

EXAGGERATED HISTORY: GRANDPA'S TALL TALE

Reconciling a family story

Did this event really happen?

Are we really related to this person?

What is the timeline?

Do records or documents exist to aid in discovery? The story will help decide what records might be useful.

Are there interviews or diaries from the period in which the story happened?

Using these pieces of information will help determine the validity of the story.

Reasonable versus Provable

Reasonable: If the story took place before the mid-1800s, more than likely no, or very few, records exist. Therefore, supposition and analysis will be used to determine how possible it was that the story happened as it was passed down.

Provable: If the story took place closer to the present day, i.e. late-1800s through the 1900s, more documentation exists, making it easier to analyze the information available and providing a more definitive answer.

Factors to consider

Determine who, what, when, where, and possibly how of the story.

Confirm the time-period for which you are concerned.

Compile any records and documents that exist related to your story. Use these records to analyze facts, if possible. Sometimes, the closest we can come to documentation is letters, diaries, or writings of some kind that were written around the time of the story.

Analyze the results.

Do the documents studied match with the who, what, when, and where of the story?

Draw a conclusion: Is it possible, or reasonable, that the story could have happened how it was passed down? Could it have really happened?

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