A photograph of a pier extending into the ocean at night. The pier is illuminated by two bright lights, and a small lighthouse is visible at the end of the pier. The lights reflect on the water's surface. The sky is dark and cloudy. The text "The Inner World of Crafting Accurate Historical Scenes" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a white, serif font.

The Inner World of Crafting Accurate Historical Scenes



Agenda

01

Welcome!

02

Published works that got it wrong!

Dissecting two scenes from published works: The Da Vinci Code and John Adams. Plus, one that got it right – Pillars of the Earth!

03

Setting the stage, historically speaking.

Real-world step-by-step history research exercise – identifying and focusing on right research avenues: Place early 20th C Dickens, Texas.

04

Setting the stage, historically speaking.

Real-world step-by-step history research exercise – identifying and focusing on right research avenues: Event 1870s West Nissouri Township, Ontario.

05

Over to you!

Time to focus on your stories .



“

Published works
that got it wrong!

The Da Vinci Code

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The Da Vinci Code

The story revolves around a murder inside the Louvre of one of its curators, and clues in Da Vinci paintings, that lead to the discovery of a religious mystery closely guarded by a secret society for two thousand years. The main characters become involved in a centuries-long battle between the Priory of Sion and Opus Dei. "Most people who read *The Da Vinci Code* have no way of separating historical fact from literary fiction," says Bart Ehrman, chairman of the religious studies department at the University of North Carolina and author of *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*.



Opus Dei

is portrayed as a Catholic organization that is led into a sinister international conspiracy. **Truth:** Opus Dei members are deeply engaged in their personal charity and social work, organize training in Catholic spirituality applied to daily life, running universities, university residences, schools, publishing houses, hospitals, and technical and agricultural training centers.

