

Archival Resources for Heritage Fair Students

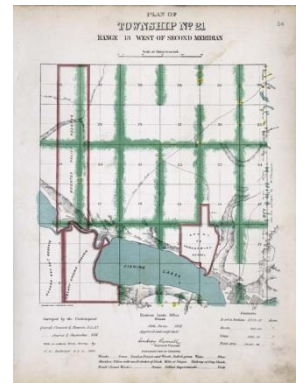
What Is a Primary Source?

Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation or study. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later. Primary sources are characterized by their content, regardless of whether they are available in original format, in microfilm/microfiche, in digital format, or in published format.

Source: <http://primarysources.yale.edu/>

Primary Sources as Evidence: History is created from primary source evidence left behind by others, in many forms:

- **Archival evidence**, such as manuscripts, correspondence, diaries, photographs, financial records, documentary art, most information in newspapers, maps, architectural records, film and video, electronic records.
- **Oral evidence**, on various media types over time, including audio tape, film, digital recordings.
- **Artefactual evidence**, the ‘things’ that are left behind other than archival documents, the kind of ‘stuff’ you usually see in a museum.



Township Plan 21-13 W2

Secondary Sources: In comparison, a secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources, and is one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources can include:

- Books
- Many types of journals and magazines.
- Encyclopedia or the modern day online equivalent, Wikipedia.

Format is not a factor in determining whether or not a record is a primary source.

- An original photograph or an original letter is still a primary source, regardless of whether you are looking at it in an archive, on a reel of microfilm, or online in a virtual exhibit or website, because the interpretation or analysis of the original information in the document can still be done by whoever is looking at the document.



R-B4482, Erma Stocking with Mrs. Haight, Mrs. McNeal, Mrs. McNaughton, Mrs. Flatt; with Saskatchewan Grain Association, Women's section group, Moose Jaw, 1914

Encouraging Inquiry Through Primary Sources

- Using primary sources can help a student understand the context of the records, and helps to make the situation real and relevant.
 - HISTORY IS MADE BY HUMANS – Looking at primary sources as evidence helps put that reality back into the story.

- Basing research on historical documents encourages CRITICAL THINKING:
 - Invites students to examine the traces of history, the leftovers of the past, as clues to support an interpretation of what happened in their period of study.
 - Invites students to analyze first hand and draw conclusions from primary sources, rather than relying on someone else's interpretation.
- Invites students to critique the sources that the information comes from, encourages them to "go to the source" and understands the context of the record, rather than relying on someone else's interpretation that formed the basis of secondary sources.
- Bonus! Primary sources can be really cool artifacts that exhibit well, that can be great visuals that quickly catch the eye of judges.



F379, Ed Sebestyen fonds, File 450: Medicare editorial cartoon.

Heritage Fair Topics Using Primary Sources

- Students who already have a topic selected can be encouraged to search archival websites such as the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan's online catalogue, to see if they can discover primary sources that might augment other primary and secondary sources they have found elsewhere. <https://search.saskarchives.com>



S-B10177, Barr Colonists, station, roundhouse and Immigration Hall, Saskatoon, March-April 1903.

- For students who have not selected a topic, teachers can suggest a topic from the sample list provided below, for which there are a lot of resources online or for which materials are quite readily available through communication with reference archivists. Note that these topics are suitable for school-aged children:

Sample Heritage Fair Topics That The Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Can Support:

1. Life and work of a Saskatchewan-based photographer, like Theodore Charmbury, or a Saskatchewan based film-maker like Dick Bird.
2. Prohibition
3. Life and work of a local figure
4. Local history of the community
5. Built heritage history of a particular building in the community (ie. a school, church, water tower, house)
6. Family history: can be focused on a particular individual in the family, or a branch of the family

