



# DEVELOPING AN ARTICLE 1

## *Scope and Content*

Development of an article covering local history is significantly different from writing a historical monograph or text.

- An article is smaller than a monograph or a textbook; the topic choice should reflect this difference.
- An article can be developed around a single strong piece of documentary proof.
- Research necessary for an article should also reflect this difference.

**Objective:** to develop a tightly integrated concept for an article of local historical relevance.

### **Topic Choice:**

Generally, the best topics are ones that are reasonably narrow. For instance, if you were interested in education in the area, you would be well advised to deal with one specific aspect of that topic rather than education as a whole. Depending upon the resources that you have, you might want to talk about the games that elementary students played 100 years ago in a one-room schoolhouse, the books that were used, or the development of mentoring skills among students.

If you really were most interested in “education as a whole” and had only minimal interest in the internal workings of the classroom, you should still try to narrow down your focus so that you can cover one point well and apply it to a local historical focus. You might be able to find the business minutes of one or more early schoolhouses and develop an article on the early development of schools in a small area, or finances necessary for the development and maintenance of early schools.

### **Development:**

You can waste a good deal of time if you select a topic and then you find that you are missing a vital piece of information. To get around this, you can do general historical research with the idea that you will find one document, artifact, picture, or whatever that will pique your fancy and will be the topic of an article.

Based on this kernel of an idea, consider these elements before you start writing, and then try to develop all of these points somewhat simultaneously.

1. Topic the article
2. Sources that you can access on this topic
3. Topic sentence of the article
4. Subpoints of the topic sentence
5. Compare your plan to outside sources (ex: Wikipedia or Google search)
6. Fill in the sub points

7. Document details (rules-of-thumb, local references, pieces of art, illustrations)
8. Fill in appropriate documentation
9. Validate your content with other people or resources

**Resources:**

This website (<http://www.northerncatskillshistory.com/Writing%20History/>) has hints on ways to organize your article:

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