

Grandmothers, Mothers & Daughters: Researching Your Female Lines"

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Most historical records have been created for and are about men, making it more challenging to research the women in your family tree. This talk will discuss the importance of documenting your female ancestors and offer a number of suggestions for creating meaningful lasting tributes to their lives.

Researching Female Ancestors: Why So Difficult?

- Prior to the 20th century, it is typically difficult to locate and trace women
- Most historical records have been created for and are about men
- Property was usually listed under the man's name
- Men ran the majority of the businesses and controlled the government
- The man's surname was carried to the next generation by the children
- Few women left diaries or letters
- Cultural influences toward the behavior and treatment of women

Five Strategies for Finding Female Ancestors

1. Check all records for her husband, especially tax, property, and naturalization records. Also check records for siblings. Look for clues in photographs, newspapers, yearbooks, bridal books, employment, convent, military, books, monographs, printed sources, and other records).
2. Consider the possibility of more than one marriage and multiple burial markers.
3. Learn naming practices and patterns and note regional, cultural, and religious influences. For example, Elizabeth (English) vs. Alzebeta (Czech & Slovak) vs. Erzébet (Hungarian). Investigate different endings for female surnames (e.g. in for Slovaks, add an -ova, to a woman's name when searching databases or European records).
4. Be aware of spelling variations, and handwriting/transcription errors when searching census, immigration or vital records.
5. Create a timeline to place the woman's life in historical context.

Breaking the Silence

- Record stories of living female ancestors/write your own story n
- Encourage more women to research/write about family history
- Honor female ancestors (scrapbook, family tribute CD or DVD, book, etc.)

Telling the Stories

- Write a character sketch about a female ancestor
- Use photographs, documents, or interviews to enhance the story
- Blog about your female ancestors, using the “Fearless Females” Blogging prompts: <http://bit.ly/Ar9aBq>

Conclusion:

While tracing female ancestors can be difficult and challenging, it is not impossible. With a bit of creativity and patience you can trace your maternal ancestry. We all need to explore the histories of our female ancestors, and then document our findings for future generations—to give voice to the stories of the silent women from our past.

For Further Reading and Learning

"Any woman who is now or may hereafter be married . . ." Women and Naturalization, ca. 1802-1940 by Marian L. Smith, Summer 1998, Vol. 30, No. 2
<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html>

The Legal Genealogist Blog by Judy G. Russell <http://www.legalgenealogist.com>

Articles

Download PDF copies at: <http://www.lisaalzo.com/publications/articles>

"Ladies First" by Lisa A. Alzo, *Family Tree Magazine*, Jan. 2008

"Sister Act" by Lisa A. Alzo, *Everton's Genealogical Helper*, Jan./Feb. 2008

"There's Something about Mary" by Lisa A. Alzo, *Internet Genealogy*, Jan. 2008

"20th Century Desperate Housewives" by Lisa A. Alzo, *Family Chronicle*, Oct.2006

"15 Fantastic Sites for Tracing Female Ancestors" by Lisa A. Alzo, *Internet Genealogy*, Oct./Nov. 2010

Legacy Family Tree QuickGuide™: *Finding Your Female Ancestors*, Lisa A. Alzo, <http://www.legacyfamilytreestore.com>; Kindle version: <http://www.amazon.com>

Three Slovak Women by Lisa A. Alzo. Order from <http://www.amazon.com>

Courses

Finding Your Female Ancestors, Family Tree University
<http://www.familytreeuniversity.com>

Research: Grandmothers, Mothers & Daughters-Tracing Women, National Institute for Genealogical Studies <http://www.genealogicalstudies.com>

Websites

FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org>

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

Library of Congress American Memory Project

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc>

One-Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse <http://www.stevemorse.org>

Immigration accounts

Ellis Island <http://www.ellisland.org>

StoryCorps <http://www.storycorps.net>

Newspapers

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

Elephind <http://www.elephind.com>

GenealogyBank <http://www.genealogybank.com>

Newspapers.com (Ancestry) <http://www.newspapers.com>

Newspaper Archive <http://www.newspaperarchive.com>

Newslink <http://www.newslink.org>; News Library <http://www.newslibrary.com>

Google News Archive <http://news.google.com/archivesearch>

Online Historical Newspapers Site

<https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite>

The Ancestor Hunt <http://www.theancestorhunt.com/newspapers.html>

US Newspaper Program - National Endowment for the Humanities

<http://www.neh.gov/us-newspaper-program>

Timelines

Genelines (\$) <http://progenygenealogy.com>

OurTimelines <http://www.ourtimelines.com>

TimeGlider <http://timeglider.com>

TimeToast <http://www.timetoast.com>

Treelines <http://www.treelines.com>

DNA testing <http://www.familytreedna.com>

Note: The handout for this webinar was submitted a month in advance. For any additional or revised content for this presentation, please visit: <http://www.lisaalzo.com>.