RESEARCH GUIDES

WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA

VISIT US
California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
9:30-4 Monday–Friday
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 researching 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/
Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! These texts provide both biographies of prominent women and overviews of women’s history in California.


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author


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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author
**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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author

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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author

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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title and/or author
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.

**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.


Dating from the 1920’s, this magazine chronicles the views, activities and business strategies of California’s working women.
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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank  
**Search by:** Title

**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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank  
**Search by:** Title

**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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank  
**Search by:** Title
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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

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: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
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:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_IN:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

**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.
**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

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**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
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.

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<td>Maps</td>
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<td><strong>1960's</strong></td>
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Subject:
- Aeronautics
- Agriculture
- Art
- Baseball
- Business
- Cooking
- Education
- Environment
- Fiction
- Fish
- Land
- Legislature
- Migration
- Mining
- Music
- Poetry
- Politics
- Shipping
- Slavery
- Railroads
- Religion
- Restaurants
- Taxes
- Wine
- 1960's
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.
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.womenshistory.org/
- http://womensmuseumca.org/
CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY
CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: (916) 654-0176
E-mail: csilcal@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/