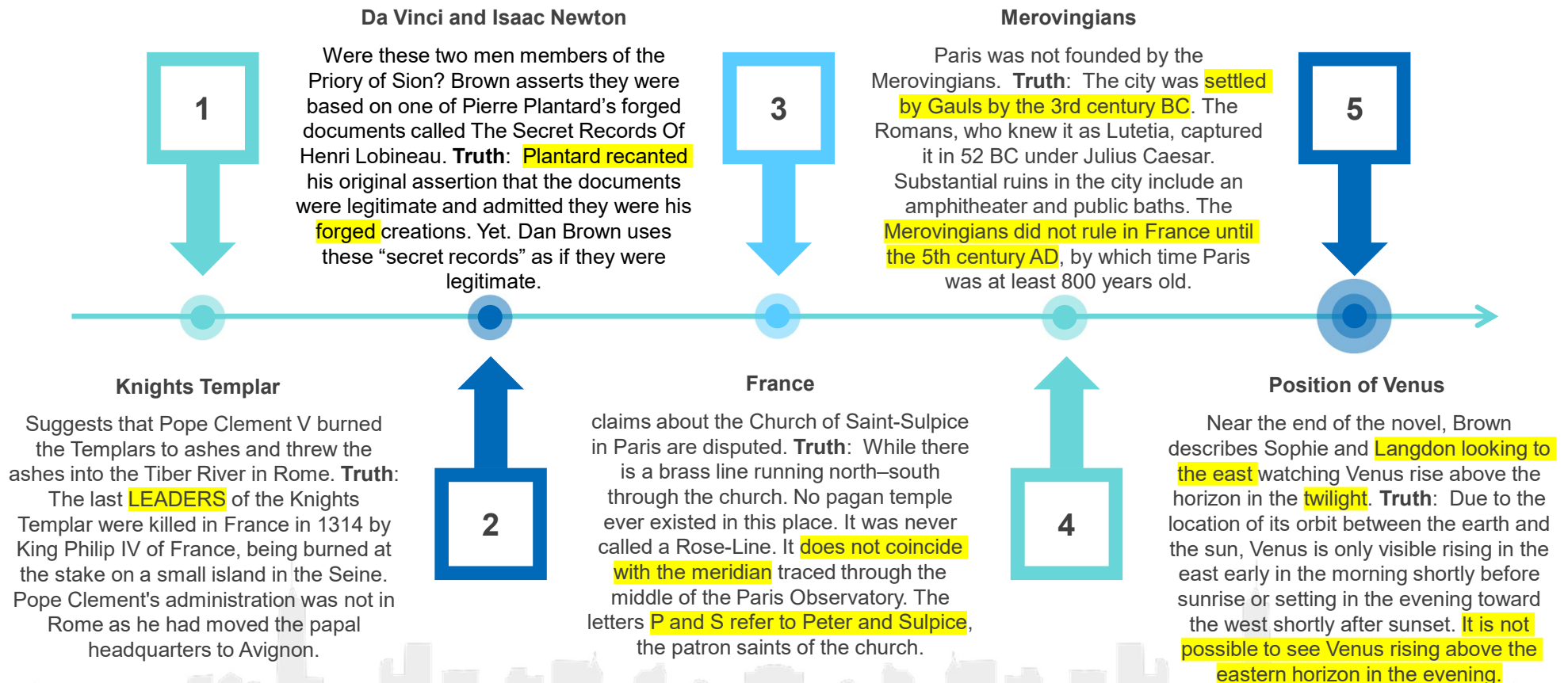


Priory of Sion

claimed as a factual entity in the preface of the 2003 conspiracy fiction novel *The Da Vinci Code*. **Truth:** The Priory of Sion myth has been exhaustively debunked by journalists and scholars as one of the great hoaxes of the 20th century.



5 Sins of Da Vinci Code





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Multi-award winning mini-series that got it wrong!

John Adams

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John Adams the mini-series

is a 2008 American television mini-series chronicling most of John Adam's political life and his role in the founding of the United States. Adapted from David McCullough's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, this mini-series chronicles John Adams, starting with the Boston Massacre of 1770 through his years as an ambassador in Europe, then his terms as vice-president and president of the United States, up to his death on July 4, 1826. It was broadcast in seven parts between March 16 and April 20, 2008. *John Adams* received widespread critical acclaim and many prestigious awards: four Golden Globe awards and 13 Emmy awards, more than any other miniseries in history up to that point. It went on to win 34 other awards.



