

WISCONSIN STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
APPLICATION FOR PIONEER OR CENTURY FAMILY CERTIFICATE

**Instructions**

The Wisconsin State Genealogical Society issues certificates to persons who are directly descended from Wisconsin Pioneer or Century ancestors. Applicants must prove direct descent and prove that the ancestor or ancestral couple settled in Wisconsin prior to the year 1851 in the case of Pioneer Ancestors, or over 100 years preceding the date of application in the case of Century Ancestors. For both names of the ancestral couple to be included on the certificate, each individual must have settled in Wisconsin prior to 1851 or more than 100 years ago. Applicants may apply for certificates to be issued to themselves or to other persons. The person to whom the certificate is issued need not currently live in Wisconsin.

The purpose of the Pioneer/Century Family Certificate Program is to recognize families with Wisconsin roots, encourage people to undertake genealogical research, develop a database of information for researchers, and to improve the quality of genealogical research.

1. A separate signed application is required for each certificate requested. More than one ancestor or ancestral couple may be identified on a certificate, but a separate application is required for each ancestor or ancestral couple claimed. Type or print all entries. Legibility is important. A signed authorization granting permission to publish and release data is required.
2. A complete application consists of the following:
  - a. **Both pages of the application form must be completed and signed.** Only the current version of the form provided by WSGS will be accepted. Applications submitted on previous forms will be returned for resubmission on the proper form
  - b. **A Pedigree Chart** showing the ancestral line(s) of the person to whom the certificate is to be issued. Identify that person as number 1 on the chart. Any standard pedigree or ancestral chart form, or a computer generated pedigree chart on 8 ½ x 11 inch paper may be used.
  - c. **Proof of Wisconsin settlement by the date claimed and proof of direct descent.** The guiding principles for proof are that it should permit reviewers to reach conclusions as to the validity of the claim without having to undertake additional research. Sources should be specifically identified so that reviewers can locate and verify them if necessary. List the documents enclosed with the application in the space provided in the PROOF/REMARKS section on page two of the application. Specific considerations related to forms of proof are presented below.
  - d. **A check, payable to WSGS** for \$20 for WSGS members and \$25 for non-members.

3. If more than one certificate based on the same ancestor or ancestral couple is requested, proof of the ancestor's or ancestral couple's settlement in Wisconsin is required for only the first such application. The remaining applications should be cross-referenced to it. Application form, pedigree chart, and proof of descent are still required for each person for whom a certificate is requested.
4. An application based on a previously issued Pioneer or Century Family Certificate does NOT require resubmission of the proof of settlement. Cite the previous certificate in the Proof section. Pedigree chart and proof of direct descent ARE required. Provide a copy of the original certificate with the completed application if possible.
5. Names and dates
  - a. Enter the names of the person to whom the certificate is to be issued and the ancestor or ancestral couple exactly as you want them to appear on the certificate. For both names of the ancestral couple to be included on the certificate, each individual must have settled in Wisconsin prior to 1851 or more than 100 years ago. If an ancestral couple is to be listed on the certificate, specify how the names are to be printed. Some examples are: 1. Johann Schmitt and Louisa Braun Schmitt 2. Johann Schmitt and Louisa Braun 3. Louisa Braun and Johann Schmitt 4. Louisa Braun Schmitt and Johann Schmitt.
  - b. Enter dates in day, month, year format. Use three-letter abbreviation for the month. List the four digits of the year.
6. Forms of proof
  - a. Proof must be provided in the form of copies of documents establishing each fact claimed. Such documents include Census, Land, Church, School, Naturalization and Declarations of Intent, Probate, and Vital Records. Copies must clearly identify the nature of the document, the agency or office that created it, the volume, page, sheet, line, etc by which it may be located, and where it may be located. Bible records, county histories and published transcripts of records must include copies of the page (s) establishing the fact claimed and a copy of the title page including publisher and date.
    - 1) Abstracts of records prepared and authenticated by the custodian thereof are acceptable in lieu of copies. An example would be an abstract of a church baptismal record.
    - 2) Other abstracts or summaries compiled from records are acceptable only if they clearly identify the person who did the abstract or compilation, the specific identification of the record on which the abstract or compilation is based, and the location of the original.
  - b. Photocopies of diaries, letters, business, and other personal records may be submitted, but proof of authenticity must accompany them and the name and

address of their current custodian must be stated. Do not submit original records, they cannot be returned.

- c. Obituaries may be submitted to establish a fact claimed. The title of the newspaper needs to be listed on the photocopy of the obituary.
  - d. County histories may be submitted. Copies of appropriate pages and title pages are required. Some recent commemorative publications, usually issued in connection with a community or organization anniversary, are not acceptable. These publications usually contain family histories submitted by modern family members.
  - e. Documents that infer rather than establish the fact claimed require corroboration. Two such common documents are census records and naturalization records. It is a fact that census records often contain errors. Thus an 1860 Milwaukee County population schedule enumerating a 14-year-old child born in Wisconsin does not prove that the family settled in Milwaukee in 1846.
  - f. Published or unpublished genealogies, family histories, and family group sheets are generally not acceptable as proof. Instead, submit the documents or abstract that were used as proof for them.
7. Make a copy of your complete application for your records.
8. Send the completed application to: WSGS P.O. Box 5106 Madison, WI 53705-0106