

# Research Methods and Sources - History Day

## CONTEXT

One of the tough History Day judging standards asks if a project “Places the topic in historical context.” Does the project narrative recognize and use information about the environment (other events, people, institutions) surrounding the story? Did those other events, people, institutions influence your story? Was your story part of a larger story? Context helps the reader relate the historical story to present time. For example: When we read the dollar amount of wages paid to a worker in 1890, the wages may seem very low to us. Context asks: How did that wage compare to the price of a bag of rice or loaf of bread in 1890? What would the wage be in 2015 dollars?

There are several ways you can place your project story in historical context:

### **By TIME**

To orient yourself to the era in which your story takes place, look at a timeline.

In no particular order:

Kamehameha Schools library has timelines for Hawai'i and Schools

<http://kapalama.ksbe.edu/archives/Archives/TIMELINES.html>

Most major electronic **encyclopedias** have a **timeline** function. In Hawai'i State Library's Encyclopedia Britannica Online see “Research Tools” and click on “Timelines.”

**The History Place** <http://www.historyplace.com/index.html> has many **timelines** on different topics. The articles and other materials have not necessarily been reviewed by others, so compare what you find there to what you read other places (always a good idea).

**Time** magazine archives <http://www.time.com/time/archive>

Articles from 1923-2013 are available. You can search by date or topic. For context, you could search for the time of your project and skip around getting to know the year(s) you will be researching.

**Life** magazine <http://www.life.com/> includes timeline options and searching.

As with Time magazine, the magazine can provide an overview of an era or year.

Events and milestones of American military history arranged as a timeline:

**US Army Corps of Engineers** publications web site has several history papers and a photographs section. <http://cdm16021.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/>

Time continued:

Surf the web for timelines specific to your target. Example: “timeline labor reform” yielded **Timeline of U. S. Labor History**

<http://www.hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/Timeline.html> from U.H. West Oahu Center for Labor Education & Research <http://clear.uhwo.hawaii.edu/Timeline-US.html> . Combine timeline and a key word such as ‘prohibition’ to get results like <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/prohibition/prohibition-nationwide/timeline/> .

There are many searchable scanned documents on the web. Use your web surfing skills; watch for links on larger library web sites. The **Making of America** <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/> is a digital library of secondary sources, books, and journals in American social history from before the civil war through reconstruction (about 1877). You can search by topic, author, or proximity<sup>1</sup>.

Library of Congress is posting newspapers at their **Chronicling of America** web site <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> . Several Hawai’i papers are included. New options are added frequently. Just in 2013, some issues [1856-1883] of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser appeared. In addition, this site lets you see how Hawai’i events were presented in mainland papers. Some states still have more newspaper titles on their own web sites, so try web searches for alternate sites. California, for example, has more titles at The [California Digital Newspaper Collection](#) than at Chronicling of America.

## By PRICE / VALUE

### What materials or services cost then and now:

One way to provide context is to bring the dollar value of whatever you are writing about to modern costs. Building Iolani Palace for \$350,000+/- in 1879-1882, sounds low when we read it in a 1880s newspaper. However, translate the cost to 2012 = \$8,490,000, and we understand why the cost was controversial.

You can also compare prices in advertisements in newspapers and magazines of the era. If a shirt cost \$1.00 what else could you buy for \$1.00 in 1918?

To calculate inflation’s effect on costs, wages, government expense, etc. go to <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/> This site uses the Consumer Price Index to adjust an amount of money for inflation. It calculates the price change between dates 1800 to 2014. For example: a meal cost **\$.50** in 1860, but **\$12.99** in 2014.

[http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) This site determines what an item or service purchased in 19xx would cost in 2015 dollars. It calculates the cost increase for a period between any date between 1913 and 2015. For example: If in 1913 a shirt cost **\$1.00**, in 2015 the same shirt would cost **\$ 24.10**

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<sup>1</sup> Proximity means how close together two words being searched are in the sentence. Hawaii / sugar are in closer proximity in the second sentence: “When in Hawaii take a tour of sugar fields.” “Hawaii sugar fields are green seas.” In proximity searches you decide how close together the words will be.

The two web sites use slightly different methods of calculation and different sources of measure. It is best to use both and average the two if your time period allows.

### **By PLACE**

What other businesses, houses, structures were near the place where your event took place or person lived?

