



Beyond the Sources • Milling

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

1. Using a variety of sources to learn about a topic is one way to gain a broader knowledge of the topic you are studying. This section of the web site uses advertisements, charts, and diagrams to demonstrate some of the different parts of the milling industry in Minnesota. What skills do you use when you are studying a map, diagram, or chart in your research?

Geography skills, math skills and reading skills are all used in studying maps, diagrams, or charts.

How is this different from the way you study a letter or a newspaper article?

By studying charts, diagrams or maps, you are often gaining a more clear visual image of the subject you are studying. It may be easier to understand how a mill worked by looking at a diagram than by reading a book on the subject. But you need to study and interpret diagrams, maps and charts closely because the information is not usually summarized for you in a written form. You must make your own conclusions about the importance or usefulness of a source without the benefit of an author's description or written conclusions about the information.

2. Historians often use charts and diagrams as research sources for their work. List the strengths and weaknesses of using charts and diagrams as sources in historical research.

Answers will vary, but possible strengths might be: easy to read, visual, summarizing large amounts of information, etc... Weaknesses might be: difficult to evaluate without a great deal of research, no written summary of the information, some diagrams or charts can be confusing, etc...

How might these strengths and weaknesses affect how you use the source or how reliable you think the source might be?

Sources that are difficult to understand or don't seem to be reliable will not be useful to you or will take much of your time to interpret. "Stronger" sources will be easily used by you and will give you a greater understanding of the topic.

3. Classified ads (such as the ones shown on this site) can tell us something about the people who lived during a time period and what their work was like, but they cannot by themselves provide us with a detailed story of the person who placed the ad. What other sources might give you a clearer picture of someone who placed one of these ads?

Marriage or birth records, personal letters or diaries, and photographs can all provide us with a clearer picture of the person placing an ad.

How might you go about "tracing" that person's history?

You could search through court or church records for birth, marriage, and death certificates, as well as searching for the records of family members. If the person was prominent in the community, you

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may be able to find newspaper articles about the person.

What sources might you use if you wanted to find out who the person was and whether or not they got a job from the ad they placed?

Employment records from local businesses they were qualified to work in and personal letters or diaries might tell us where they ended up working and if they ad helped them to get a job. The newspaper where they placed the ad might also have had a policy of removing the advertisement as soon as the person received a job.

How likely do you think it might be that you could find information about the person in the advertisement?

It depends upon the resources available and the detail of the newspaper's advertisement records. If they kept information about each ad placed and whom it was placed by, you may be able to locate information about the person. If the person left the community or the newspaper did not keep detailed records, it will be harder or almost impossible to locate them.

4. Injuries were common in many industries during this time period. What other sources (other than the injury chart we provided) on this section of the site might suggest to you how someone could get injured?

The machinery used in the mills appears to have many moving parts, the lack of identified safety equipment on the diagrams of milling machinery, and the unit on the mill explosion could all point to ways that people could be injured in their jobs.

What other sources might you be able to find that would give you more details about how someone could get hurt in a mill?

Other injury statistics from other years could tell you if mills were getting safer or more dangerous over time. Letters, hospital records, or diaries from people who worked in the mills might express their concerns about the work or mention injuries they received.

Where could you find information about what happened to someone if they got injured on the job?

Local charities or churches might mention in their records any efforts they made to help out someone injured on the job. Mill records might mention why a worker either left his job to recover from an injury or was no longer employed at that mill.