

Wife Unknown: What Do I Do Now?

❖ The Weaker Sex

▪ **In Her Father's House: Under his protection**

State & Territorial Property Laws: Basically, an unmarried woman (femme sole), whether single, divorced or widowed had the same rights as a man in regards to buying, owning or selling property.

- Census
- Property Deeds
- Death Certificates/Obit
- Probate
- Church Records
- Marriage Records
- Naturalization Records
- School Records
- Passports
- Passenger Lists

Home Alone: Single

- Orphan Sources (orphanages, church records, newspapers, orphan trains)
- Census Records
- Land Grants
- Texas Homesteads
- Newspapers
- Military

▪ **In Her Husband's House: Under his protection**

- State Property Laws
 - ✓ Common Law: Based on English laws, a married woman (feme covert) ceased to exist as an individual with legal property rights. Property she owned or later inherited belonged to her husband. Upon his death, she received one-third of his property for her lifetime use (dower rights). She could leave a will only with his approval.
 - ✓ Community Property Law: A married woman had the same property rights as her husband. Property she owned before marriage or later inherited remained hers. She often left a will.
- Marriage Records
- Marriage Announcements
- Census Records
- Property Deeds
- Mug Books
- Bible Records
- Probate
- Obit
- Death Record
- Guardianships

- Pension Records
- Social Security Application
- Court Records
- Bible Records
- Son's Given Name

❖ **Home Alone: Divorced or Widowed**

- ✓ State & Territorial Property Laws: An unmarried woman, whether single, divorced or widowed had the same rights as a man in regards to buying, owning or selling property. However, the one-third dower rights she inherited sometimes could only be used during her lifetime.
- Before Marriage
 - Census Records (living with another relative or working)
 - Land Grants
 - Tax Records
 - Property Deeds
 - Newspaper Stories
 - Military
- Widowed
 - Census Records (living alone or with one of her children)
 - Land Grants
 - Property Deeds
 - News stories
 - Tax Records
 - Marriage Records
 - Divorce Records

❖ **A Woman's Place**

- Father's or Husband's Community Position
- Local Newspapers
 - Gossip Columns
 - Church News
 - Cultural Events
- Church Records
- Journals & Diaries
- Oral Histories
- Back to Court (insanity hearings; court cases; bastardy cases; divorces; military discharge; civil cases; dower release)
- Women's Organizations (local clubs, lineage & patriotic societies; sisterhoods (Rebekah Lodge, Eastern Star); Women's Suffrage Association (est.1869); Women's Christian Temperance Union (est.1874)
- Professional Records & Association (nurse licenses; physician license; teacher association)
- Bibliographies to Published Manuscripts & Diaries

Free Websites:

National Archives:

- **Digital Records:** <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/>
- **Women Resources:** <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/womens-history.html>
- **Making of American Journals (MOA):** online journals and books, mostly from antebellum period through reconstruction.
<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/about.html>
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagr/>

Library of Congress

- **Chronicling America:** free access to millions of newspaper pages, beginning in 1830; organized by date and subject. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- **National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections** <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/>
- **American Memory** <https://memory.loc.gov>

University Libraries: Digital collections nearly always open to the public.

- **University of Pennsylvania: Women's History** <https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/womens-history-resources>
- **Middle Tennessee State University
Discovering American Women's History Online**
<http://digital.mtsu.edu/cdm/states/collection/women>

Suggested reading list:

Discovering Your Female Ancestors by Sharon Carmack (Betterway Books)
Hidden Half of the Family by Christian K. Schaefer (Genealogical Publishing)
Marriage Laws in the United States: 1887-1906 by SND North (Arkansas Research)
Women & the Law of Property in Early American by Marylynn Salmon (University of North Carolina Press)
Customs & Fashions in Old New England by Alice Earle (Heritage Press)
Home Life in Colonial Days by Alice Earle (Heritage Press)
Men, Women & Manners in Colonial Times by Sydney Fisher. (Heritage Press)
Betterway Books *Everyday Life Series*: Among American Indians; in the 1880s; during the Civil War; in the Wild West; in colonial America; in Regency & Victorian England; in Renaissance England; in the Middle Ages.
Claiming Their Land: Women Homesteaders in Texas by Florence Gould (Texas Western Press)
Mary Austin Holley: A Biography by Rebecca Lee (University of Texas Press)
Surviving on the Texas Frontier by Sarah Hall (Eakin Press)
All the Daring of a Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies by Elizabeth Leonard (WW Norton & Co.)
Mothers of Invention by Drew Gilpin (University of North Carolina Press)
The Plantation Mistress by Catherine Clinton (University North Carolina Press)
A History of Women in America by Carol Hymowitz (Bantam Books)
Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs by Kathleen Brown (University North Carolina Press)
Robert E Lee Family Cooking & Housekeeping Book by Anne Zimmer (University North Carolina Press)
Patriots in Disguise: Women Warriors of the Civil War by Richard Hall (Marlowe & Co.)
Within the Plantation Household: Black & White Women of the Old South by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (University of North Carolina Press)
A Woman Doctor's Civil War: Esther Hill Hawks' Diary (University South Carolina Press)