



# Missing! Reward! Locating Widows, Spinsters, and Bachelors

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### Widows

- ❖ Widows created records after their husbands died; look for them in tax records, city directories, land records, and estate records.
- ❖ Remember that remarriage was not restricted to widows with young children.
- ❖ Women who are remarrying could be listed on the marriage record with their married name or their maiden name.
- ❖ Remarried women could be buried with any husband, or none of them.
- ❖ Widows often moved in with a child or another family member in their final years, check census records for all of her children, known siblings, and even siblings-in-law.
- ❖ Search the records of all children for references to their mother, no matter where they lived or if mom moved in; including obituaries and other news articles.
- ❖ The records of your widows' husband may provide clues. City directories may list his name alongside hers after his death. Estate records, land records, employment, and military pensions may also yield clues to her dower years.

### Unmarried Adults

- ❖ There are many reasons adults never marry, including:
  - The death of their fiancée.
  - Never locating Mr. or Miss. Right.
  - Laws which restricted who could marry; *e.g.*, an interracial or same sex marriage.
  - Family disapproval.
  - Conflicting religions or personal religious beliefs.
  - No desire to have children; for women, consider that they may have married late in life.
  - For women, a desire to remain “Feme sole” and have control over the legal aspects of their lives.
  - For men, a hazardous or transient occupation may have discouraged them from marrying.
  - Entrance into Religious Service.
- ❖ There are many reasons we lose track of unmarried adults in our trees, including:
  - Lack of communication between them to the family.
  - The unmarried person was the last of the siblings to pass away.
  - They left no known living heirs.
  - Name changes and variant spellings, nicknames.
  - Our assumptions about where they went (or didn't go).
  - Our assumptions are that if they didn't marry by a certain age, they never would.
  - Foul Play.

### General Tips for Success:

- ❖ Remember Genealogy Rule #1—Start with what you know!
- ❖ Review all the research and documents you already have on an individual. Examine every record thoroughly and look for clues that you missed or didn't realize were clues.
- ❖ Review the documents of close family members, especially parents' wills and siblings' obituaries.
- ❖ Assemble known facts into a chronological timeline to help you see records you're still missing. Include locations and occupations.
- ❖ Make a list of sources to check and keep a log of your searches.
- ❖ Not every genealogical record is online yet, and some records will probably never be digitized. Consider all leads and be willing to order records based on an educated guess that the record in question belongs to your individual.
- ❖ Search databases using parents' names rather than the child's name, as this search strategy may help you locate individuals who have left the region of their birth, or who married unexpectedly.
- ❖ Don't get attached a particular spelling for a name; instead, consider how the name was pronounced, as record creators often wrote names down phonetically.
- ❖ Broaden your search beyond the location and timeframe you have started with, especially if that information came from oral history sources.
- ❖ Consider the "Current Events" of that person's life and look in likely records for them, even if there's no family story about their participation in that event. As an example, men drafted into military service might not pass down that information.

### Notes & Ideas: