

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES

WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA



[VISIT US](#)

*California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
9:30-4 Monday-Friday*

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Are you a California resident who happens to be female? If not, perhaps you are the son or nephew of a woman who lived in California. You might even be re-searching first, second or third wave feminism for a paper. Regardless of your interests, you can explore your California “herstory” via the [California History Section's](#) rich collections!

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ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

Can't come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to California's women!



[Digitized Images](#)

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our extensive photograph collection, including images related to California's women. You can see them on Calisphere!



URL: <https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/>

Type in Subject Box: Women* OR Girls OR Mothers



[Digitized Publications](#)

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California women. You can see them on Internet Archive!



URL: <https://archive.org/>

Type in Search Box: (Women* OR Girls OR Mothers) AND collection: (californiastatelibrary)



[First Ladies Gallery](#)

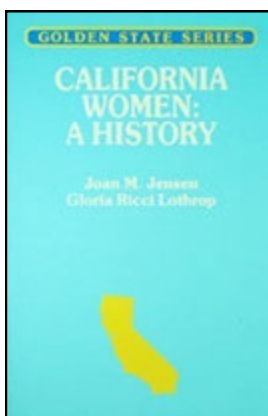
Curious about the power behind the gubernatorial chair? Read about the wives of each of California's governors!



URL: <http://governors.library.ca.gov/firstladies/>

BOOKS

Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! These texts provide both biographies of prominent women and overviews of women's history in California.

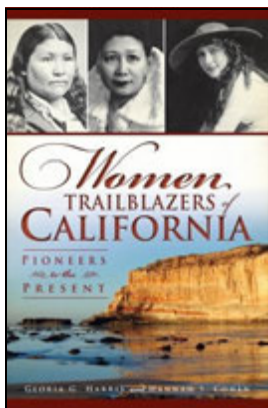


Jensen, J., & Lothrop, G. (1987). [California women : A history](#). San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser.

A widely recognized seminal work in the study of women's history in California, this book covers trends, movements and accomplishments from the earliest European settlement period through to the 1980's.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000438672



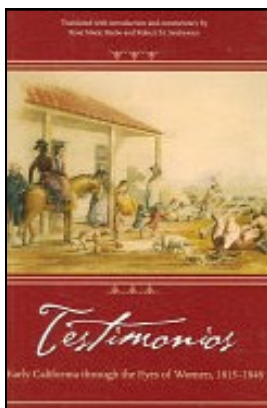
Harris, G., & Cohen, H. (2012). [Women trailblazers of California : Pioneers to the present](#). Charleston, SC: History Press.

Featuring short biographies of prominent women across time, profession, and race, this highly approachable book provides a good overview of the many ways women have contributed to this state's history from its inception to the present.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001477887

BOOKS



Beebe, et. al. (2006). [Testimonios : Early California through the eyes of women, 1815-1848](#). Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books.

A collection of oral histories gathered in the 1870's from women who grew up in Mexican California, this edited and translated compilation sheds light mostly on pre-American California but also touches on aspects of the Gold Rush.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001263547

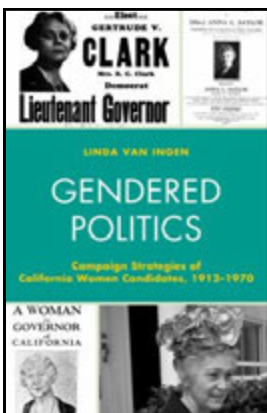


Gullett, G. (2000). [Becoming citizens : The emergence and development of the California women's movement, 1880-1911](#). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

A chronicle tracking the development of the woman's suffrage movement in California. This scholarly work looks at the social factors and controversies surrounding the right to vote.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001416405



Van Ingen, L. (2017). [Gendered politics : Campaign strategies of California women candidates, 1912-1970](#). Lanham : Lexington Books

Even before they won the right to vote, California women have been involved in politics. This book profiles some of the many women who have run for political office since gaining suffrage.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001600992

PERIODICALS

Want something shorter than a book? In addition to biographies in historical publications, like [Golden Notes](#), you can read real-time women's events and views in historic magazines!



