Using Primary and Secondary Sources for Historical Research

Presented by former Division Manager, Judy James
Special Collections Division
Akron-Summit County Public Library

Contact current Manager,
Mary Plazo, for any questions:
mplazo@akronlibrary.org
330-643-9041
WHAT ARE PRIMARY SOURCES?

- PRIMARY: first

- Original records from the past recorded by people who were:
  - Involved in the event
  - Witnessed the event, OR
  - Knew the persons involved in the event......
They can be documents, objects (artifacts) or visual evidence such as photographs or drawings.

They give you an idea about what people alive at the time saw or thought about the event.

Keep in mind that a primary source reflects only one point of view and may contain a person’s bias (prejudice) toward an event.
EXAMPLES OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- GOVERNMENT RECORDS
- DIARIES
- NEWSPAPER ARTICLES WRITTEN AT THE TIME
- LETTERS
- SPEECHES
- INTERVIEWS
- PHOTOGRAPHS
Census Records

- Taken every 10 years
- Records data about U.S. citizens

1920 Census for Seiberling Household (transcription)

PRIMARY SOURCE
1920 Census: Household of F.A. and Gertrude Seiberling: 3 children + 11 servants

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<th>Relation</th>
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1930 Census for Seiberling Household
(transcription)
1930 Census: Household of F.A. and Gertrude Seiberling: one son + 6 employees

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LANDORFF, TRYGGVE
26 YEARS OLD – SERVANT – BORN IN SWEDEN
Tryggve Knut Emanuel Landorff
United States of America

Declaration of Intention

Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof

State of Ohio

In the United States Court

Subbute County

No. 20965

27th day of February, 1931

H. Segarra, Petitioner

aged 23 years,

occupation: laborer,

do declare on oath that my personal description is: Color: ruddy complexion, hair dark brown, height of feet 62 inches, weight 120 pounds, color of hair: black, color of eyes: blue-gray.

other visible distinctive marks:

I was born in Yaxa, Querétaro,

on the 1st day of October, anno Domini 1878; I now reside at Atlan, Yaxa, 2, Colonia, Oaxaca,

I emigrated to the United States of America from Yaxa, Querétaro,

on the vessel: Stockholm,

the name of my last foreign residence was:

I am not married; the name of my father:

and now reside at:

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to:

Española, H. de Guzmán, of whom I am now a subject;

I arrived at the port of New York, in the State of New York,

on or about the 12th day

of August, anno Domini 1905; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein:

So help me God.

H. Segarra

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court this 17th day of January, anno Domini 1925.
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<td>Stockholm</td>
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HOME OF ABRAHAM HATFIELD
NEW CANAAN, CONNECTICUT

New Canaan, Connecticut City Directory, 1939:

Landorff Tryggve K E emp Abraham H Hatfield r Weed e Elm
United States Social Security Death Record

Tryggve Landorff, "United States Social Security Death Index"

Given Name: Tryggve
Middle Name: 
Surname: Landorff
Name Suffix: 
Birth Date: 16 October 1903
Social Security Number: 071-20-5844
State: New York
Last Place of Residence: Queens, New York
Previous Residence Postal Code: 11377
Event Date: March 1982
Age: 79

PRIMARY RESOURCE
PHOTOGRAPHS: PRIMARY SOURCE

SUMMIT MEMORY
www.SummitMemory.org

Digital “scrapbook” of Summit County History
Swimming in the Lagoon at Stan Hywet

PRIMARY SOURCE
March 1913 Flood

Primary Sources
Newspaper Account of 1913 Flood
March 26, 1913

PRIMARY SOURCE
PRIMARY SOURCE ARTIFACT

Mr. Seiberling’s “Needle Shower”
WHAT ARE SECONDARY SOURCES?

- SECONDARY: second or later
- Secondary sources are made at a later time.
- They include written information by historians or others AFTER an event has taken place.
BOOKS PUBLISHED AFTER THE FACT
Past Pursuits
A Newsletter of the Special Collections Division of the Akron-Summit County Public Library

Volume 11, Number 4

Winter 2012

The Great Flood of 1913
by Rebecca Larson-Troyer, Librarian

A century ago, Ohioans endured what is generally held to be the worst disaster in the state’s history. The Great Flood of 1913 devastated parts of Ohio as flood waters overtook entire communities and resulted in monumental losses throughout the state. The massive flood claimed more than 400 lives statewide and left thousands homeless, dispossessed by a torrent that ripped houses from their foundations and carried away nearly everything in its path. The disaster would prove a catalyst for change, as those who experienced the Great Flood resolved to prevent any such disaster from ravaging the state again.

In 1913, a snowy January and February gave way to an early thaw and heavy, unrelenting rains. The rains began on March 23, Easter Sunday, and continued for five days. Rainwater ran over ground still hardened from winter, coursing into lakes, rivers and streams and setting the stage for disaster. Between 8 and 11 inches fell in parts of the state, overwhelming waterways and causing dams and levees from Cleveland to Cincinnati to burst under the extreme pressure. Every waterway in Ohio reached higher than normal levels, many spilling over into the communities constructed along their banks. Ohio’s river cities bore the brunt of the flood’s force. Columbus, Marietta and Zanesville found entire sections submerged in icy waters. Dayton by far suffered the greatest. Located at the confluence of the Great Miami,
PRIMARY SOURCES:
Original records from the past recorded by people who were:
  - INVOLVED in the event
  - WITNESSED the event, OR
  - KNEW PERSONS involved in the event......

SECONDARY SOURCES
Records made at a later time:
  - They include written information by historians or others AFTER an event has taken place.
THANK YOU!