**City Directories and Telephone books** for the years important to your project can provide many opportunities for context. The location of a home or office, the kind of services and businesses available at the time of your event/story, how government was organized are all revealed. City directories list a person's address and employment. Look at advertisements. What do the ads tell you about the business community? Are all the ads in English? What products are advertised in what language?

Hawai'i State Library, Hawai'i State Archives, and University of Hawai'i Hamilton Library all have good collections of both **city directories and telephone books**. The collections are not the same - some years are missing from all the collections. You may need to shop around to find the years important to you! UH Hilo has a smaller collection; Maui and Kaua'i Community College libraries have only scattered, more recent copies. Regional public libraries (Hilo, Kahului, etc.) do have runs of some directories from mid-late 1900s on. Check with your neighborhood librarian for help. Some genealogy web sites have telephone books and city directories scanned, but membership maybe required. UH eVols web site now has some directories on line <http://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/> Type **city directory** in the search box.

Look at **maps, aerial photos, and 'fire maps.'**

**Fire maps** name the owner / user of a building and rate the building for fire risk. The map notes the building materials (brick, wood, cement), tells how many floors a building had, etc.

**Dakin Fire Insurance Maps** 1891-1906 – Downtown Honolulu

<http://digicoll.manoa.hawaii.edu/maps/index.php>

Look at Map 1 for each year covered to understand the key that tells how color and code words tell you things about the locations and buildings. [for 1906 the key is "Inside Front Cover" and "Title Page"] Click on the + to see larger images to get details about the maps and buildings.

By Place continued:

**Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps** 1867 / 1914-1970 (dates vary)

Microfilm<sup>2</sup> copies of the maps are at Hawai'i State Library (downtown H 912.969 S) and UH Mānoa Hamilton (MICROFILM S11310) and Hilo (G4381.G475 S3 1996) Libraries. If you are at a Library computer terminal **inside** a UH system library these maps may be accessed online from a catalog hot link. [use author Sanborn Map Company]. You can print from the microfilm or online link for a fee. As with some other UH databases, you may need a UH friend to assist you.

Hawai'i State Archives has **aerial photos** and **maps**. Use paper index on site.

The University of Hawai'i at Manoa has **MAGIS** (Maps, Aerials and GIS), a geographic information collection. <http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/magis> Some maps and other resources are on-line, but require special computer programs. Access to physical collections is via public access room, Hamilton Library, Ground Floor, BY APPOINTMENT. Call or write 808-956-8230; email: <http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/magis/contacts> before going.

**By IMPACT on people's lives**

Did the event change people's daily life?

Did the event you are researching take place in the lifetime of your parents, aunts or uncles, grandparents, teachers, or other friends and family? **Interview** them. What do they remember? Did your project topic make news at the time? How did they react then? Was the event important or unimportant in their lives?

Remember even when honest people tell a story about themselves, they usually tell the story showing them in a positive way. Each person will remember the event differently. Get reactions to the event from several people.

**By relationship to OTHER EVENTS**

What else was happening in the world, in Hawai'i, at the time of your event? Could your event be influenced by those other events? What was being reported at the time of your event in Hawaii's ethnic community newspapers? In New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Paris, London?

Hawai'i has had many newspapers besides the two major daily papers of recent memory. To find useful news for Hawai'i projects, look at [Guide to Newspapers of Hawaii: 1834-2000](#) (H.G. Chapin, c2000, Hawaiian Historical Society, Honolulu). Newspapers are indexed by date published, by newspaper name, by language, special topic (example: Plantation). Each newspaper is described and libraries where it is available are noted. In print or online <http://www.hawaiianhistoricalsociety.org/ref/chapinmultisearch.php>.

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<sup>2</sup> Remember: If you photocopy or print microfilm, turn over the page and **write on the back** the source (example: Sanborn Fire Map), date, page number and any other bibliographic info. Also record which library you were in & the catalog number, in case you need to find it again.

Some **non-English papers** had an English language page giving you another view of what was happening. Examples: United Chinese News, Japanese language Nippu Jiji, and some Hawaiian language papers. See some Hawaiian newspapers online at <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/digicoll/newspapers.htm> (good links also). Even if you can't read the paper's language, the photos, editorial cartoons, and headlines and the amount of space given to your topic may be informative. Ask around for help with translation of non-English articles.