**Visual Effects
Society Award, 2009**

Outstanding Created
Environment in a
Broadcast Program or
Commercial

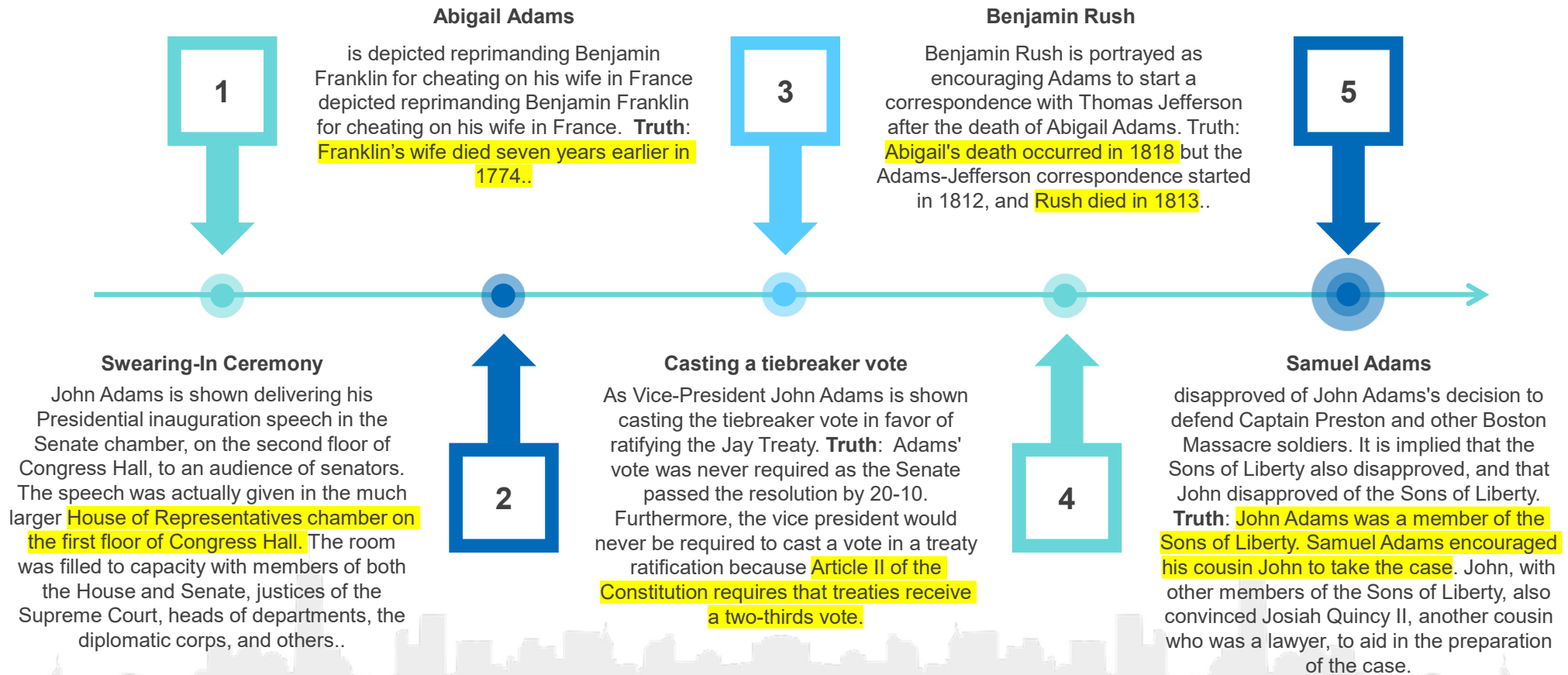


**Primetime Emmy
Awards, 2008**

Outstanding Costumes
for a Miniseries, Movie
or a Special



The Many Sins of John Adams



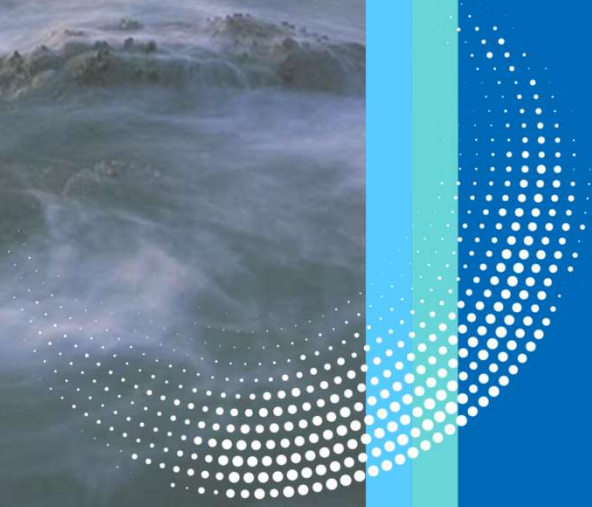


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One that got it
right!

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Pillars of the Earth





Pillars of the Earth



Set in the middle of the 12th century, primarily during the Anarchy, between the time of the sinking of the White Ship (1120) and the murder of Thomas Becket (1170), Ken Follett earns top marks for having completed meticulous research into the period of the mid-12th century. Although he has been criticized for supposed historical inaccuracies, the least of which is the contention that peasants did not eat breakfast, he has portrayed this time with almost 100% historical accuracy. All people ate a meal at the start of their workday as no one was assured of getting anything else to eat until mid- to late afternoon. We certainly wouldn't recognize their breakfast as a nourishing meal: it consisted of a gruel or broth, bread and ale. Midday meal was more bread, a chunk of cheese and more ale!





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Setting the Stage

Place: Early 20th century Dickens, Texas

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Story Inspiration

Dickens, Dickens County, Texas.

Elevation: 2550 feet Latitude: 33 37N Longitude: 100 50W.
Köppen Classification: Tropical and Subtropical Steppe Climate

This climate type occurs primarily on the periphery of the true deserts in low-latitude semiarid steppe regions. It is transitional to the tropical wet-dry climate on the equatorward side and to the Mediterranean climate on its poleward margin, with a cooler, wetter winter resulting from the higher latitude and mid-latitude frontal cyclone activity. Annual precipitation totals are greater than in tropical and subtropical desert climates. Yearly variations in amount are not as extreme as in the true deserts but are nevertheless large. In Dickens, there's an average of 1.8" of snow (0 cm). The month with the most snow is January, with 1.3" of snow (3.3 cm).

Cattle Ranching.

In the 1850s Texas cattle were shipped from coastal ports by the Morgan Lines to New Orleans and the West Indies. Herds also were trailed west through hostile Indian country to the California goldfields. By 1860 Texas cattle ranching was shifting from Southeast and South Texas to the north central frontier. The core area lay west of Fort Worth, in Palo Pinto, Erath, and Comanche counties. For the first time cattle brought cash revenue to Texas, although the annual increase in herds far exceeded exports.