[Woman's herald of industry and social science co-operator.](#) (1881-1884). San Francisco : Mrs. J.W. Stow, 1881-

Though only published for about three years, this magazine takes a comprehensive approach to women's concerns in the 1880's including social, political, legal and economic inequality.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000325547



[Club Woman.](#) (c1910-). Los Angeles: California Federation of Women's Clubs.

Written under a wide variety of titles, this publication chronicles the activities of women's clubs throughout California, as well as opinion articles from around 1910 to the present.



URL: [http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=\(AUT=\(California Federation of Womens Clubs\)\) AND \(WFM=\(SE\)\)](http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=(AUT=(California Federation of Womens Clubs)) AND (WFM=(SE)))



[Business Woman.](#) (1920-1976). San Francisco : San Francisco Business and Professional Women's Club .

Dating from the 1920's, this magazine chronicles the views, activities and business strategies of California's working women.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000147481

SPECIALIZED ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

In addition to periodicals we have several manuscript collections that focus specifically on women's history. Here are some selected collections at the State Library.



[Annie Bidwell Collection](#)

A prominent woman in early California, Annie Bidwell was involved in both the temperance and suffrage movements. Her massive collection contains information on these activities as well as her business papers..



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D000555426



[Mrs Wong Mee Shee Collection](#)

The legal papers of a Chinese woman who emigrated to California, this collection includes her certificates of residence and identity.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001294261



[Research material for book on California's first women legislators](#)

The research materials for an unpublished book about California's earliest female politicians, this collection includes interviews with family members and more.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001217992

SPECIALIZED ARCHIVAL RESOURCES



[Lucy Thompson Collection](#)

A small collection of letters written by the prominent California Native American author describing her book and background.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001506085



[James Purcell Collection](#)

A lawyer active in the 1940's James Purcell represented Mitsuye Endo, a Japanese American woman who challenged the legality of internment. His collection contains papers related to her case.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001117518



[Tarea Hall Pittman Collection](#)

The head of the West Coast NAACP, this collection documents NAACP activities in California between 1951 and 1970, including Tarea's role as its leader.



URL: http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=SYS%3D001018569

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on women



[Catalog](#)

If you are looking for [images](#), [books](#) and [articles](#) on women, your best source is our [catalog](#).



URL: <http://catalog.library.ca.gov/F/?func=find-a-0>

Type in Subject Box: (Women* OR Girls OR Wives OR Mothers OR Sisters OR Daughters OR Widows)

Limit: By place



[California Information File II](#)

Sometimes the catalog doesn't provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find catalog records on individual articles, pamphlets and more.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Subject Box: Women* OR Girls OR Wives OR Mothers OR Sisters OR Daughters OR Widows

For a narrower search: Add a place or specific tribe to your keyword search

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS



The screenshot shows a search interface for "City and County Directories". It includes a header with the title and a background image of a city skyline. Below the header, there is a search instruction: "Enter one or more search terms. The more terms you enter, the fewer results you will get." and a tip: "To search for a range of years, type a colon between the years, e.g., 1940-1950." The search form contains several input fields: "County", "City", "Year", "Title", "Author", "Publisher", and "Material type". Each field has a small "x" icon to the right. At the bottom, there is a "Search Query" button and a "Help" icon.

City Directories

Looking for a person? You can trace this information via our city directories! See what we have by checking our specialized database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCityDir.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. Location



The screenshot shows a search interface for "Telephone Directories". It includes a header with the title and a background image of a telephone keypad. Below the header, there is a search instruction: "Type in the city or county. If you get too many results, add the year to your search." and a tip: "To search for a date range, type a colon between the first and last years, e.g., 1940-1950." The search form contains several input fields: "Location-White Pages", "Location-Yellow Pages", "Year", and "Material type". Each field has a small "x" icon to the right. At the bottom, there is a "Search Query" button and a "Help" icon.

