



Finding Your Female Ancestors

Women make up 50% of our ancestry and yet discovering their stories can be some of our biggest genealogical challenges. Identifying maiden names is a key objective but understanding how they lived is equally important. Because they were all too often left out of the history books, we must use other methods to piece together details for our female ancestors. We will explore a variety of strategies for bringing our grandmothers out of the shadows.

How to find your female ancestor?

- Look for clues at home first!
- Look for ephemera, identity cards, postcards, funeral records, recipes, etc.
- Look for newspaper articles for marriage announcements, school happenings, obituaries, etc.
- Look for yearbooks, organization histories and county histories.
- Check state archives and libraries for local records.
- Check universities, historical societies, *etc.*, for photographs, diaries, and other primary sources.

Getting from nothing to née!

We love seeing our great grandmother's name recorded as *Rhoda Cryder Smith*, but all too often a woman's maiden name does not reveal itself in the records available to us and we have to use more indirect methods to establish family connections. This is where your FAN Club (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) really gets a workout. Here are a few essential things to try:

1. Marriage records are most likely to contain a woman's maiden name. When looking for a marriage, start in the county she is living in in the census closest to her estimated marriage date. Look for a birth record for the oldest child, for a possible location also.
2. Search for your ancestor's relatives such as her husband, father, siblings, and children for possible mentions of her as an heir, witness, *etc.*
3. Research all her children, even if they are from another marriage, for clues. Pay attention to witnesses and others mentioned and research their possible connections.
4. Look at all the nearby headstones in a cemetery and research burial records to determine any connections with people buried near your ancestor and if there are others without headstones.
5. Do not ignore records which took place after your ancestor's death. She may be mentioned in a probate record or land sale as a result of her inheritance being passed to her children.

Read More About It!

General Guides

- Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Female Ancestors: Special Strategies for Uncovering Hard-To-Find Information About Your Female Lineage*, 1998.
- Schaefer, Christina. *The Hidden Half of the Family: A Sourcebook for Women's Genealogy*, 1999.

Quick Guides

- Alzo, Lisa. *Finding Your Female Ancestors Legacy QuickGuide*
legacy.familytreewebinars.com/legacy-quickguide-finding-your-female-ancestors-p126.php
- Ortega-Philbert, Gena. *Tracing Female Ancestors Quick Sheet, Tracing Your Female Ancestors and Tracing Your Female Ancestors Vol. II.* | your-genealogy-history-store-usa.myshopify.com

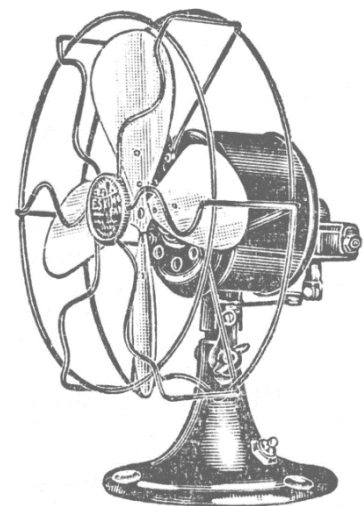
Online Resources

Databases

- Ancestry.com | www.ancestry.com
- Chronicling America | chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- Find A Grave | www.findagrave.com
- GenealogyBank | genealogybank.com
- Google Books | books.google.com
- HathiTrust | www.hathitrust.org
- Internet Archive | archive.org
- JSTOR | www.jstor.org
- Newspapers.com | www.newspapers.com
- Newspaperarchive.com | newspaperarchive.com
- Washington Digital Archive | www.digitalarchives.wa.gov
- WorldCat | www.worldcat.org

Online Resources

- Female Ancestors (Cyndi's List) | www.cyndislist.com/female
- How to Research the Women in Your Family Tree (ThoughtCo)
www.thoughtco.com/invisible-women-ancestors-1422869
- Pathfinder for Women's History Research (NARA)
www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/women.html
- Strategies for Finding Female Ancestors (Family Tree Magazine, May 2018)
www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/strategies-for-finding-female-ancestors
- 3 Practical Strategies for Finding Female Ancestors (Amy Johnson Crow)
www.amyjohnsoncrow.com/3-practical-strategies-finding-female-ancestors
- 3 Ways to Unravel the Mysteries of Women in Your Family Tree (FamilySearch Blog)
www.familysearch.org/blog/en/3-ways-unravel-mysteries-women-family-tree
- Your Female Ancestors Nicknames (Family Tree Magazine, March 2018)
www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/your-female-ancestors-nicknames





Checklist of Genealogical Sources

Home Sources:

- Account books
- Baby books
- Citizenship papers
- Employment records
- Farm records
- Health/medical record
- Journals and diaries
- Military files, medals, etc.
- School records
- Photography albums
- Family Bibles
- Heirlooms
- Letters
- Memorial cards
- Family stories/oral history
- Social Security card

Certificates:

- Birth
- Death
- Baptism/Christening
- Graduation
- Manumission/Indenture
- Naturalization
- Divorce
- Marriage Adoption
- Conformation
- Fraktur
- Annulment

Cemetery Records:

- Sexton records
- Plats
- Memorials
- Deeds
- Monuments/tombstones

Funeral Records:

- Burial registers
- Funeral books
- Funeral cards

Church records:

- Birth
- Baptism
- Ordination
- Annulment
- Subscription lists
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Burial
- Marriage
- Christening
- Banns
- Removals
- Ministers' records
- Death

Probate Records:

- Wills
- Inventories
- Settlements
- Administrations
- Bonds
- Guardianships

Employment Records:

- Indentures
- Apprenticeships
- Pensions
- Personnel files
- Licenses
- Services awards
- Account books

Institutional Records:

- Charities
- Convents
- Libraries
- Mission societies
- Reunion registries
- Fraternal organizations
- Hospitals
- Seminaries
- Historical Societies

- Orphanages
- Adoption records
- Prison records
- Lineage Societies

Immigrant records:

- Passenger lists
- Alien registration cards
- Naturalization records
- Customs records
- Ships' logbooks
- Register of voters
- Passports
- Oaths of allegiance
- Citizenship papers
- Immigrant aid societies
- Name change records

Land Records:

- Deeds
- Grantee index
- Patents, grants
- Mortgages
- Grantor index
- Surveys
- Homestead papers

Military Records:


- Services files
- Bounty awards
- Muster rolls
- Pensions
- Discharge papers
- Medals

Tax Records:

- Poll tax
- School tax
- Real estate tax
- Personal property
- Poor law records
- Income tax records

What do I know?

Before undertaking a search for one of your ancestors embrace the fact that census enumerations, vital records and other sources of information of interest to family historians contain errors! Many errors! This just requires you to be more creative in your search and take advantage of all of the pieces of the puzzle you have to locate your family. Take a moment to think about what you know about a particular ancestor. Then you'll be ready to use all of the information you have to find for someone if searching their name doesn't directly lead you to the information you are looking for!



Birth date?

Birth place?

Parents' names?

Nicknames?

Parents' birth places?

Common surname misspellings (Soundex)

Places lived?

Spouse(s)?

Occupation(s)?

Siblings' names?

Childrens' names?

Name