The Farmer Takes A Wife

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**Examples of Records**

* US Census Agricultural Schedule
* Tax Records
* Grange Records
* Cookbooks
* Correspondence
* Dairies/Journals
* Organizational Records/Membership Groups
* Newspapers
* Homestead Records
* Manuscript Collections

As you research, make sure to:

1. **Use her FAN Club**

Research Involves Five Aspects of a Woman’s Life:

* The woman herself
* The woman’s family
* Locality where she lived
* The time period she lived in
* The neighbors and community

It can be easy to rely on searching just on a person’s name as you use subscription websites. But as you continue to research you may find more relevant information if you expand your search beyond the person themselves. Research should include the clusters that were a part of the person’s life including extended family members. In researching women consider expanding your search to include her community (you can’t know all the resources available if you don’t have knowledge of the community she lived in) and her historical era.

Most genealogists start a family history project by focusing their research on the individual woman and her family. Collateral family members can be vital in finding more information about an individual since some family members may have left a better paper trail than others. Genealogist Elizabeth Shown Mills talks about the FAN principle (friends, associates, and neighbors). The idea is that in research you need to go beyond just searching on an individual if you want to find rich materials that detail their lives. Our ancestors were part of a community and that community may have documented your ancestor through business records, correspondence or even a scrapbook or diary entry.

1. **Know her Time and Place**

Make a Timeline

Whenever you start researching an ancestor, it’s always a good idea to begin a timeline. The timeline serves as a visual representation of your ancestor’s life. This can help you as you analyze your findings and to see any missing pieces. It also can provide you with a list of what you have already found.

1. **Use Female Specific Databases/Records/Resources**

Female specific databases and indexes do exist. Seek these out by conducting a keyword search or browsing in the online catalog for the website, library, or archive of interest. For example, in the FamilySearch Catalog you can find such materials by conducting a keyword search on “ farm women.”

1. **Step Away from the Computer**

What does it mean to step away from the computer? It means that research is not done using only online sources. Real research means accessing (either in person or via a researcher) resources available in archives, libraries, government offices, cemeteries, and museums.

Manuscript Collections

Found in archives, manuscript collections include everything from photographs, correspondence, business records, theses/dissertations, journals, maps, scrapbooks, anything that has not been previously published. Women’s manuscript collections focus on collections authored by individual women or women’s groups. These collections tell the history of an individual, locality, era, an organization or a community through the activities and writings of women.

What do manuscript collections offer genealogists? They can provide vital record alternatives, verify a person’s home in a specific place and time and reconstruct your ancestor’s community. It is through these records that you can gain a sense of what your ancestor’s life was really like, written by those who lived at the same time and place as your ancestor.

Utilize **Archive Grid** < <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>>to find manuscript collections that pertain to the area your ancestor lived in. Also check library, archive and museum online catalogs for the city, county, region and state they lived.

University Libraries

University libraries and archives are one place to search for women’s manuscript collections.

When searching these collections remember to go beyond searching by your ancestor’s surname. Archival collections are not indexed by the name of everyone mentioned in the collection. They are indexed by a locality or author. By searching on your ancestor’s locality, you will increase your chance of finding important documents.

Other Archives and Libraries

Any type of entity that has an archive may include a manuscript collection. As you research, consider a variety of repositories including university libraries and archives, museums, historical and genealogical societies, libraries (state, private, public, organizations, and religious), and archives (state, organizations, religious).

1. **Use Keywords**

As you search, remember name variations. For example:

* Maude Sarah Snider
* M.S. Snider
* Maude S. Snider
* M. Sarah Snider
* Mrs. John Snider
* Mrs. J. A. Snider

Also consider the various creative spellings of her first and last name/s. Create a list of all these variations. Finally, create a keyword list to use in archival and library catalogs and search engines. This list should include the place/s the ancestor lived in, their religion, occupation, and groups they belonged to.

1. **Use Subject Headings**

When using the library, Library Subject Headings can help you find what you want:

Women in agriculture--Bibliography.

Women in agriculture--Europe--History--19th century.

Women in agriculture--Middle Atlantic States--History.

Women in agriculture--North America--History--19th century.

Women in agriculture--United States.

Farmers' wives.

Women agricultural extension workers.

Women agricultural laborers.

Women farmers.

**Resources**

US Department of Agriculture Library: <https://www.nal.usda.gov/>

Ancestry.com – Census Collection: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/35/>

Female Farmer Project: <http://www.femalefarmerproject.org/>

The National Grange – History and Archives: <https://www.nationalgrange.org/7255-2/>

**Bibliography**

Books

Fink, Deborah. *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Holt, Marilyn I. *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930*. Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

Lauters, Amy M. *More Than a Farmer's Wife: Voices of American Farm Women, 1910-1960*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009.

Walker, Melissa. *All We Knew Was to Farm: Rural Women in the Upcountry South, 1919-1941*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Articles

National Women’s History Museum – On the Farm <https://www.womenshistory.org/resources/general/farm>

Farm Women in American History: A Note on Sources Available in Washington, D. C <https://pubs.lib.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/article/5154/galley/113993/view/>

West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History – “Women's Work, Never Done”: West Virginia Farm Women, 1880s-1920s <https://archive.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh49-3.html>

History Matters - Dissatisfied With the Lives They Live: Farm Women Describe Their Work in a 1913 U.S. Department of Agriculture Report <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/101/>

Separation and Sorrow: A Farm Woman's Life, 1935-1941 <https://web.viu.ca/davies/H322%20Between%20the%20Wars/SeparartionSorrowFarmWomansLife.pdf>

Eyewitness to History - Farm Wife, 1900 <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/farmwife.htm>

Prologue Magazine - “To the Rescue of the Crops” The Women’s Land Army During World War II <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/winter/landarmy.html>