(A primary source is an eye witness account to an event or series of events. A secondary source is written by one who may have used the primary sources to write about a happening that she/he did not actually witness or take part in. In a court of law, an eye witness account is admissible as evidence; a secondary account or “hearsay” is not admissible).

**Primary sources include (but are not limited to):**

**County Court Records**
- Wills
- Inventories
- Deeds & surveys
- Minutes of the city & country trustee
- Tax lists, license fees,
- Equity, criminal etc. cases

**State Documents**
- Birth records
- Death records
- Acts of Kentucky (laws)
- Journals of the House, Senate
- Kentucky Documents (annual reports of the Health Department, Dept of Education, Dept of Transportation, etc)

**Federal Documents**
- Census
- Military records

**Letters**
- Diaries,
- Travel accounts, etc.

**Memoirs**
- Newspapers
  - Articles
  - Ads
  - Photographs
- School records & yearbooks
- Business records
- Photographs
- Broadsides
- Ephemera (party invitations, church and theatre programs, etc)
- Maps
- Music
- Architecture
- Cemeteries
- Traditional crafts
- Foods
- Advice books
- Objects/artifacts
Selected, published diaries, journals, letters & reminiscences

“Journal of Doctor Thomas Walker, 1749-50,” in *First Explorations of Kentucky* (Morton & Co., 1898). Walker’s diary is filled with descriptions of the untouched wilderness and the dangers it presented to those who traveled through it.

“Journal of Mose Austin,” *American Historical Review*, VI (April 1900). In late 1796 Austin traveled from Virginia to St. Louis via the Cumberland Gap and made fascinating observations about pioneers coming through the gap.

*Diary of My Travels in America: Louis Philippe, King of France, 1830-1848* (Delacorte Press, 1977). The future king of France and several companions visited the US in 1797-98. His diary has interesting comments about south central Ky and its residents!


Daniel Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky* (originally published 1870, republished 1948). Three-year-old Daniel came to Mason Co. with his family in 1788; fifty years later he wrote about his everyday childhood activities in pioneer Kentucky.

*Excerpts from Recollections of the Rev. John Johnson. . . by Susannah Johnson* (Southern Methodist Publishing, 1869). Seven-year-old Susannah moved with her family from South Carolina to Caldwell County about 1796. Years later she reminisced about going to school, learning to weave and spin and her life as the wife of an poor, itinerant preacher.

Bernard DeVoto, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (Houghton Mifflin, 1953; republished several times). The journals are filled with descriptions of the countryside, the customs of its native inhabitants and the difficulties encountered in crossing the uncharted west.


Una Pope-Hennessy, ed., *The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Months’ Sojourn in America, 1827-1828* (G.P. Putnam, 1931). Although she found many of our habits distasteful, Mrs. Hall’s detailed descriptions of Americans are probably quite accurate.

Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London, c. 1844; republished many times). Dickens was “disappointed” by the United States and made damming comments about the South and its institution of slavery.
Albert C. Koch, *Journey Through a Part of the United States of North America in the Years 1844 to 1846* (Southern Illinois Press, 1972; originally published 1847). The travel diary records the activities and interests of a German immigrant who owned the St. Louis Museum and was a passionate paleontologist and fossil collector.

Dale Morgan, ed., *The Overland Diary of James A. Prichard from Kentucky to California in 1849* (Old West Publishing Co, 1959). The promise of gold drew this Mexican War vet and several of his Bourbon County friends to the California goldfields. The beauty of the countryside apparently compensated for the travail of crossing the Plains and laboring in the mines.

Nancy Baird, "... Been Pretty Good: The Diary of an Eight-year-old," *Filson Club History Quarterly* (April 1992). Willie’s life in Louisville was both similar and very different from that of modern children.

The Diary of Josephine Calvert 1878-1881 (Kentucky Library & Museum, 1982). A Bowling Green native, the diary of fifteen-year-old Josie reveals family and town activities as well as provides information about era schooldays.


John David Smith, ed., *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky: The Diary of Frances Peter* (Univ. Press of KY, 2000). The 18 year-old, bedridden daughter of a Union doctor, Frances wrote of war-related events in Lexington, many of which she witnessed through her bedroom window that overlooked Gratz Park.

Hambleton Tapp, ed., *The Union, the Civil War and John W. Tuttle: A Kentucky Captain’s Account* (Kentucky Historical Society, 1980). The wartime diary of this Wayne County attorney reveals the many contrasts of war—boredom and fruitless marches, glorious and spectacular events and bloody and sordid horrors.

Mary Julia Neal, ed., *The Journal of Eldress Nancy kept at South Union, Kentucky...* (Parthenon Press, 1963). Although the Shakers supported the Union, the Civil War was devastating to the Logan County community (and to the Shakers at Pleasant Hill as well).

Ralph S. Thompson, *A Sucker’s Visit to Mammoth Cave* (Patron Publishing Co, 1879; reprinted 1970). The diary concerns five Illinois residents who traveled by wagon from Albion IL to the cave (208 miles). The diary describes the journey and “reflects that spirit possessed by contemporary mountaineers or wilderness hikers” as he travels through the “wild beauty of this unique land of caves.”

and hundreds more!!!