**Wives, Widows, Spinsters, Mistresses:**

**Documenting Women’s Relationships** Gena Philibert-Ortega, MA2

**General Website Resources**

# Genealogy Databases

FamilySearch: [www.familysearch.org](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.familysearch.org)

Findmypast: [www.findmypast.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.findmypast.com)

Ancestry.com: [www.ancestry.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.ancestry.com)

New England Historic and Genealogical Society: [www.americanancestors.org](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.americanancestors.org)

# Vital Records

Vital Rec: <http://vitalrec.com>

Online Death Indexes: [www.deathindexes.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.deathindexes.com)

Online Birth and Marriage Records: [www.germanroots.com/vitalrecords.html](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.germanroots.com\vitalrecords.html)

RootsWeb Wiki – Red Book: <https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php/Main_Page>

# Libraries/Archives

National Archives: [www.archives.gov](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.archives.gov)

World Cat: [www.worldcat.org](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.worldcat.org)

Library of Congress: [www.loc.gov/index.htm](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.loc.gov\index.htm)

ArchiveGrid: <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>

# Newspapers

Online Historical Newspapers: <https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite>

Chronicling America: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>

Newspapers.com: [www.newspapers.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.newspapers.com)

GenealogyBank: [www.genealogybank.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.genealogybank.com)

The Ancestor Hunt: [www.theancestorhunt.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.theancestorhunt.com)

**Digitized Books/Articles**

Google Books: <https://books.google.com>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com>

Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/index.php>

Hathi Trust: [www.hathitrust.org](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.hathitrust.org)

JSTOR: [www.jstor.org](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.jstor.org)

PERSI: <www.genealogycenter.info/persi/>

# Finding Aids

Cyndi’s List: [www.cyndislist.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.cyndislist.com)

Linkpendium: [www.linkpendium.com](file:///C:\Users\genao\Documents\Seminars%20and%20Conferences\Fresno\Wives,%20Widows,%20Spinsters,%20Mistresses\www.linkpendium.com)

LibGuides: <https://community.libguides.com/>

**Relationships**

**Spinsters**

* Home sources (journal, oral interviews, correspondence, scrapbooks, yearbooks)
* Marriage record (marriage license)
* Newspaper (engagement notice, eloped)

Bibliography

Chambers-Schiller, Lee V. *Liberty, a Better Husband. Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984

Israel, Betsy. *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century.* London: Aurum, 2003.

Wulf, Karin A. *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

**Wives and Widows**

* Marriage Banns
* Marriage License/Marriage Certificate
* Matrimonial Investigations
* Marriage Certificate (either official or decorative)
* Newspaper (marriage notice, milestone anniversary)
* Pension (military, Railroad Retirement)
* Naturalizations (before 1922)
* Passports
* Mother’s Pensions
* Feme Sole Trader
* Death Certificate

Bibliography

Cott, Nancy F. *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Salmon, Marylynn. *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Encyclopedia of Chicago – Mothers’ Pensions <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/845.html>

Virginia Commonwealth University The Social Welfare History Project - Mothers Aid <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/mothers-aid/>

**Divorce**

* Courthouse records
* Mentions of legal actions in newspapers (legal notices, court notices, articles)
* “No longer responsible for debt” notices in newspapers.
* Proof of remarriage (marriage license)
* Death Certificate

Bibliography

Riley, Glenda. *Divorce: An American Tradition*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Schaefer, Christina K. *The Hidden Half of the Family: A Sourcebook for Women's Genealogy*. Baltimore, Md: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1999.

**Mistress**

* Check for records involving the birth of children like bastardy bonds
* Church records that describe a child in terms of “natural born”
* Maternity homes (homes for unwed mothers)
* Orphan records (church records)
* Newspaper articles (missing husbands, details of affairs)

Bibliography

*Illegitimate Children and Missing Fathers: Working Around Illegitimacy* by Donna Przecha <https://www.genealogy.com/articles/research/52_donna.html>