



Remember the Ladies: Strategies for Identifying Maiden Names

Presented by Kathleen Kaldis, The Ancestor Finder

Email: AncestorFinder1@gmail.com

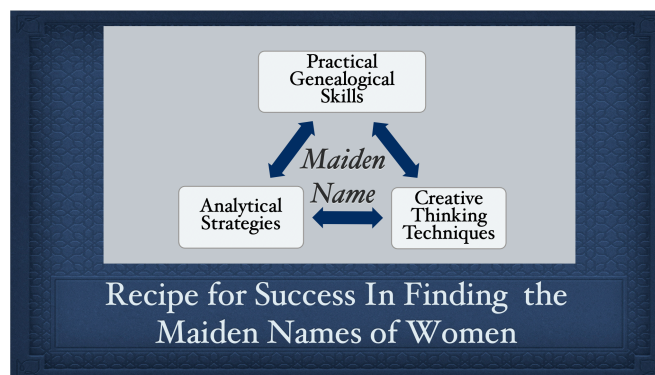
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*...remember the Ladies & be more generous & favourable to them than your ancestors...
Letter from Mrs. Abigail Adams to Mr. John Adams - 31 March 1776.¹*

Genealogy has, for the most part, sadly forgotten the ladies. Many genealogies published in the early part of the twentieth century focused on single surname studies and usually did not carry forth the descendants or husband's name for the daughters of the family. Traditionally, when women married, they replaced their maiden name with the surname of their husband. Furthermore, women were not represented within the records since many laws considered women property of their father or husband. There were so many reasons why women were highly underrepresented within genealogical records, leading to many genealogical brick walls usually ending with the women. With so many challenges, how do you overcome them and where do you begin when you do not know their maiden name?

What is a maiden name? According to the book, *A to Zax* by Barbara Jean Evans a maiden name is "the surname of a female's father."²

The Maiden Name Recipe - With "Super-Secret Ingredients!"



PRACTICAL GENEALOGICAL SKILLS

- Organize & Plan: Create Research Plans and Geographical/Region Research Guides

¹ Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March - 5 April 1776 [electronic edition]; citing, *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/> : accessed 19 August 2019).

² Barbara Jean Evans, *A to Zax, A Comprehensive Dictionary for Genealogists & Historians* (Alexandria, Virginia : Hearstside Press, Inc., 1995), p. 167.

- Record every detail: Word processing programs or spreadsheet programs are very useful when analyzing all the data collected while you research. No detail is too insignificant to capture. Note such things as: names of witnesses, abutters, children, siblings, dates, locations, record type, etc. The more captured the better it is for patterns to emerge.
- Search: Locate all of the records for your female ancestor. Vital Records, Census Records, Church Records, etc.
- Locate the Marriage Record. Use other records to help narrow down dates and places for when a marriage may have taken place.
- Records: Review original records when you can, know the laws and terminologies regarding why and how the records were recorded, learn the history of the geographical region the family lived.
- Community: Adopt the community and study all of the families in the region. It is very helpful to know the surnames commonly associated within the geographic region of focus.
- Timelines: Create and refer to timelines.
- Known Relatives: Get to know the family. Locate ALL records for the husband.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES

- Research using traditional methodologies and practices.
 - Work from the *present to the past*.
 - Work from the *known to the unknown*.
 - Use the GPS: *Be methodical – Have a plan!*
 - Cite your sources
 - Know the *FAN Club* of your Female Ancestor.
 - Ask yourself ... *Does this make sense?*

CREATIVE THINKING TECHNIQUES

- Who are the people in the neighborhood?
 - Maps, Census Records, Indexes, Vital Records, City Directories.
- Naming Patterns: First names, middle names, last names.
- Newspapers: Marriage Notices, Social Pages, Obituaries, Special Events, etc.
- Records: Note all collateral individuals noted within the records.
- Land: Land records, land platting, build all land parcels which have been bequeathed to the husbands.

LEGAL TERMS:

Dower: A widow's portion of her husband's estate if he dies without a will (intestate).

Dower Right: The share a widow receives if her husband dies without a will (testate). If the estate had real property (real estate) The widow would be entitled to one-third share of the estate.

Dowry: Property a woman brings into the marriage, for the husband, at the time of her marriage.

Et al.: An abbreviation meaning "and the others."

Et ux.: An abbreviation meaning "and wife."

Feme-covert: A married woman.

Feme sole: A single woman.

Feme Sole Trader: A married woman who has been given the right to conduct the business on her own, this includes the buying and selling of real property (real estate).

Nee: A maiden name.

Relict: A widow. Can also mean a formerly married woman, such as a divorcee.

RESOURCES:

- Bibles
- Bridal and Baby Books
- Census Records
- Church Records
- Court Records
- DAR GRS
- Death Records
- Feme Sole Trader Books
- Fraternal Benefit Society Records
- Journals
- Manuscripts
- Military Pensions (Widows)
- Mothers' Pensions
- Newspapers
- PERSI (*FindMyPast.com*)
- Probate Records
- Regional Histories/Mugbooks
- Published Indexes

CONSIDERATIONS:

- A previous surname may be a married name from a previous husband.
- Married name could be the same as the maiden name if a woman marries a husband with the same surname.

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