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/](https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/)
- **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://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/about.html)
  [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/)

Library of Congress
- **Chronicling America**: free access to millions of newspaper pages, beginning in 1830; organized by date and subject. [http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/)
- **National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections** [http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/](http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/)
- **American Memory** [https://memory.loc.gov](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](https://hsp.org/collections/catalogs-research-tools/subject-guides/womens-history-resources)
- **Middle Tennessee State University**
  Discovering American Women’s History Online

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)
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.)
*Mother 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)
*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)

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