

LEARNING MODULE #2
RIDEAU ARCHIVAL RESOURCES

Learning Objective

To Learn:

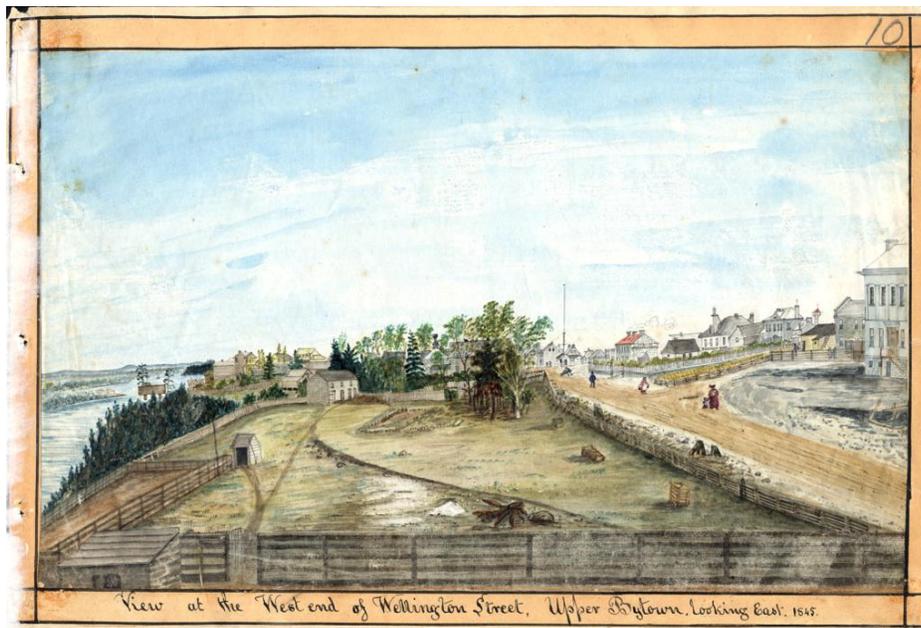
1. What primary sources are
2. How to locate primary sources
3. How to use primary sources
4. About primary sources as evidence
5. How primary sources can help reveal the history of the Rideau Canal

Introduction

Primary sources are generally accounts or artefacts generated by witnesses to or participants in events of the past. They can document the thoughts and/or actions of an individual, organization, establishment, or group of people. Normally, primary source materials are unique and unpublished; they are usually preserved in an archives, library, or museum because the documents have long-term value and provide evidence of past events and/or those who created them.

Primary sources include, but are not limited to:

- Photographs
- Paintings and sketches
- Letters and correspondence
- Textiles such as needle points
- Maps
- Architectural drawings
- Diaries
- Videos
- Oral histories and interviews
- Newspapers
- Published first-hand accounts



View at the West End of Wellington Street, Upper Bytown, Looking East, 1845,
Thomas Burrowes Fonds. Reference Code: C 1-0-0-0-10, Archives of Ontario, I0002128.

Learning Module

1. Why is it important to care about the difference between primary and secondary sources, and how do you conduct primary research?
 - Primary sources give authority and legitimacy to statements you make about the past. If you state that “Bytown was a developing urban landscape in 1845,” you may be questioned as to how you know this is a fact. In contrast, the statement “Looking at Thomas Burrowes’s watercolour sketch, entitled View at the West End of Wellington Street, Upper Bytown, Looking East, 1845, one can see that Bytown was a developing urban landscape” is much stronger, as it includes a primary source reference. Supporting your statement with a primary source means that you are providing historical evidence to strengthen your claim. Remember, primary sources come in many different formats, and you can support your work with any of these types of archival documents.
2. What else does this painting tell you about Bytown?
 - Does it give you information about the landscape?
 - Does it tell you about how people lived and where they lived?
 - Does it give you information about the plots of land and size of land grants?
 - Does it give you information about how the land was cleared for urban development?
 - Before the 1860s, paintings were one way to capture what people saw in their time, particularly since photographic technology was not yet available. Paintings provide historical evidence of the past or serve as an

eyewitness account of what people saw and how they interpreted it. Images such as the Burrowes painting, above, document the construction of the Rideau Canal and early Bytown. Such findings can provide answers to many questions about that time period, though they still require your interpretations.

3. What institution houses Thomas Burrowes's paintings and records? Can you locate other Thomas Burrowes items at this repository?
 - Look at the citation under the photograph—it will tell you the institution of origin.
 - The Archives of Ontario
 - Visit the website for the Archives of Ontario and search for this image: <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/index.aspx>
 - Go to **Start Your Research**.
 - Go to **Archives Descriptive Database**.
 - Type in “Thomas Burrowes” in the **Keyword Search**, and click enter.
 - You have three choices here:
 1. **File / Item / Title** which will give you results of items with “Thomas Burrowes” in the file or title names only;
 2. **Groups of Archival Records**, which will give you all groups of records that have “Thomas Burrowes” somewhere as a keyword; or
 3. **Record Creators**, which will search all records created by “Thomas Burrowes.” Using **Groups of Archival Records** as the search category will likely retrieve the highest number of positive hits.
 - Click on the Thomas Burrowes fonds—you have almost found that painting! It is here in the online finding aid that you can also look at the other Thomas Burrowes records.
 - Note: Archival repositories call a collection of records created, used, or acquired by the same person, family, or organization a fonds. In this case it is the Thomas Burrowes fonds, so the researcher knows that everything in this collection of records was created, used, or acquired by Thomas Burrowes.
 - Where it says **Finding Aid** along the left hand side of the page, find the link **View an Online List of These Records**—this will link to the finding aid. Here you can find the listing of all the images in the Burrowes fonds. Find the image we are looking for from the list “View at the West End of Wellington Street, Upper Bytown, Looking East, 1845.”

4. Who was Thomas Burrowes? Why was he in Bytown during the construction of the Ottawa Locks?
- The description for the Thomas Burrowes fonds includes biographical information. Most archival repositories will include this type of information in their finding aids, if it is available.
 - There is often more than one way to search via an archives website. Try searching “Thomas Burrowes” by using the **General Search** bar at the top of the homepage. Did you find the exhibit? You should find information about Burrowes and his connection to Bytown and the Ottawa Locks in this exhibit.