



Colonial Quest

Discover Your Place in History!



Session 5: Researching our Towns First Settlers

Focusing question: *What did these people do to form our town?*

Overview:

Students use primary sources such as the 1790 census or town meeting records and secondary sources such as the town history, to learn more about their town's settlement era. They decide what is the most important information they will share about their settler.

Topical Understandings:

Using primary sources
Using secondary sources

Materials:

Town History
Town meeting records or other primary sources
1790 Census

Time: Varies, depending on students & resources.
Recommend 1 – 2 periods.

Procedure:

1. Introduction to Historical Evidence

Introduce the concept of primary and secondary sources as evidence. Typically, primary resources are "artifacts" *from* the time in question. Secondary resources are books *about* the time in question.

Primary Sources provide firsthand evidence of historical events. They are generally materials such as manuscripts, photographs, maps, and newspapers from the time under study. Gravestones are primary sources. Other primary sources you might gather into a classroom archive include:

- Scans of the first town records (found via the Town Clerk)

- Scan of the town charter (found via the Town Clerk)
- 1790 census (online)

Secondary Sources, on the other hand, offer an analysis or a restatement of primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include: dictionaries, encyclopedias, and textbooks. A textbook might reprint a primary source such as an old document or photograph. A website might provide digitized versions of primary sources. Secondary sources you might gather into a classroom archive include:

Copies of Abby Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* history of your town. Some one online at archive.org

Your town history (found online or in your town library)

2. Gathering Evidence

Provide students with a notetaking system that you already use. For each primary or secondary source have them look up "their" settler's name and answer the questions generated at the end of session 4. These might include: How big was the family? Where did they live? Did they have a role in the community? What sort of work did they do?

3. Formative Assessment

After researching your settler, create a list of at least three important details you will share with the class about your settler's story. For each detail, provide a quote from your research, and record where you found your information.