

World War I: Women's Lives During the War

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Considerations

- Roles of women on the homefront and the battlefield
- Organizations (Red Cross and Salvation Army)
- Suffrage
- Benevolence and Patriotic Duty (knitting, victory gardens)
- Employment in the absence of men
- Search social history to document your ancestor's life

Places to find information about women during World War I

- Archives
- Libraries
- Museums (National WWI Museum, national, local, subject)
- Websites (digital collections, archives, libraries, genealogy, volunteer, historical, digital books)
- Societies (historical and genealogical)

Must-Have Resources

Create a List of Keywords

As you search, remember that your ancestor may have been mentioned in records using numerous name variations. For example:

- Maude Sarah Snider
- M.S. Snider
- Maude S. Snider
- M. Sarah Snider
- Mrs. John Snider
- Mrs. J. A. Snider
- Mrs. Jno Snider
- Miss Maude Jones
- Miss Jones

Then you have to consider the various creative spellings of her first and last names. Create a list of all these variations. Then create a keyword list to use in archival and library catalogs and search engines. This list should include the place/s the ancestor lived in, their religion, occupation, and groups they belonged to.

Utilize Search Engines

So many resources exist online that it's impossible to know about every resource that can help you. That's where a generalized search of search engines can assist you. Utilize a search engine like **Google** for your research. By using quotes around the ancestor's name (like "Maude S. Snider") you are essentially telling Google to search for that phrase intact. Otherwise a search for Maude S. Snider without the quote marks can bring back all kinds of results that contain those words somewhere on the web page but not necessarily together. While using an exact phrase search is a great technique, remember that it won't find variations of your ancestor's name, it will only find that exact phrase. Use advanced search features to narrow your search even further.

Survey the Library

It's important to survey resources that may help you find additional information. To do this, you will need to look through the catalogs of various libraries. State, academic, genealogy, private and public libraries all have something to offer. Start your search with **WorldCat.org**, a card catalog of items from thousands of libraries all over the world. Use keywords like the name of your ancestor's hometown or county to begin your search. While not every library is represented in WorldCat, it's a good place to begin your search. Once you have completed that search, move onto other library catalogs. I always search through the catalog of my local library, genealogy libraries, the public and state library where my ancestor lived, and nearby academic libraries. A catalog of digitized collections should also be searched. One such catalog is the Digital Public Library of American < <https://dp.la/>>.

Digitized Books

After you have looked at what resources can be found at the library, seek out digitized book websites for histories of the place your ancestress was from, as well as genealogically related books like city directories, to find mentions of that ancestor. Digitized book websites include **Google Books** < <http://books.google.com/>>, **Internet Archive** < <http://archive.org/index.php>> and **Hathi Trust** < <http://www.hathitrust.org/>>. Digitized books can also be found on genealogy websites.

Use Familiar Sources Differently

How do you use FamilySearch < www.familysearch.org>? Each research project should find you searching the **FamilySearch Catalog** for pertinent microfilm, digitized books, and other resources. The Catalog allows you to search by author, title, place, surname and keyword. Start with searching the catalog for resources for the place/s your ancestor resided. Once you have noted all the resources available for the place, conduct a keyword search. A keyword search is similar to how you would search

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an online search engine like Google. Use a word or short phrase to describe your subject. So for example I may choose the phrases “Red Cross nurse” or “Quaker women” to describe an ancestor. As you consider keywords to use, choose keywords that describe the church or organization your ancestor belonged to. Don’t use too many words at once, the more words you include the less likely you will find matches.

Read the Newspapers

Newspapers can be found online and on microfilm. For digitized newspapers on subscription websites see **GenealogyBank**, **Ancestry.com**, **Newspapers.com**, **Findmypast**, and **Fold3**. For free digitized newspapers check the Library of Congress website **Chronicling America**, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>. Some states also have digitized newspaper websites. Try Googling the name of the state and the phrase “digitized newspapers.” Some examples include **Utah Digital Newspapers** < <https://digitalnewspapers.org/>>, **Colorado Historical Newspaper Collection** < <https://www.coloradohistoricalnewspapers.org/>>, **California Digital Newspaper Collection** < <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cdnc>>, and the **Portal to Texas History** < <https://texashistory.unt.edu> > .

Consider Her Life

What types of activities did your female ancestor take part in? Was she a member of a church? Did she join a women’s club? Was she a member of a fraternal organization? Learning more about the time period and place she lived in can provide important clues to what records documented her life. Groups recorded their activities whether by creating membership lists, histories, meeting notes, or treasurer’s reports. When researching the organizations your ancestress may have belonged to, consider searching city directories and local histories for the names of membership groups. Organizational records can be archived with the organization itself, if it still exists, or in a manuscript collection housed at a library, archive or museum. Catalogs to search include **Archive Grid** (<http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>). In some cases a regional catalog might assist you in searching. Examples include **Online Archive California** < <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/>>.

Take a Look at Other Family Members

When researching a female ancestor it’s vital to take a look at the men in her life. Think about what the men in her life were doing during World War I and then search out their story as well. This can lead you to information about her. It is through these men that you might fill in the details of a woman’s life. Mentions in military pensions, newspaper articles, a will, or probate papers can provide valuable clues. Start with a timeline for her husband’s and father’s life. Then identify documents that they should appear in.

Bibliography

Digital Collections for World War I

World War I Pamphlets

<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/WWIPamp>

Women, War and Society, 1914-1918 (Institutional subscription)

<https://www.gale.com/c/women-war-and-society-1914-1918-from-the-imperial-war-museum-london/>

A University Goes to War, World War I Women

<http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/isu>

National Archives – Archives Library Information Center – Women

<http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/womens-history.html>

Home Before the Leaves Fall - Women Peace Activists During World War I

<http://wwionline.org/articles/women-peace-activists-during-world-war-i/>

Women in World War I (Gena's Pinterest Board)

<https://www.pinterest.com/genaortega/women-in-world-war-i/>

Blogs

Gena's Genealogy – Women's History Month 2017-Her Life During World War I

<http://philibertfamily.blogspot.com/2017/03/#.WnDmL66nGM9>

Includes resources and posts about women's various roles during the War.

Books

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