7. Transportation in Saskatchewan: ferries, railways, steamboats, farm vehicles
8. Experiences of settlers in Saskatchewan: pioneer life
9. Experiences of settlers in Saskatchewan: immigration literature
10. Homesteading in Saskatchewan
11. Prairie housing: sod houses, farm houses, etc.
12. Famous weather events – ie. the 1912 Regina Cyclone
13. History of a political or world event through editorial cartoons (ie. Saskatchewan Becomes a Province; Medicare; Prohibition; Women’s suffrage, the Cold War, etc.)
14. Significant Saskatchewan Events, like becoming a province in 1905
15. History of an organization that the student belongs like the Scouts.
16. History of a local or family business
17. History of a local sports team, including women’s sports teams
18. Aviation history in Saskatchewan
19. History of medical care -- or Medicare -- in Saskatchewan.
20. British Royal Visits



R-PS78-1030-122: Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip's Royal Visit, 1978

Where Can Students Find Primary Sources?

- **Primary sources at home or in the community, including oral interviews**
 - At Home: Family documents, family photographs, family memorabilia
 - Interviews with grandparents, neighbours, parents’ friends, local officials, local celebrities, and their documents, photographs, and memorabilia.
- **At Archives, Museums and Libraries**
 - **In-person visits**
 - At the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, and other local archives, museums and libraries
 - Traditional research methods: come in, discuss topics with an archivist, review materials, order reproductions.
 - Please note that in-person visits to the Provincial Archives are limited to our reference hours, from 10 am to 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm to 4 pm.
- **Researching at the Provincial Archives -- from a distance**
 - Students should identify themselves as Heritage Fair participants so Archives staff can ensure that their request is put into an express queue.
 - Timelines: the earlier the better!

What can the Archives deliver?

- Support for research
 - Help identify possible sources at the Archives.
 - Advice & referrals for other possible sources
- Free scans: For any student who indicates that he or she is preparing a heritage fair project, the Provincial Archives will provide you with 5 free scans of already scanned images or 2 free scans of images or documents that have not been scanned from our collection.

Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan online resources:

Explore our [website](#) to see the various resources available.

How Can Teachers Help Students Access and Use Primary Sources?

In addition to helping students find topics and supporting their efforts to find and use primary sources for their heritage fair projects, suggestions for teachers include:

- Teach students how to cite their sources, particularly for materials obtained from archival institutions and from websites.
 - Archival citation example:
Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (hereinafter PAS), F 376 Rose Family fonds, File 58.a.1. Letter from Gerald F. Rose to his parents, Arthur and Elsie Rose, February 5, 1942.
 - Website citation example:
“Barn raising bee on a farm in the Cottonwood district north of Pense, 1912,” Photograph R-B12988
- Help students understand the value of knowing what websites they have used and the context of the documents they have found there.
 - Know the website, not just the link!
 - Heritage fair judges are impressed by a student’s understanding of their source information, and how the broader context of the information is used in their project.
- Encourage students to augment their research by:
 - Using family resources.
 - Talking to family members.
- Going out into the community to talk to local citizens who might have some connection to a topic of interest
- Encourage students to visit historic sites, archives, museums and libraries, locally or when they are on vacations with their parents.
 - Students who physically visit a location have a better understanding of the context of their material (e.g. their great-grandparents’ homestead; the first grain elevator in their hometown; the site of buildings destroyed in the 1912 Cyclone in Regina.) Consequently, they do better displays and verbal presentations.
 - In past years, students at local regional fairs had visited Pier 21 in Halifax, the Moose Jaw Air Base, the Royal Tyrell Museum, the Western Development Museum and other local museums. One student had interviewed her grandmother and had used original documents relating to a great uncle who had served in WWII.
 - In short, both students and their projects benefit from research ‘away’ from the computer. Presentations using primary sources stand out and help connect students to their topics.



R-PS80-1272-254, Grain elevators in Grayson, SK, 1980

Contact Information:

Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan Reference Services

Phone: 306-787-4068 (toll-free: 1-833-382-4068)

Website: www.saskarchives.com