Dickens, Texas



Top photo:
May 8, 1905, Wedding
transportation.

Bottom left:
The Dickens Springs
scenic spot for picnics
and outings. A mecca
for old and young during
the 1960s.



Bottom right:
Dickens Springs picnic
ground. Yes, that is
snow!



What's important to Places?

Transportation

How did people and goods get from Point A to Point B?

There was no train into Dickens (62 miles to Lubbock) Texas in 1923. Nearest points appear to be Plainview, Lubbock or Quanah. So, how did people get travel to, in and out of this place in 1923?

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Landscape & Weather

How did the landscape and local weather affect daily life?

The earliest sunrise is at 6:32 AM on June 11, and the latest sunrise is at 8:02 AM on March 8. The earliest sunset is at 5:34 PM on December 4, and the latest sunset is at 8:57 PM on June 29.

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Amenities

What conveniences were available? What wasn't?

By 1923 Dickens had a post office, school, a wagon yard, a blacksmith shop, a saloon, a barbershop, a hotel, two stores, two doctors, a dentist, a newspaper, several telephones and several churches. Electric service didn't arrive until 1927!

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Inhabitants

What was the general character of the population?

The population increased from 176 in 1900 to its maximum of 500 by 1927. The town was a marketing center for surrounding cattle ranches. The first criminal case was Texas vs Willis Edwards on a charge of unlawfully carrying on and about his person, a pistol!

Text Here

Step-by-Step to Historic Accuracy – Dickens, Texas circa 1923

FOCUS:

1. Transportation in and out of Dickens, including routes and methods of travel for people, animals and goods.
2. Cattle ranching.
3. Weather including how it affects cattle ranching.

On your visit to Dickens,
who would you arrange to
interview and how?

Local Organizations,
Associations, Clubs

Local
Resources

County Resources

State Resources





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Setting the Stage

Place: 1870s West Nissouri, Ontario.

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Story Inspiration

Murder of George Campbell by Thomas Coyle and the victim's wife, Phoebe Campbell.

The murder took place 15 July 1871. Phoebe Campbell was hanged 20 June 1872 but gave evidence implicating Thomas Coyle before her death. John Campbell, the father of George, among others gave evidence. Weapons found in the house were an axe, pistol, and knife. The victim and his wife and one of the witnesses lived at a boarding house owned by one McWain. Mrs. McWain gave evidence that 2 of the defendant's white shirts were missing as was his brown "derry" smock. [Guelph Evening Mercury : Vol. VI, No. 51 (October 8, 1872)]



West Nissouri, ON



Top photo:
Apiaries become a very popular business and farming pursuit of residents.

Bottom left:
Two farm hands from the 1860s. The fellow on the right side of the photo is wearing a "brown derry shirt".



Bottom right:
Phoebe Campbell circa 1872, aged about 25 years.



What's important to People?

Daily Life

Food, clothing, housing, access to financial resources all play a role in what the daily life looked, felt and smelt like.

Very poor and vulnerable people may have to make harsh choices that affect their own well-being so that their children don't go hungry. The burden of caring is often taken on by a female relative, who may have to give up her education as a result, or take on waged work to help meet the household's costs. Missing out on education has long-term implications

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Employment

Know everything you need to know about occupation X.

Cattle rancher? Did you know that cattle are very sensitive. So, it is critical that you not excite or upset the cattle by handling them roughly. Cutting, or separating, the steers for tallying or calves for branding must be done slowly so as not to startle them and start a stampede. Cows (female cattle) will always head for home.

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Social Activities

How did the locals occupy their time outside of work?

Social activity can take many forms, from one-on-one conversations to group activities. One of the problems with poor social skills is lack of social awareness, leading to loss of connection with appropriate romantic partners, productive employment, increased arguments with co-workers or spouses. In general, they don't see themselves as the root of their problems.

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Physical Environs

How convenient is the location to daily life?

A typical open-range roundup of the late 19th century might cover an area of 100 square miles requiring several weeks or even months to complete, depending on weather and the difficulty of the terrain and vegetation. Broken and brush-infested range, which restricted visibility and took its toll on horseflesh, presented special challenges to roundup crews. Why? Your readers want to know the answer!