Telephone Books

Are you not finding what you need in our city directory collection? No worries, you might find it in our telephone book collection. See what we have by checking our phone book database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryPhonebk.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. Location

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

California women contribute in a myriad of ways to this state. While these catalog links barely scrape the surface of this history, they provide a good overview.



By Group:

[Vital Records](#)
[African Americans](#)
[Chinese Americans](#)
[Japanese Americans](#)
[Latin Americans](#)
[Native Americans](#)
[Portuguese Americans](#)

By Subject:

[Agriculture](#)
[Business](#)
[Civil Rights](#)
[Earthquakes](#)
[Education](#)
[Environment](#)
[Fiction](#)
[Mining](#)
[Oil](#)
[Poetry](#)
[Politics](#)
[Railroads](#)
[Slavery](#)
[Transportation](#)
[Water](#)
[Wine](#)

By Type:

[Books](#)
[Images](#)
[Manuscripts](#)
[Periodicals](#)
[Statistics](#)

COUNTY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

Researching women's history in a specific region? While these catalog links don't list all that the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.



[Merced](#)
[Modoc](#)
[Monterey](#)
[Napa](#)
[Nevada](#)
[Orange](#)
[Placer](#)
[Plumas](#)
[Riverside](#)
[Sacramento](#)
[San Benito](#)
[San Bernardino](#)
[San Diego](#)
[San Francisco](#)

[San Joaquin](#)
[San Luis Obispo](#)
[San Mateo](#)
[Santa Barbara](#)
[Santa Clara](#)
[Santa Cruz](#)
[Shasta](#)
[Sierra](#)
[Siskiyou](#)

[Alameda](#)
[Amador](#)
[Butte](#)
[Colusa](#)
[Contra Costa](#)
[Del Norte](#)
[El Dorado](#)
[Fresno](#)
[Glenn](#)
[Humboldt](#)
[Inyo](#)
[Kern](#)
[Los Angeles](#)
[Madera](#)
[Marin](#)
[Mariposa](#)
[Mendocino](#)
[Mono](#)
[Tulare](#)
[Kern](#)
[San Bernardino](#)
[Riverside](#)
[San Diego](#)
[Imperial](#)
[San Joaquin](#)
[San Luis Obispo](#)
[San Mateo](#)
[Santa Barbara](#)
[Santa Clara](#)
[Santa Cruz](#)
[Shasta](#)
[Sierra](#)
[Siskiyou](#)
[Solano](#)
[Sonoma](#)
[Sutter](#)
[Tehama](#)
[Trinity](#)
[Tulare](#)
[Tuolumne](#)
[Ventura](#)
[Yolo](#)
[Yuba](#)

ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.



California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of California articles, books, and manuscript collections related to individuals active in California.



Subject Headings:

- Women (various subdivisions)
- Individual Names



Photographic File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection, search our picture file.



Subject Headings:

- Women
- Portraits: Individuals by Name

OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about any information related to women in the following files:



Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files covers a wide variety of topics including women. You can check them for information on organizations, event pamphlets and more.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians.



Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images of women. Most are not online.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Of course the California History Section doesn't have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations



Other California State Library Sections

[Government Publications Section](#)

[Witkin Law Library](#)

[Sutro Library](#)

[General Information](#)



URLs:

- <http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/law/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/>
 - <http://www.library.ca.gov/services>
-



Other Government Agencies

[California State Archives](#)

[Commission on the Status of Women and Girls](#)

[California Museum](#)

Local California libraries or archives



URLs:

- <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/>
 - <https://women.ca.gov/>
 - <http://www.californiamuseum.org/>
-



Other Organizations

[National Women's History Project](#)

[National Women's History Museum](#)

[Women's Museum of California](#)



URLs:

- <http://www.nwhp.org/>
 - <https://www.nwhm.org/about-us>
 - <http://womensmuseumca.org/>
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California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: (916) 654-0176
E-mail: cslcal@library.ca.gov
Hours: 9:30-4 Monday-Friday

This guide is also available online at:
<http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/>