



An Introduction to Primary Sources: Yellow Fever in Savannah

TARGET GRADE RANGE: 9-12

OVERVIEW

In this activity, students examine primary and secondary sources related to 19th century Yellow Fever epidemics in Savannah, Georgia to discover patterns in the epidemics and analyze relationships between multiple archival records. Students will simulate the entire research process, from identifying and requesting materials to carefully handling archival items and closely examining primary source documents. They will consider the types of information available to researchers and what different material types can offer on the subject.

What is a Primary Source?

A primary source is a first-hand, original account or record about a person, place, object, or an event. Oral histories, objects, photographs, and documents such as newspapers, census records, diaries, and journals are primary sources. Secondary sources are accounts, records, or evidence derived from original or primary sources. Textbooks are secondary sources.

Objectives:

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- Identify materials relevant to a research topic using finding aids
- Analyze archival materials to understand relationships and differences between record types
- Interpret cursive handwriting
- Understand the impact of disease epidemics on the citizens of city of Savannah

Time Required: 1.5 hours

Topic/s: Science, Epidemiology, Social Studies

Standards:

- GSE Social Studies 9-12 Grade: Map and Globe Skills GOAL: The student will use maps to retrieve social studies information.
- L9-10RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- L9-10RHSS2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- L9-10RHSS3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- L11-12RHSS1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.



- L11-12RHSS2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- L11-12RHSS3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Materials:

Materials may be original or reproduction, at the discretion of the Archivist and Municipal Archives Director.

- Pencils
- Yellow Fever History Overview (1 per student)
 - Excerpted from “Yellow fever,” Encyclopedia Britannica Online (<https://www.britannica.com/science/yellow-fever>, retrieved April 30, 2019).
- Yellow Fever Worksheet (1 per student)
- Archival Records Retrieval Request Form (2 per student)
- Record Series 5600HE Health Department finding aid
- *A History of the City Government of Savannah, Ga., from 1790 to 1901*, compiled from Official Records by Thomas Gamble, Jr., 1900, pages 112-115 and 140-145
- Record Series 5600MY-010 Mayor’s Letter Books, Volume 1, page 39
- Record Series 5600HE-060.1 Health Department, Vital Statistics Registers – Death Registers, Volume 4, October 1820
- Record Series 3121-007 Engineering Department – General Maps, Item XA-25, *Map of the City of Savannah, GA., by J. B. Hogg, 1876.*
- “Analyze a Map” handout, developed by the National Archives and Records Administration (available online at: https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf)



PROGRAM

Introduction: (15 minutes total)

- Introduction to concepts of archives and archival work, and the City of Savannah Municipal Archives
- Introduction to Yellow Fever, including a review of the Yellow Fever History Overview handout and a brief presentation on Yellow Fever in Savannah

Rotating Stations: (75 minutes)

- Students will break into 5 groups and will be assigned a station to start. Students will get 15 minutes at each station before rotating to the next station.
- Students will complete the Yellow Fever Worksheet and following activities during the rotating stations:
 1. *Identifying Resources*
 2. *Savannah Yellow Fever History*
 3. *Handwriting Challenge*
 4. *Death Registers Review*
 5. *Map Exploration*
- Students will take their completed Yellow Fever Worksheets back to school with them for in class discussion about what they learned.
- Teachers will provide the Archives staff with feedback on the program, successes and areas for improvement.