



## **Guide for Using Primary Source Sets from the Northfield History Collaborative**

### *Definitions:*

- A **Primary Source** is an original record from the past created by firsthand witnesses of an event or particular time period. It can be a written record (a letter, diary, or newspaper), a visual material (painting, photograph, map), an artifact (tool, object, etc.), etc.
- A **Secondary Source** is made at a later time, often by someone who has researched the primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, biographies, encyclopedias, etc.
- A **Primary Source Set** is a collection of primary sources that explore topics in history. The Northfield History Collaborative's Primary Source Sets focus on the local Northfield experiences of a broader historic theme, subject, or event. All of these sets include a topic overview, links to approximately 20 unique digitized items available on the Collaborative's online database, discussion questions, related resources, education standards, and a guide to interpreting and using primary sources for research.
- The **Northfield History Collaborative (NHC)** is an online collection of primary and secondary sources from 16 community partners. Our partners include museums, libraries, college archives, businesses, churches, and more. We created this online collection to share the history of Northfield with a wider online audience. Our mission for over 10 years is to preserve and make accessible digital versions of records of the history of the Northfield area. Visit our website at <http://northfieldhistorycollaborative.org/>.

### *Resources*

- [Primary vs. Secondary Sources](#) video
- [Teaching with Primary Sources Videos and Sets](#) from the Minnesota Historical Society
- [Using Primary Sources](#) guide developed by the Library of Congress
- [Document Analysis Worksheets](#) developed by the National Archives
- [Teaching Primary and Secondary Sources](#) lesson plan from the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum

### *Other Primary Source Sets*

- [Digital Public Library of America](#)
- [Minnesota Digital Library](#)

## Using NHC Primary Source Sets

To see a list of all available Primary Source Set topics, visit the landing page at <http://northfieldhistorycollaborative.org/primary-source-sets/>. Click on the image thumbnail for each topic to go to the set.

For each set, read the introduction text and begin to explore the sources. The images link directly to their entry on the NHC's online database. Each entry provides more details on the historic material, what partner it came from, its date (if known), and other descriptions.

Tips for exploring the sources on the NHC:

- Use the zoom tool to scroll in for greater detail.



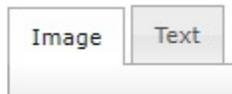
- A quick way to zoom is to use the "Fit to Width" icon.



- You can grab the image by clicking and holding your mouse on it to move it around.
- You can download a JPEG copy for personal or classroom use.



- If it is a text document, use the "TEXT" tab to toggle between the scan and a transcription (typed-out version) of the document's unique words.



- You can also view the image and typed-out text side-by-side by using this button.



- For text documents, you can also search within the source using the text search bar right above the image. Use this tool if you are looking for a particular name or topic.



- Some of these sources are only one page; others are multiple pages. Use the "Next" and "Previous" arrows to move among the pages, or scroll on the thumbnail list on the right side.



- Sometimes the image in the thumbnail is a particular page within a larger document, like a scrapbook. In these cases, the thumbnail captions should say what page they came from, so you should be able to go directly to that page on the database.

— Our Servicemen from  
Waterford, page 31

### *Other Tips for the Primary Source Sets*

The rest of the set will provide you with discussion questions for further exploration, sometimes with links to the sources. Some of them also have suggestions for classroom activities. Use these as suggestions or come up with your own!

Related items on the NHC that did not appear in the thumbnail list above are also linked to below. These often include more secondary sources (like a history of churches in Northfield) or text-based items that may not look as visually interesting, but are worth deeper explorations. Some of the links go to a set of search results on a topic, like "Northfield bank raid photographs", rather than listing each individual photograph. I encourage you to explore these links too, not just the thumbnail links!

There are also lists of related resources, including lesson plans, with links if they appear online. There is a full bibliography of sources used to develop the introductory text. Sometimes these sources are great primary sources on their own - like maps - and others provide greater details and context to the topic, usually on a wider scale than only Northfield.

- If you wish to look at any of the sources listed that are not online or you can't find them at the Northfield Public Library or your school library, contact the Northfield Historical Society museum and archives to request copies or schedule a time to visit. Some of the Northfield history books listed (especially *Our Story* and *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community*) are available for sale in the museum store, and they're not too expensive.

You will also see more tips for analyzing primary sources, and links to the same resources I've included above. Sometimes this is a good place to start when looking at sources like the ones in these sets.

Finally, each set includes the benchmark codes for Minnesota State Education Standards in Social Studies as well as English Language Arts that could be explored using the primary source sets. Follow the links included to identify which benchmarks they refer to (if you don't know already). You'll see that there are a wide range of grades and complexity. The sets were developed primarily for use in middle and high schools, but we encourage all ages to consider exploring these broad history topics through the sources in these sets. Also, many English Language Arts standards relate to reading and analyzing a variety of sources, including visual items, so that is why they're included here too.

We hope you enjoy exploring these historical subjects through the lens of local history! Hopefully more of these sets will be developed over the next few years. Please let us know if you have any questions, comments, concerns, recommendations, edits, or more at [NHC@northfieldhistory.org](mailto:NHC@northfieldhistory.org).

*These Primary Source Sets were made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Any views, findings, opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historic Resources Advisory Committee.*