University of Hawai'i, Hamilton Library, and Hawai'i State Library have large collections of microfilmed newspapers. Most Community College Libraries and many Hawai'i State Library branches have holdings. Be alert to the true name of the publication (example: 'Advertiser' is under H for Honolulu Advertiser). To learn which HSL branch library has a newspaper or magazine go to <http://www.librarieshawaii.org/serials/SHL.html> for the "Serials Holdings List"<sup>3</sup> and search by island or title. Again, some of these papers are now online at Chronicling America, but not all.

For help with **indices** to the Honolulu Advertiser and Honolulu Star-Bulletin go to <http://www.hawaii.edu/emailref/instruction/guides/hni.pdf>. This guide also explains how to access the newspaper microfilm at Hamilton Library. The guide has not been updated to reflect the change in Honolulu papers with the closing of the Advertiser, but the link redirects you to the Star-Advertiser archives.

Most newspapers will be on microfilm. You have to find the box of film with the right dates, and thread the roll of film into a machine that enlarges the picture. You roll the microfilm from the storage reel to take-up reel to find the page with your article. Ask the librarian for help to get started. Also read the Supreme Court Microfilm Guide posted with the History Day Student toolkit. <http://hi.nhd.org/images/uploads/SupremeCourtMicrofilmGuide.pdf>

Once you are looking at the article on the screen, look at the OTHER articles around it. What else was happening? Finances? Sports? Families? Entertainment? Government? International? Front page headlines? What do these stories tell you about the **context** in which your event took place?

A growing number of Hawai'i newspapers are digitized, but only a few years of the Advertiser [1856-1883] or the Star-Bulletin [1912-1917] <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/>. Early editions of the Advertiser and other Hawai'i papers are online at <http://www.genealogybank.com/gbnk/> but it is a subscription service. You can, however, search without a fee, then go to the microfilm for items that appear of interest and save a great deal of time.

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<sup>3</sup> Serials are what librarians call magazines and journals because they are published one after the other, or in a series.

## Hawai'i context helpers

### **Hawaiian almanac and annual** (HAA) 1877- 1960s

The title varied: Thrum's Hawaiian Annual, Thrum's Annual, All About Hawaii. Hawai'i State Library and the University of Hawai'i libraries have paper copies and microfilm. Hawai'i State Archives has links to the University of Hawai'i digitized volumes 1875-1923. <http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/hawaiithrums>

In each volume of HAA, look for "**Retrospect** of the Year X" for the year(s) important to your project. The "Retrospect" feature appeared 1876-1932. It was a review of what happened in the previous year in business, entertainment, government, health, schools, roads, and all manner of things. This means the "Retrospect for 1893" is in the issue Hawaiian almanac and annual for 1894. Be aware that the narrative has an 'establishment' point of view in most cases.

Each year HAA has lists of government officials, organization of the government, annual production of agricultural crops, exports, population figures by ethnicity, enrollment in schools, and similar data. The beginning and ending pages are advertisements which can be very informative (who's in business and what are they selling, what services are available, what's NOT being advertised).

**The Friend** was a monthly magazine that included a "**Monthly Record of Events**" in Hawai'i. The "Record" starts February 1887 until spotty publication in 1916, then ends with the April 1917 issue. 1917 begins a column "About People & Things" which is a less detailed replacement. The magazine's original title was "The Friend of temperance and seamen" and the choice of reports is slanted (government, good works, evils of alcohol, and crime tend to make the list). Articles in the magazine often deal with events important to Hawaii's Protestant religious community. Ship arrivals and departures are listed, sometimes with information on cargo and passengers. This useful resource is now online at <http://server.honstudios.com/mhm-friend/cgi-bin/mhm-friend> You can search by date, do simple or advanced searches.

**The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1885-1963**. 3 vols. Kuykendall, Ralph S. University of Hawai'i, Honolulu. There are revised and updated editions Hawaii: a history, from Polynesian Kingdom to American State. This book and other major histories of Hawai'i give a big-picture overview of Hawaii's history. These books are a place to look for dates and who was involved in events. Look at the footnotes (remember the author has done a lot of work to boil things down to a few paragraphs - look to see where the author got the information). Caution: Kuykendall used few if any Hawaiian language sources.

Note: Information was correct when collected, but time passes and so do web addresses  
Please report errors and omissions to Anita Manning [manninga001@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:manninga001@hawaii.rr.com).