

Top 10 Places to Find Maiden Names
From [Kimberly Powell](#), about.com

http://genealogy.about.com/od/surnames/tp/maiden_names.htm?nl=1

1) Marriage Records

The best place to locate a woman's maiden name is on her marriage record. These can include not only the marriage license, but also the marriage certificate, marriage announcements, marriage banns, and marriage bonds. You will need to know the spouse's name, marriage location and approximate marriage date to find these records.

2) Cemetery Records

The cemetery may be the only place where you will find proof of the existence of a female ancestor. Tombstones may list women under their maiden names, with "wife of so and so" as the record of their married name, or may include the wife's maiden name as a middle name or initial. For those with no mention of the female's maiden name, check nearby plots for possible family members.

3) Census Records

Check every census year available for your female ancestor, up until the year that she died. Young couples may be found living with the wife's parents; an elderly parent may have been added to the household; or brothers, sisters, or other family members may be found living with the your ancestors' family. Clues may also be found in the names of families living nearby.

4) Land Records

Land was important, and often passed down from father to daughter. Examine deeds for your ancestor and/or her husband which include the Latin phrases "et ux." (and wife) and "et al." (and others). They may provide the names of females, or names of siblings or children. Also keep your eye out for a man or a couple selling land to your ancestors for a dollar, or other small amount. The ones selling the land are more than likely the parents or relatives of your female ancestor.

5) Church Records

Churches are a good source for birth or christening records which usually include the names of both parents, including the maiden name of the mother. Church marriage records will usually include the spouse's maiden name, and are an alternate source for marriage information for periods where civil registration was not in effect.

6) Probate Records & Wills

If you have a possible set of parents for your female ancestor, search for their probate record or will. Surnames of female children, along with the names of their spouses, are often listed. Since estates often involved the division of land, deed indexes for your female ancestor may be able to lead you to probate proceedings.

7) Newspaper Records

Check newspapers for the locality where your ancestors lived for birth or marriage announcements or obituaries. Even if you can't locate an obituary for your female ancestor, you may find notices for siblings or other family members that provide helpful clues. Combining a list of your ancestor's siblings with census research can help determine potential families.

8) Death Records

If your female ancestor died recently enough to leave a death certificate, this is potentially one of the few places where her maiden name may appear. Since death certificates can often include inaccurate information, check the certificate for the name of the informant. The closeness of the relationship between informant and the deceased can help you assess the likely accuracy of the provided information.

9) Military Records

Was your ancestor's spouse or children in the military? Pension applications and military service records often include good biographical information. Family members also often signed as witnesses.

10) Naming Patterns

It is only a clue, but the maiden name of a mother can sometimes be found buried somewhere among the names of her children. Unusual middle names, among boys or girls, might be the maiden name of a mother or grandmother. Or the eldest daughter might be named for her maternal grandmother.

This site is an excellent source for ideas on researching your ancestors.