



Tips for Finding Primary Sources

This document has two parts: a list of general, nationwide resources, and then some specific advice for each of our six Signature Programs.

Always check for local resources first. Most states will have their own digitization initiatives for newspapers, archives, or other resources. The general resources listed here are the most common, sometimes free, national online resources. If there is a subscription-based service that your institution does not already provide access to, try gaining access through your local library. Many public libraries will have subscriptions to commonly used databases. If you are part of a K-12 school or district, [AncestryClassroom](#) is available to you for free on-site access. It includes Ancestry's online primary resources, as well as Newspapers.com and Fold3, which are all mentioned here. Check if your educational institution is already enrolled or ask them to enroll for free access.

There are limits to what has been digitized and made available online. However, there are often many records you can get images of by sending a reference request to the organization/institution that owns the document. If a local government, historical society, or library/special collection has a document or folder listed in a finding aid online that you think has what you need, reach out by email or phone to ask them if they can send you an image, or allow in-person access. Always check with your local historical society as well- if they don't have the documents you need, they may know where to look for them.

Researching a significant person? Try to find out if a special collection or archive hosts their personal papers.

General Resources:

- **Maps** – include date and source of map; use multiple images, if needed. Include a link to an online version if possible.
 - Maps are often available through:
 - [Library of Congress Maps Division](#)
 - [Alabama Maps](#)
 - [David Rumsey Map Collection](#)
 - [Sanborn maps](#) are excellent resources for showing addresses, buildings, etc. between the late 1800s and 1950.

- **U.S. Federal, State and local government census records** – must include copy of original document (no transcripts). Include the full page whenever possible. You must include any date or location information.
 - [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)- a great source to find both state and federal censuses. You may need a subscription or institution with access.
 - [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) also has some census records and is free.
 - [National Archives](https://www.archives.gov) also has most census records, and a helpful guide to searching for them.
- **Newspaper articles and advertisements**– created at the time event(s) occurred; include header with name and date of newspaper.
 - [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com) is a good resource but may require a subscription, as it is an Ancestry.com related resource.
 - [NewspaperArchive.com](https://www.newspaperarchive.com) is also subscription based, but local libraries may offer access.
 - [Chronicling America](https://www.chroniclingamerica.org) is a free resource from the Library of Congress.
- **Gazetteers, directories, and other publications** – copy of page(s) relevant to marker text, including title page, publisher and publication date of source; please note that local history publications are rarely accepted as primary sources documentation.
 - [Internet Archive](https://www.archive.org) has many of these resources digitized for free. You can “borrow” books on here that are still under copyright, like a digital library.
 - [HathiTrust](https://www.hathiitrust.org), [Google Books](https://books.google.com), and [Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov) also digitize these resources, especially if a book is old enough to be in the Public Domain and out of copyright.
- **Government records** – copy of the original document; transcriptions not accepted.
 - State Laws and statutes are often available for free by Google searching, found through Google Books or Internet Archive. Your state also likely has its own archive site you can search on.
 - Many local documents (especially deeds prior to the mid-1900s) are going to be in-person access only, or accessible through a reference request sent to the archive.
 - [Congressional Serial Set](https://www.congress.gov)- House and Senate documents going back to the 15th congress (1817-1819).
 - [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)- Searchable congressional records. Set the search bar to search “all congresses” and then narrow by date and type of document.

- **Military Records-** including muster rolls, pension applications, etc. Include date, location, and names whenever possible
 - [Fold3.com](https://www.fold3.com), a subsidiary of Ancestry.com. Military records will often show up in Ancestry searches, but going to Fold3 directly allows you to search more precisely by name, war era, etc. If your institution does not have Fold3, try accessing through an Ancestry subscription.
 - [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org)- has digitized collections for many state archives, can be a great resource for any genealogy-related records (including military records). Free to use.
 - [Founders Online](https://foundersonline.archives.gov)- hosted by the National Archives, consists of 184,000 searchable documents (writing, correspondence, etc.) from the founding fathers, Revolutionary War, and many early Presidencies.
- **Life dates, birth, marriage, death records, Wills, Deeds, etc.-** Include full context whenever possible.
 - [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)- can be subscription based, check with your institution or local library for access.
 - [FindAGrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com)- an Ancestry.com related service. We accept readable photos of original gravestones as primary sources only.
 - [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org)- has digitized collections for many state archives and can be a great resource for any genealogy-related records. Free to use.

Program Specific Resources:

- **NYS Historic:**
 - [New York State Archives Research Services](https://www.nysarch.org)- The NY State Archives have over 270 million records from New York's colonial and state governments, dating from 1630 to the present, many of which are available online.
 - New York State Library [Digital Collections](https://www.nyslib.org/digital-collections) and [Manuscripts and Special Collections](https://www.nyslib.org/manuscripts-and-special-collections)- digitized collections of New York State government documents, including 18th-20th century materials, mainly consisting of books.
 - [New York Heritage](https://www.nyheritage.org)- diverse collections of digitized records from across NY, contributed by over 430 libraries, museums, archives, etc.
 - New York Public Library [Digital Collections](https://www.nypl.org/digital-collections)- Over 1 million items digitized from The New York Public Library's collections.

