EXPLORING DOCUMENTATION USED FOR DEATHS:

1. Death Records/Certificates – Usually these are the best documents because it is a primary (record-of-the-day) source. However, data listed for the decedent's date and place of birth and parents' names and places of birth are only as reliable as the knowledge of the informant. If a death record/certificate is submitted, a death index, which is an abstract of a death certificate, is not needed. Likewise, unless an SSDI contains additional data, there is no need to submit one, if a death certificate is submitted.

2. Obituaries – Usually a very good source of data, but again, the data is only as good as the "author." Obits should state name of newspaper or publication, place of publication, and date of publication.

3. Tombstones – Tombstone photos are acceptable, if they:
   a. …were erected contemporary to the death of the decedent.
   b. …are readable.
   c. …include the cemetery name and location (city/county/state)
   Note: Tombstones cannot be used as proof of Rev War service.

4. Findagrave indexes are not acceptable. User-entered text on findagrave memorials is not acceptable, including the name of the deceased at the top, except for obvious obits copied to the page that include citations of the newspaper and date of publication (see #2 above). [Therefore, there is no need to underline user-entered text, since it is not accepted as proof.] Relationships inscribed on tombstones are only acceptable if the tombstones meet the requirements of #3 above.

5. Cemetery Transcriptions – Use with some caution. These usually come in book form. Read the introduction to the book to hopefully learn how the cemetery listings were compiled. This may include notes regarding additional data that may have been added by compilers that may not actually be inscribed on the tombstones (such as, relationships, added from personal knowledge). Very often, additional data, such as relationships, were added to cemetery listings, as though they were inscribed on the stones, but more often than not, they were not on the actual markers. If you find cemetery listings with relationships listed, obtain a photo of the stone for confirmation. If there is no stone or marker, the cemetery listing cannot be accepted for that relationship. The same goes for a woman's maiden name listed in a cemetery book; make sure the stone actually shows the maiden name.

6. Bible Records – As with other genealogical data, bible records should include the bible's title page and date of publication, along with the provenance of the bible. Relationships between people listed should be clear.