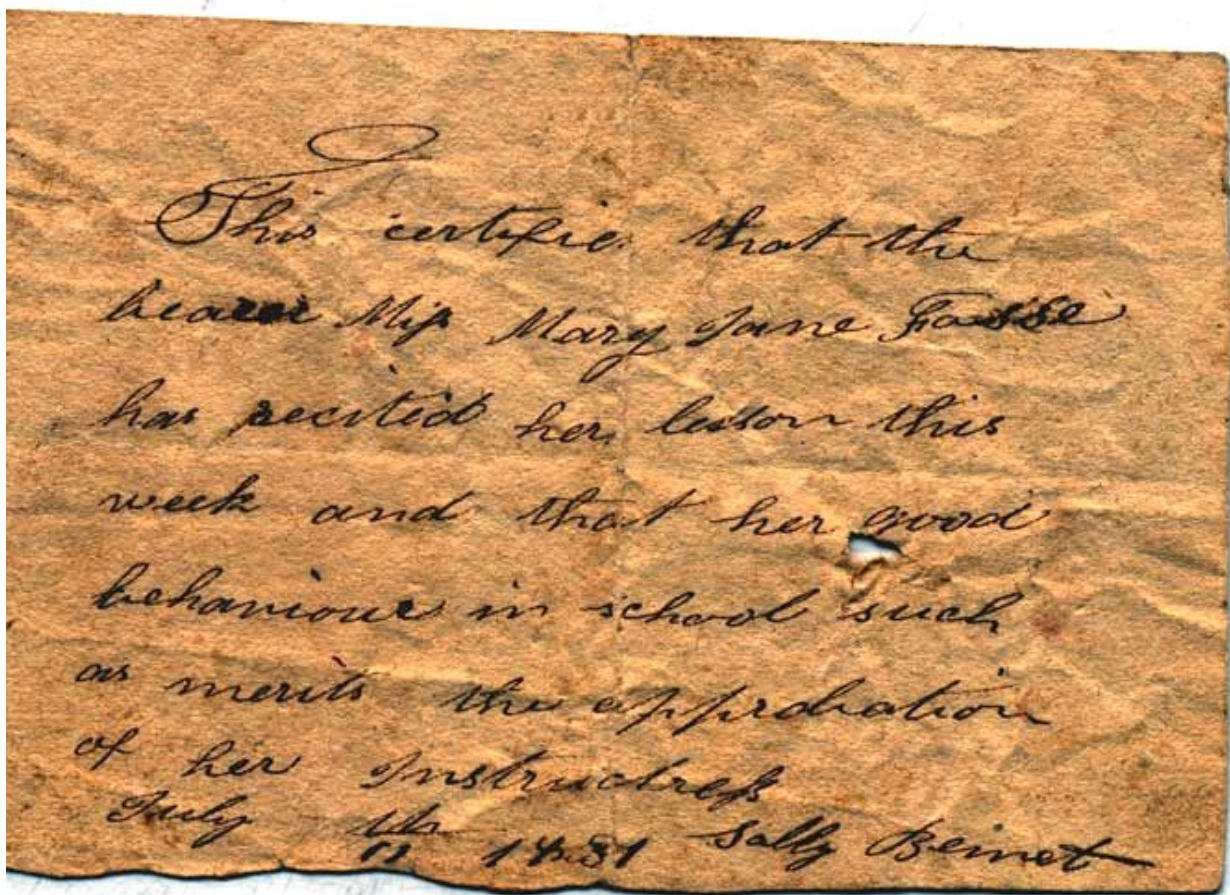


# Everyday Documents

## An Introduction



A Note from the Teacher (NHHS Collections)

It is almost impossible to live without creating documents. Tests, quizzes, sales receipts, hall passes, and report cards are examples of documents that you might be familiar with. Historians use documents created in the past to recreate what life was like. And documents don't have to be "old"—like the one above—to be of interest.

With the help of a family member or an adult who is close to you, look through the souvenirs of your own life that have been saved as you have grown. These might include photographs, letters, a diary, newspaper clippings, a birth certificate, report cards, or a library or social security card. Select an item and study it like an historian. Try to answer the same sort of questions you would ask if you were studying the note above. (A transcript of the note is on the last page.)

- What type of document is it?
- What is the date of the document?
- Who created the document?
- How does the document relate to you—or to the person who owns it?
- What does this document say about whoever *created* it?
- What does this document say about whoever *saved* it?
- What does this document say about life at the time it was created?

Of course, not all questions can be answered with certainty. Historians are called upon to form *hypotheses* and to conduct further *research*. If these italicized terms are unfamiliar to you, look at the vocabulary list below. These are terms common to historical study.

## Vocabulary

**Archive** .....a place where documents including diaries, letters, photographs, and maps are stored.

**Artifact** .....anything new or old that was made or changed by people.

**Document** .....a written source of information. *Documents* used by historians include photographs, paintings, diaries, business records, and many other types.

**Hypothesis** .....an educated guess. Scientists and historians make educated guesses about things that they observe and then test their ideas by doing additional research.

**Manuscript** .....a handwritten document. Letters, diaries, and wills are examples.

**Museum** .....a place where artifacts are stored and displayed.

**Observation** .....something that is noticed by looking carefully. Historians learn about how people lived long ago by making observations about the things people made, used, and wrote.

**Portrait** .....a picture of a person or people. Portraits can be drawn, painted, or photographed.

**Primary source** .....a document or artifact created by an eyewitness to history. Examples of primary documents include diaries, court records, photographs, maps, and letters. Examples of artifacts include tools, product containers, and children's toys.

**Research** .....to investigate. Historians are like detectives who search for clues in documents and artifacts that help solve the mysteries of the past.

**Secondary source** .....a document created after an event has happened using primary sources as evidence. Examples include history textbooks.

**Transcript** .....a typed copy of an original document. Transcripts are created to preserve originals. They are often easier to read.

## Transcript of the Note from Sally Bennet

This certifies that the  
bearer Miss Mary Jane Fosse  
has recited her lesson this  
week and that her good  
behaviour in school such  
as merits the approbation  
of her instructress

July 11<sup>th</sup> 1831 Sally Bennet [?]