- Fultonhistory.com- digitized newspapers from across New York from 1795-2007.
- [Brooklyn Newsstand](#)- can be accessed through the Brooklyn Public Library for free or through Newspapers.com/Ancestry.com. This database includes the Brooklyn Eagle, which had state-wide coverage from 1841-1963.
- Laws or Statutes of New York- these can be found on Google Books for free and can contain anything from incorporations to appropriations records.
- **Hometown Heritage:**
 - See the above general resources, or check for your State's Archives and Libraires collections, as well as colleges and universities in your state for specific resources.
- **Hungry for History:**
 - [Culinary Institute of America](#) at Hyde Park offers an extensive online collection of menus; as well as [Archives & Special Collections](#)-
 - See also their [online Library Guide](#) for primary source research, which includes links to many online repositories and databases.
 - New York Public Library is scanning and transcribing their [six collections of menus](#)- the largest of which is the Buttolph collection, with 25,000 menus spanning ca. 1890-1910.
 - University of Iowa's [Culinary Manuscripts and Cookbooks](#)- collection has digital scans with transcriptions included of many early cookbooks.
 - [Early American Cookbooks](#)- collection of digitized cookbooks from NYU, covering ca. 1800-1920.
 - [Manuscript Cookbook Survey](#)- a database of pre-1865 English-language manuscript cookbooks held in U. S. public institutions as well as a database of kitchen artifacts used at the time these manuscripts were written.
- **Legends & Lore:**
 - Library of Congress [American Folklife Center Digital Collections](#)- established by the 1976 American Folklife Preservation Act, the extensive collections contain documented folklife from across America.
 - Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage [Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections](#)- contains extensive collections of documented folklife with online access to 80,000 items.
 - [Lomax Digital Archive](#)- a digital archive of the collections of folklorists John and Alan Lomax, comprising of over 20,000 items.
 - American Folklore Society [Folklore Collections Database](#)- an open-access online resource compiling 12 institutions collections.

- **Historic Transportation:**
 - Library of Congress [Railroad Maps Collection](#)- collections cover 1828-1900.
 - Rgsrail.com [useful links page](#)- many links to railroad related historical societies, museums, collections, and other informational sites.
 - [The Street railway journal](#)- held by the Smithsonian Libraries and available digitally, spans 1884-1908.
- **National Register:**
 - Find the designation for your historic building in the Department of the Interior and National Parks Service's [National Register Database](#).

Compiling Sources

Since our online application only has **two upload locations** that allow **one file upload in each**, you will need to compile all the sources you find into one or two files as you do your research. There are a number of ways to do this:

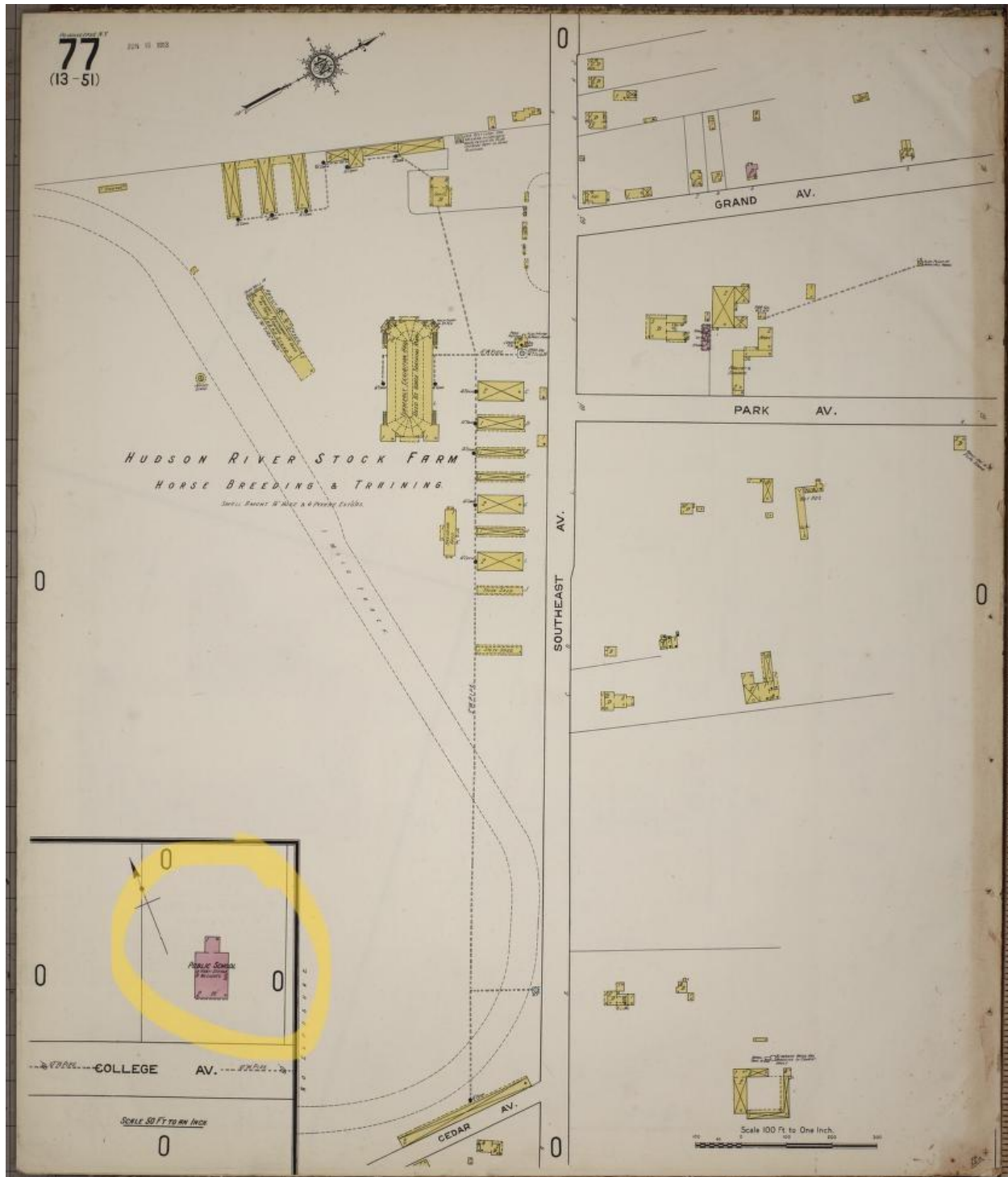
- **Word document:** As you find sources, you can insert screenshots or photos into a Word document along with a link to where you found it or a written explanation of where you got it. If you find the document in-person, take a picture or scan the document you need. Then, insert the image into your compiled Word document and write where you took it so that we have some context. When you have finished compiling all the sources in one document, you can either upload the Word document itself or export it as a PDF and then upload.
 - If you do not have access to Word, you can use Google Docs for free or visit your local library which may be able to offer access.
 - If you compile the sources in a Google Doc, you will have the option of downloading the document as a PDF, which you can then upload to the application.
- **PDF:** If you have multiple documents in PDF form and need to merge them into one file, you can use Adobe Acrobat, or Preview (Mac only).
- **ZIP file:** You can upload a ZIP file to the two locations on the application. To create a ZIP file, you select all the documents/files you want to have in the ZIP file by holding the shift key and clicking on them. Then, right click on the selected documents. On a Windows computer, you then select “Compress to” and then “ZIP file”. On a Mac, after you right click select “compress”. You can then upload the ZIP file to the application.

