

Pioneer Families of Tarrant County



sponsored by

*Fort Worth Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 471789
Fort Worth, Texas 76147-1408*

Rules of Evidence

The rules of evidence applying to membership in Pioneer Families of Tarrant County (PFoTC) follow and are the standards by which all proof is judged. *There are no exceptions.* The nature and extent of the evidence submitted as proof in all applications shall be sufficient to prove that the applicant is directly descended from the pioneer(s) named in box B of the application blank, and sufficient to differentiate between any two persons of the same name residing in the same area at the same time. Proof must be included to show residence in Tarrant Co., Texas by 31 December 1870. Documentation must be provided for each date listed, even if only an approximation (e.g., born c1785-1790 per 1820 census).

1. Primary or collateral evidence from vital statistics, courthouse or other government records, usually is considered excellent proof. Other primary evidence might include Bible records (which must be contemporary with the publication date of the Bible or events), diaries or letters.
2. Secondary evidence such as census records and newspaper clippings (applicant must provide the name of the newspaper, location, page and date of publication) might be used as corroborative evidence. County histories and family records, contemporary to the facts reported, are considered as supporting evidence only.
3. Circumstantial evidence will not be accepted as proof unless supported by primary or secondary evidence.
4. Oral, written or published family traditions may be in error and cannot be accepted as documentation.
5. Printed or manuscript genealogies, genealogical records or compilations, family group sheets and charts, family reunion records and similar material are not considered proof. Unsupported information from an amateur or a professional genealogist is not acceptable, including such records printed in any genealogical, historical or similar publications.
6. Lineage papers, accepted or unaccepted, from other patriotic or hereditary societies by themselves are not considered proof. The document copies which were used to prove the lineage may be considered proof if

they follow these rules.

7. Material authored by the applicant or a member of his or her family cannot be considered as proof.
8. Documents used as proof must, either alone or in conjunction with other acceptable documents, actually state the fact to be proved. Examples of implied proof which are not acceptable are:
 - A. Unnamed individuals specified in court records as “heirs” or “heirs-at-law” unless it is known that applicable laws at the time included only bloodline descendants.
 - B. Census records which show the name of the head of the family only, along with numbers of family members or others by age group, prove only the family head actually named. The 1850 through 1870 censuses cannot be used as proof of relationship. Next door neighbors on a census or tax record do not prove any relationship by themselves.
 - C. A father is not proved as being in an area just because his child was born there. The birth only proves the mother was there!
 - D. Blood descent is not necessarily proved by owning the same land as an earlier owner by the same name, whether the land was inherited or purchased.
9. Documents written or printed in a foreign language must be accompanied by a translation into English and the translation certified as a “true translation” by the translator (not the applicant or a family member).
10. Old letters or family records can be accepted as proof for only the facts that the writer could logically know as contemporary knowledge. Identification of the writer and the date is necessary. County histories or other published biographies also should have been written by someone with contemporary knowledge, not hearsay, to be acceptable.
11. Land or tax records are acceptable only if they specify that the individual was a resident of Tarrant County, Texas, since many early landowners and speculators never lived in Tarrant County, Texas.
12. Female ancestors living in Tarrant County, Texas before 31 December, 1870 must be identified by their maiden names. Exceptions are made only in the case of African Americans and Native Americans, and only when such ethnicity is proved.
13. Illegitimacy is not grounds for denial.
14. A direct line from applicant to the pioneer ancestor must be proved at each step, including the spouse in each generation. Collateral descent is not applicable. Adopted children do not qualify as a step in lineage. Blood line descent only is acceptable.
15. Proof is required for each date listed for both persons in each generation.
16. All documents must include full citation, meaning the title, volume and page number must be written on the copy itself.
17. Bible records must include a photocopy of the title page showing publication date. Please include the name and address of the Bible's current owner.
18. Photocopies of original documents are acceptable as copied if there are no changes on the original. If it is not possible to make a photocopy of a document, a typed or handwritten copy of the document must be certified as a “True Copy” by a courthouse or other official, librarian, etc. An applicant or member of his or her family cannot certify a document as a “True Copy.”
19. Married female applicants, who use their husband's surname, must include a copy of their marriage record to document their change of name. Each legal name change must be documented.
20. Photographs of tombstones are acceptable for proof of birth and death dates and for relationships actually stated on the stone. A photograph of the gate or entrance to the cemetery should be included, if available, along with the location and directions to the cemetery. Published compilations of tombstone readings are acceptable if no additional information has been written in that is not on the stones themselves.
21. If an ancestor has been previously proved by another individual, the applicant may submit proof only to the nearest common ancestor, if so desired. A citation to the name and number of the PFoTC member must be included.
22. Reminder: A statement is not necessarily true just because it's in print.