Local history is about place

A place is more than simply a geographic area defined by coordinates on a map; it is a locale in which people conduct their lives and which they have invested with meaning, become attached to and named.
Local history is about individuals, like genealogy...but asks different questions

An individual’s identity and experience is shaped by the places of which they are part, and their lives shape the meaning of those places
Local history is about your community ...
...which creates challenges

- it risks becoming focused on milestones, continuity and successes, and ignoring failures and conflicts
- it can include only the early settlers, the wealthy and powerful members of a community, and events that can be commemorated, and used to promote a place
- it can narrow to exclude any attention to surrounding places, and to larger regions, events, and processes
To unveil an inclusive picture of the past begin with good historical questions

- Focus on events, people, communities & locations, and understanding how and why things change over time
- Frame topics in different contexts and time scales
- Consider topics in terms of the larger context of the surrounding places, region, and nation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Time Frames</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residences &amp; Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Where did the new group live &amp; why?</td>
<td>− the years immediately after the group arrived</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− the first generation</td>
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<td>− the second generation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>− across multiple generations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work &amp; Business</td>
<td>Where did they work, and why? What businesses did they establish, and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Where did their children go to school, and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Organizations</td>
<td>What religious groups, organizations and events did they join and establish, and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Who did they marry and how many children did they have, and why?</td>
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Frame a local history question

• Choose one topic; in making that choice consider:
  • What topics and events play a prominent role in your community’s past?
  • What historical topics have received limited attention?
  • What historical topics are of interest to your patrons and community?
  • What historical topics are of particular interest to you?
  • What historical topics have sufficient sources in your collection or those of other local organizations?

• Choose a context in which to explore that topic
• Choose a timeframe in which to explore that topic
• Frame a question about how and why change occurred in your topic
Locating local history digital primary sources

- American Memory Collection (Library of Congress)
- National Archives and Records Administration
- Digital Public Library of America
- Internet Archive
- Umbra Search
Locating local history digital primary sources: state portals

- Virginia Memory (Library of Virginia)
- Maryland Historical Society
- Archives of Maryland Online
- Dig DC

Library of Congress Digital Portals to State History
National History Day Affiliates Directory of Resources
Locating local history digital primary sources: other

- Chronicling America
- Sanborn Maps
- HathiTrust Digital Library
Scavenger hunt

• Find a recipe for ice cream from 1915.
• Find a map of your hometown (or vicinity) from the 19th century.
• Find an 1858 edition of The Daily Journal (Wilmington)