



Using the information you gather on the web site, answer the following questions about the unit.

1. What can information about a purchase (such as Merritt's purchase of land in the newspaper article) tell us about a person?

Depending upon the purchase, we can make some assumptions about the success or wealth a person might have, as well as what their interests might be (mining land, farm land, etc.).

What other sources might give us more information about the purchase or the reasons behind it?

For many purchases, records must be kept at the local court house or land office. Newspaper articles might also tell us if the purchase was newsworthy in the community.

How could we find out if a purchase was a good investment for the person we are studying?

The person's financial records or later business dealings could tell us whether or not the purchase was a profitable one. We could assume that it was not profitable if they sold the property at a later date for a lower price than they paid for it.

2. Court records can give us a summary of a case or argument against someone. What role can court records play in your research if you are studying a person's life? What other kinds of legal documents would help your research?

Court records can provide the birth, marriage, and death certificates for a person, as well as information about what property they owned and whether or not they were involved in any legal disputes.

3. In a court case, there are always at least two sides to a story. The issue involving the Merritts and the Rockefellers is an example of this. What advantages are there to seeing both sides of an issue when doing your research?

By being able to read both accounts of an event, we can get a clearer picture of what actually happened.

What challenges can this present for the researcher?

It is possible that neither account of the event is correct, and the researcher will need to do more research to determine the facts of a case. The researcher also needs to develop some knowledge about the trustworthiness of each account and what other issues were apparent at the time that could have influenced a person's description of the dispute.

4. In looking at Gates's pamphlet and Merritt's response to the pamphlet, how would you go about deciding which of these was more accurate?

By studying both, we could compare them to the official court records and our knowledge of

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the two sides involved.

What other information might you need to make that decision?

Information about the people involved and the exact nature of the dispute would be helpful.

Where might you look to get that information?

Newspaper articles supporting both sides, court documents, reminiscences of people involved, and possibly oral interviews with participants would all help us know more about the case. Consulting an expert who has studied the topic might also give us more insight.