

# Fireside Chat: Researching Your Female Ancestors

Genealogy Center

March 1, 2022

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## Basic Strategies

- *Name Variations*
  - Search for all of the variant names (maiden name, married name, first initial married name, nicknames etc.)
  - Keep in mind, you might see different names/nicknames on different records
    - Example: Margaret, Marge, Mary, Meggy, Meg, Peggy, Peg, etc.
- *Timelines and Social History*
  - Make a timeline of everything you know about your female ancestor and compare that to a historical timeline. Doing this gives historical context to your ancestor's life and might give you a few clues along the way!
  - Our Timelines is a good resource for that: <http://ourtimelines.com/>
- *Ask questions*
  - If you can, ask your relatives! Even if your mother, or grandmother is no longer alive, try reaching out to an extended cousin. You never know what information might have been passed down.
- *Records*
  - Search for her under both her married and maiden name. In some cultures (Louisiana is a prime example), women used their maiden names on official records.
  - Don't assume a record won't have the information you need on a female ancestor without looking. Sometimes checking something that is a "long-shot" turns out to be gold!
  - Understand the laws specific to women. Schaefer's book *The hidden half of the family: a sourcebook for women's genealogy* provides a synopsis of laws by state.
  - Best Websites for Tracing Women:  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Best\\_Websites\\_for\\_Tracing\\_Women\\_\(National\\_Institute\)](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Best_Websites_for_Tracing_Women_(National_Institute))
- *Don't forget about the FAN Club!*
  - Look for your female ancestor in records for other people such as her father, husband, brothers, or other men she might be associated with. Include neighbors or other people outside of the immediate family that she might have interacted with.
  - FAN Club explanation: <https://lialouisecooke.com/2016/10/29/genealogy-fan-club/#:~:text=Using%20the%20FAN%20club%20principle,hints%20for%20your%20own%20research.>
- *Diaries and Letters*
  - If you don't have your ancestor's diaries or letters, it's worth reading the journals and writings of other community members because they might also mention your ancestor or provide historical context to the community in that time period.
    - Check with the library and/or historical society near where your ancestor lived to see what is available.

## **Helpful Books in Our Collection**

Kyle, Noeline. *Finding Florence, Maude, Matilda, Rose: researching and writing women into family history*. St Agnes SA: Published by Unlock the Past, 2013. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1478756?offset=1&q=researching+women&search\\_in=iets&state=search&wf\\_vestlabel=Genealogy](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1478756?offset=1&q=researching+women&search_in=iets&state=search&wf_vestlabel=Genealogy)

Newby, Jennifer. *Women's lives: researching women's social history, 1800-1939*. Barnsley, [South Yorkshire, England]: Pen & Sword Family History, 2011. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1335305?offset=0&q=researching%20women&search\\_in=iets&state=search&wf\\_vestlabel=Genealogy](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1335305?offset=0&q=researching%20women&search_in=iets&state=search&wf_vestlabel=Genealogy)

Salmon, Marylynn. *Women and the law of property in early America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/431631?offset=3&q=women%20and%20the%20law%20of%20property&search\\_in=iets&state=search&wf\\_vestlabel=Genealogy](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/431631?offset=3&q=women%20and%20the%20law%20of%20property&search_in=iets&state=search&wf_vestlabel=Genealogy)

Schaefer, Christina Kassabian. *The hidden half of the family: a sourcebook for women's genealogy*. Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1999. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/786081?offset=0&q=The+hidden+half+of+the+family&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/786081?offset=0&q=The+hidden+half+of+the+family&search_in=iets&state=search)

Ward, Margaret. *The Female Line: Researching Your Female Ancestors*. Newbury, Berkshire: Countryside, 2003. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1021995?offset=2&q=researching%20women&search\\_in=iets&state=search&wf\\_vestlabel=Genealogy](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1021995?offset=2&q=researching%20women&search_in=iets&state=search&wf_vestlabel=Genealogy)

Ward, Margaret. *Female occupations: women's employment 1850-1950*. Newbury, England: Countryside Books, 2008. [https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1252135?offset=1&q=female%20occupations&search\\_in=iets&state=search](https://acpl.lib.in.us/wise-apps/catalog/6000/detail/wise/1252135?offset=1&q=female%20occupations&search_in=iets&state=search)