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Step-by-Step to Historic Accuracy – West Nissouri, Ontario circa 1860-1870

FOCUS:

1. Daily Life – food, clothing, housekeeping, type of housing.
2. Social life including level of isolation having regard to geographic location.

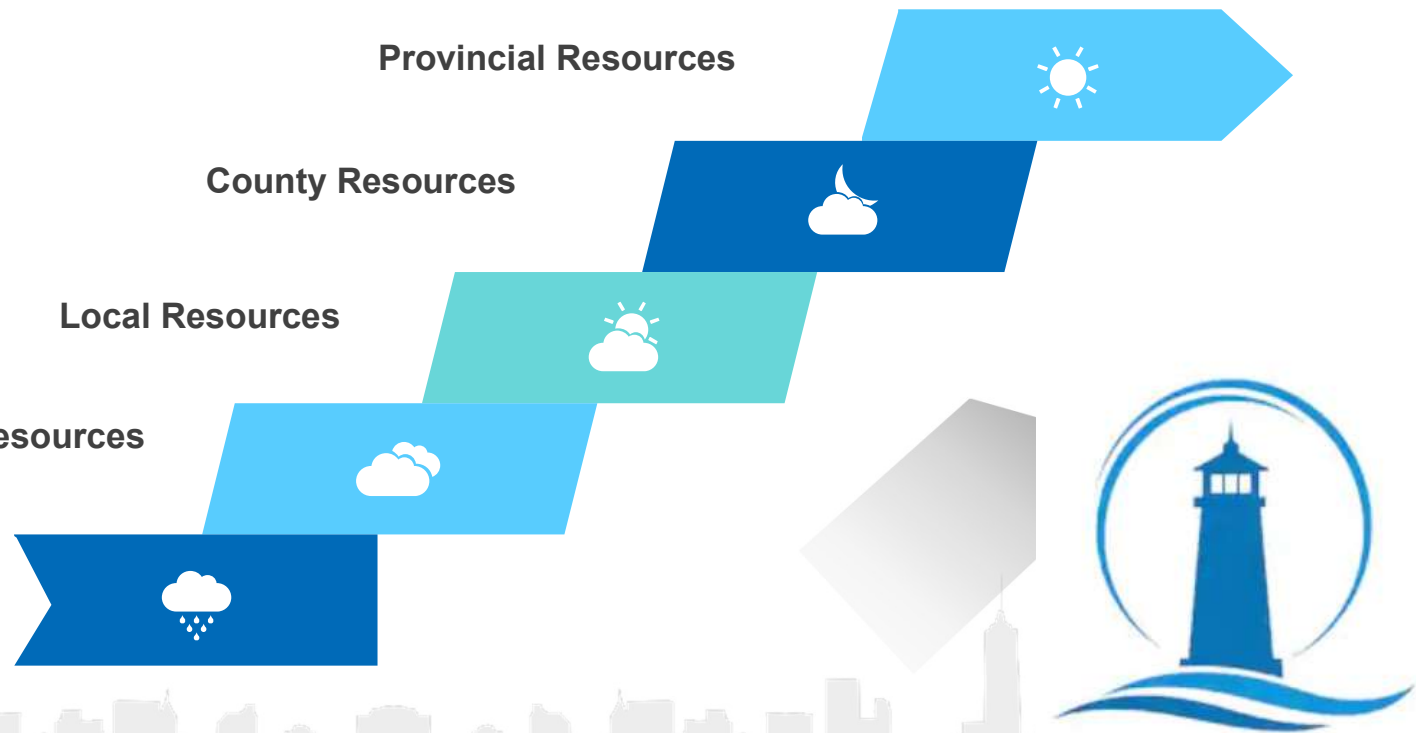
Provincial Resources

County Resources

Local Resources

Specialist Resources

On your visit to West Nissouri, who would you arrange to interview, why, and how?



A photograph of a small boat on a beach at sunset. The boat is white with some text and logos on its side. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is filled with clouds, and the water reflects the light. The boat is on the left side of the frame, and its reflection is visible in the water. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

“

**Now, it's over to
you!**

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Questions?





Thank you

A special Thank You to the Niagara Branch of the Canadian Author's Association for inviting me to provide this workshop to you, today.

A link to a PDF copy of this workshop will be posted on AncestrySolutions.com in the next week.