If you try to upload more than one file in one of the upload locations, it will remove the previous file and not submit it.

The following pages include some examples of the most commonly found and used sources, with tips on how to format them for submitting.

An example of a 1913 Sanborn map found on the Library of Congress site. The relevant building is circled, and a link to the online map was included because the resolution of the image is low, and the map can't be read easily if you zoom in. This shows the public school was at this location as early as 1913.

https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3804pm.g3804pm_g061921913/?sp=87



An example of a Civil War Muster Roll Abstract, found on Fold3. This includes the soldiers name, dates of service, and companies served in.

N. J. *Pay Roll 812* *Watkins, Charles F.* 1553

ENLISTED.										MUSTERED IN.				
AGE.		WHEN.			WHERE.		PERIOD YEARS.	WHEN.			GRADE.	COMPY.	REG'T.	
YEARS.	DAY.	MONTH.	YEAR.			DAY.		MONTH.	YEAR.					
23	29 24	May	1861	Warsaw	Hardwick City	2	24	May	1861	Camp	K/7	Eng.		
LEFT THE ORGANIZATION.														
HOW.		WHEN.			IN WHAT GRADE.		EXPLANATION.							
DAY.	MONTH.	YEAR.												
2	June	1863	Priv.	with Co.										
REMARKS: Promoted Corp, July - 1862; reduced to ranks - prior to Oct. 31, 1862. Name also borne as 'Charles F. Watkins'. Paid by the State from May 20-24/61-2 ¹⁵ . In Hosp. M.R. April 10/63.														
J.R. Born in Michigan age 23. Residence, Warsaw N.Y.														

An example of an 1870 U.S. Census with the date and location at the top, and the relevant information highlighted. Found on Ancestry.com. This tells us that this person was living in this town in 1870, as well as his age and occupation at the time.

Page No. 56 Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Winton Township, in the County of Winthrop, State of Minnesota, enumerated by me on the 14 day of June, 1870. 318

Post Office: Winton E. J. Snider, Ass't Marshal. 59

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dwelling house, occupied or not, and the value of real estate owned.		The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.		Age and Sex.		Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male or female.		Value of Real Estate Owned.		Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth.		Parents.		Married within the year, give month (Date, P. M. & A.)		Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.		Whether of foreign birth.			
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No. of dwellings, <u>4</u>		No. of white females, <u>4</u>		No. of males, foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of families, <u>4</u>		No. of colored males, <u>1</u>		No. of females, <u>1</u>		No. of white males, <u>4</u>		No. of females, <u>1</u>		No. of blind, <u>1</u>		No. of insane, <u>1</u>		No. of deaf and dumb, <u>1</u>		No. of idiotic, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>		No. of foreign born, <u>1</u>					

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