

# Source Identification

## What are Primary Sources?

A primary source is a record left by a person (or group) who participated in or witnessed the events you are studying or who provided a contemporary expression of the ideas or values of the period under examination.

Examples of primary sources include letters, autobiographies, diaries, government documents, minutes of meetings, newspapers, or books written about your topic at that time. Non-written sources include interviews, films, photos, recordings of music, clothing, buildings, or tools from the period.

## What are Secondary Sources?

Secondary sources are accounts written by people who were not themselves involved in the events or in the original expression of the ideas under study. Written after the events/ideas they describe, they are based upon primary sources and/or other secondary works. Thus, an early 20th-century historian could prepare a secondary study of the American Civil war through her reading of documents from that period, interviews with veterans, examination of weapons, and so on.

The information above was based on the part of the University of Colorado's History Department Guideline to Writing Papers