

# Johannes Schwalm Historical Association

## JSHA Hessian Certificate Program

*Instructions for Completing an Application for a Certificate of Registration as a Descendant of a German Auxiliary Soldier ("Hessian") who arrived in North America in service to the British Crown, and who remained in North America at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.*

### ----- General Guidelines -----

1. ELIGIBILITY to receive a Certificate of Registration, the applicant must prove his or her lineal descent from a German Soldier who remained in North America after the Revolutionary war.
2. The directions and the Certificate worksheet is now included on the website, [www.jsha.org](http://www.jsha.org), under Hessian Certificate section. State the full name of the Applicant to whom the certificate is to be issued. Also state the name and other identifying facts for the Soldier from whom the applicant is descended.
3. BEFORE YOU COMPLETE THE APPLICATION study the application carefully and assemble all required documentation. A working copy of the application is provided for your use. You may also photocopy the original if you wish additional working copies. If possible, type the application using a fresh black typewriter ribbon. However, as typewriters are increasingly becoming antique curiosities, you may also carefully print the application.
4. FILLING IN THE APPLICATION
  - a. Fill in CITY/COUNTY/STATE as completely as known.
  - b. Use two letter USPS state abbreviations or standard abbreviations and slashes to present the data as "Reading/Berks/PA" or "///Berks/PA," if city is not known. If the city is known it should always be possible to identify the county, the latter being generally more important with respect to vital records.
  - c. Use FULL NAMES, as known, and list wives by their maiden names. If a widow, or remarried, show maiden name in parenthesis, e.g. "Mary Jane (nee Jones) Smith." If married more than once show as, "Mary Jane (nee Jones) Smith/White," etc.
  - d. After the first generation, place the name of the parent/ancestor through whom the lineage is claimed first regardless of gender.
  - e. If an applicant is a descendant of an ancestor whose descent from a German Soldier was proven by a previously accepted application, descent only needs to be proved from that ancestor to themselves. The prior certificate number must be recorded in the proper space on the application and a copy of the Certificate must be included.
  - f. No proofs or lineages should be presented beyond the German Soldier.

5. WHEN THE APPLICATION IS COMPLETED, submit the application with copies of supporting evidence, appropriately labeled as to source and relevant generation.
  - a. Do not send original supporting documents.
  - b. All documents become property of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association.
  - c. Mail to: JSHA Certificate, P.O. Box 127, Scotland, PA 17254
6. PROCESSING TIME FOR A PROPERLY COMPLETED APPLICATION will normally be three to six months unless difficulties are encountered.
7. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE IN A FOREIGN TONGUE If a document is not in English it should be accompanied by a translation as well as a clear transcription if handwritten. The most generally encountered documents in this category will be in German, French, or Latin.
8. FEES A fee of \$35.00 must accompany the completed application.

### **Documenting Your Application**

PRIMARY SOURCES are sources contemporary with the event of record. The best ones would have been completed by a party with no direct interest in the truth of the information, e.g. a county clerk, although this lack of direct interest may also produce indifference to properly recording the data. Although generally the best and most acceptable sources, even they may contain errors. For instance a mother may not have accurately stated the identity of a father in a birth certificate or baptismal record, or a clerk may have mis-transcribed a will or deed. Photocopies of primary sources are also considered primary sources.

### **Wherever possible use the following:**

Source	Where to Search
Birth & Marriage Records	Location may vary, but generally will be found at the County and State level, or at the town level in the Northeast. Copies of birth certificates <u>must</u> be provided for any birth after about 1920.
Death Records	Generally available at the state level. They are <i>primary</i> evidence of facts relating to death, but will generally include names of spouse and parents, for which they are <i>secondary</i> evidence. Although <i>secondary</i> , they are often the best, and only official, source for parentage.
Bible Records	May be contemporaneous, but often include latter notation of prior events. For example, an individual may include his birth, and marriage date, as well as his parentage in a Bible he begins as an adult. However, a record of the birth of a couple's children is often a primary record. The reliability is often good, but must be considered carefully.
Church Records	The church where the event occurred, or central repositories, will often contain baptismal, marriage or burial records.

Probate Records	County Clerk offices, Prothonotary offices, or equivalent; in the Northeast may be in Town Records. Older records may have been transferred to State Repositories, or micro-copies may be found there. These include wills, guardianships, records of probate or administration, estate divisions, etc.
Census	Generally Federal but may include State, County, or even Town. Federal Census records prior to 1850 are not useful for proving family relationships unless supported by other records and careful analysis.
Tax Records	Generally available at the County level, or Town in New England.
Land Records (Deeds)	Available at the County Register of Deeds, or equivalent. They may show residency, parentage, or marital relationship.

SECONDARY SOURCES are sources other than primary ones and were not created at/about the time of an event. They may include published transcriptions or compilations of primary sources. As such their value depends upon the skills of the compiler, the sources consulted, and the reliability of the primary source. They may also include official sources created after the primary event. For instance a delayed birth certificate is not a primary proof of birth or parentage, but may be the best and perhaps only proof, and has the added weight of being an official document. They may or may not be acceptable as proof.

<i>Source</i>	<i>Where to Search</i>
Bible Records	See Primary Sources above. Include photocopies of title page as well as pages with relevant data. Also include name of current holder of Bible.
Obituaries	Should be dated with source given. State and local libraries often include microfilm copies.
Newspaper Clippings	See "Obituaries" above.
Compilations and Abstracts	Generally acceptable, often useful, but should be used as a source to find the primary reference wherever possible.
Published Articles	If published in respected genealogical or historical journals, and supported by references with careful analysis, they can prove invaluable.
City and County	Often available in local and state Libraries/Directories
Tombstone Inscriptions	Include photo and/or exact transcriptions with location of tombstone.

HELPFUL SOURCES OF UNCERTAIN RELIABILITY includes:

- Family Histories, Genealogies, Family Group Sheets, and Internet References
- County Portrait and Biographical Histories
- Personal Papers

These sources are only as reliable as those who prepared them. They often are prepared without supporting references, and thus are of even more uncertain reliability. THIS DOCUMENTATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AS THE ONLY SOURCE OF PROOF FOR ANY GENERATION.

### A NOTE REGARDING GENEALOGICAL PROOFS

Today, the standard for a genealogical proof is less stringent than that for conviction in a criminal trial, "guilt beyond a reasonable doubt," but greater than that frequently applied in a civil suit, where a jury must decide which of two options is more likely to be true. In this case, if one side is favored by 51% and the other by 49%, the decision is in favor of the 51%. Genealogical proof requires a higher standard. Thus, the mere claim of a possible relationship or even a probable one (if the probability is 51%) is insufficient. A detailed discussion of this highly important question, and that of citing your sources, is beyond the scope of these guidelines. However, the interested applicant is referred to:

Board for Certification of Genealogists. *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*. Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2000.

*Chicago Manual of Style*. 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Greenwood, Val D. *The Researchers Guide to American Genealogy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, 2000.

Mills, Elizabeth S. *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, 1997.

### DISCLAIMER

JSHA does not endorse any specific genealogists or organization that does genealogy research. Listed below are only a few of many sources for research.

Professional Genealogists can be found listed under Association of Professional Genealogists [www.apgen.org](http://www.apgen.org) among other Genealogical Societies, such as State and Local Historical Societies. Church of the Latter Day Saints Family History Centers and many libraries have genealogy reference sections and there is a large amount of history and documents online.