of notables. It is always useful for the applicant to consult with the Pooh-bah of the Registry before submitting an application to determine whether a specific lineage has already been researched. He also may be able to share the identity of other notables from your ancestor, thus enabling you to complete more than one category. The second page of our application is a table of names only, which must be completed for submission with the rest of your materials.

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 for the category being claimed through the Propositus. The pins and certificates are different for each category of qualification, and resemble those images shown on our emblem on the first page of this paper. A small insignia on breast ribbon is available to members once they have established at least **three** categories.

Checks and money orders must be made payable to "Alexander Bannerman."

Supplemental Applications

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

Application Process in Sum

- 1) Complete the Propositus Application, including the table of descent on the second page.
- 2) Provide a record copy of your application to another lineage society that contains the ancestor shared with the RIFRAF Propositus.
- 3) Provide definitive genealogical documentation, back to the common ancestor, for the RIFRAF Propositus. Standard forms of genealogical evidence are required. *Ancestry.com* trees and similar information from other sources is unacceptable.
- 4) Include a check or money order for **\$40** (for each category being submitted), **payable to Alexander Bannerman**.
- 5) Mail the entire package to the Pooh-bah of the Registry, whose address appears below.

Remember the Society's five MUSTS and verify that each of your applications meets all five: The propositus 1) MUST be American, 2) MUST be dead, and 3) MUST be notable. You 4) MUST have an ancestor in common who was living in or after 1550, and 5) MUST have used substantially the lineage you have in common to join another lineage society.

A Cautionary Word

Applicants should 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 an anonymous, fair, and impartial manner.

Annual Meeting

The Registry **does not** hold annual meetings, and there will be no formal business conducted on which the membership will otherwise be required or requested to vote.

Age Limitation and Establishing of Family Members

There is no age limitation for membership. Anyone who is a member of a lineage society through a qualifying ancestry may also join RIFRAF, provided the additional requirements previously outlined are met by the applicant. RIFRAF members who wish to establish membership for their children, grandchildren, nieces, or nephews may do so without those relatives already having established membership in other organizations, *provided* they piggy-back the sponsoring member's applications. Should a member wish to establish membership for such family members, please contact the Pooh-bah of the Registry for the appropriate form and guidance.

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, including a broader understanding of what genealogy actually is;
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 simply 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, although they may vary in design.

For an electronic Propositus Form, please **e-mail** the Pooh-bah of the Registry.

Alexander Bannerman
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RifrafOrg@gmail.com
304-346-6646

Visit us on the internet at www.RifRaf.org



Registry of Infamous and Famous Relatives in American Families (RIFRAF)

Propositus Application

[Rev. 07/23]

Please **read the instructions first**. Retain a blank copy of this form on your computer for use in future submissions, or request a new one from the Pooh-bah of the Registry at such time as you require one. **This is a Form-Fill tab-and-type PDF document. Use your TAB key to move throughout the fields.**

I hereby apply for membership in RIFRAF. The American of fame or infamy to whom I claim kinship (my Propositus) is _____, whose claim to fame or infamy is

_____, and who qualifies me in the following category

(mark only one, using your X key to mark the appropriate box):

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inventors | <input type="checkbox"/> Americana | <input type="checkbox"/> Infamy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Musical Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theatrical Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Literary Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports |

Your Propositus may qualify for more than one category. **However**, you may choose only one category per Propositus and no Propositus may be used more than once. For additional information about qualifying Propositi, please review the instructions.

My common ancestor with the Propositus is _____. (The term "common ancestor" means that the person is a grandparent of some degree to both you and the Propositus. For instance, your 8th great-grandfather, Thomas Barnum, is P. T. Barnum's 2nd great-grandfather. If applicant is a **direct descendant** of the Propositus, write the words "direct descendant.")

I have established my descent from the Common Ancestor in the following lineage society (**name only one**): _____, and my membership number is _____. Enclosed is a **record copy** of my application to that Society. (A **record copy** is a copy of an approved application, bearing all approval signatures and membership numbers.) Proof of the descent of my Propositus from our common ancestor can be found in (provide appropriate bibliographic citations - max. of 400 characters).

_____,
the appropriate pages of which are enclosed herewith.

Should applicant's established lineage with another society fall short of the common ancestor, the informational materials included with this form will instruct you on what is acceptable.

Name (as you wish it to appear on your certificate) _____

Address (1 line) _____

Telephone Number _____ E-mail Address _____

Send this completed form, your documentation, and your check or money order **payable to Alexander Bannerman** to the address in the instructions.

Approved by _____ Pooh-bah of the Registry Registry No. _____
Category _____ Date Approved _____ Fee _____
Check No. _____

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Put the ancestry
of the
PROPOSITUS
in the left
column.

Put YOUR
ancestry in the
right column.

