



Historical Logic

Sources

- Barzun and Graff, cc. 5-7
- David Hackett Fisher, *Historians' Fallacies*

Goals of Historical Logic

- Saving of truth from error
- Find explanations and connections among events
- Develop a sense of the times

Lincoln on stump

- Historical problem
 - Anecdotes are what is remembered
 - Reports of ability to “take the skin off”
 - Reports of his logical ability: L-D debates
 - What was Lincoln like on the stump?
- Research problem
 - Stump speaking is ephemeral
 - Everyone claims to have known Lincoln; Who is credible?
- John M. Scott’s manuscript

Centennial History of Decatur and Mason County

The Lincoln Log <http://www.thelincolnlog.org/view/1840/1> April 21, 1852 shows Lincoln and Scott as partners on case.

George E. Smith, *When Lincoln Came to Egypt* (Herrin, IL: Trovillion Private Press, 1940), 60-62.] L2 S6483w2

John M. Scott was born on August 1, 1824 in St. Clair County, Illinois. After studying law under Kinney and Bissell, he served as County Judge in McLean County from 1852 - 1862, and Circuit Court Judge for the 8th District from 1862 - 1870. On August 8, 1870 he was elected to the Illinois Supreme Court, as the first native Illinoisian to serve in that capacity. He remained on the bench until June 4, 1888, and served three times as chief justice during his tenure, in 1875, 1882, and 1886. He was the author of *History of the Illinois Supreme Court*, and died on January 21, 1898 in Bloomington, Illinois.

http://www.state.il.us/COURT/SupremeCourt/JusticeArchive/Bio_JScott.asp

Historians' Keys

- Building of confidence w/i probability
 - Suspending judgment
 - Seeking multiple sources & touch points
 - Confidence as building & diminishing
 - Probability (living with error)

Historians' Keys

- Building of confidence w/i probability
- Putting Conclusions at Risk
 - Seek information to put conclusion at risk
 - Sense anomalies
 - Account for anomaly in a plausible way
 - Seek evidence on the plausible way

Historians' Keys

- Building of confidence w/i probability
- Putting Conclusions at Risk
- Reading the times
 - How did those at the time view the times?
 - Sorting fact from position?

Historians' Keys

- Building of confidence w/i probability
- Putting Conclusions at Risk
- Reading the times
- Working the times against the moment

The Search for Facts

- Question is truth or false, error
 - What actually happened?
 - Is the claim true?

The Search for Facts

- Question is truth or false, error
- Verifying Facts
 - The Encounter with the record
 - Evaluate the Credibility of the source
 - Evaluate record internally
 - Evaluate record externally: Scenario checking

The Search for Facts

- Question is truth or false, error
- Verifying Facts
 - The Encounter with the record
 - Guidelines for working to facts
 - Look for **best** evidence
 - Avoid negative evidence as basis: Cannot prove
 - Observe the burden of proof: assertion
 - Always probability and Confidence level
 - Never be more precise than evidence warrants

The Search for Facts

- Question is truth or false, error
- Verifying Facts
- Significance of factual findings: Once true, how significant is the fact to history?
 - Criteria must be substantive not methodological
 - Substantive not moralistic or aesthetic
 - A significant fact is one that helps make the case for your explanation and helps communicate it

The Art of Generalization

- Involves 2 axes
 - Scope: How far does the generalization extend?
 - Precision: How homogenous is the generalization

The Art of Generalization

- Involves 2 axes: Scope & Precision
- Works through logic of anomaly
 - Anomaly and crisis in Cartesian Logic
 - Regulates probability
 - Actively pursue anomaly

The Art of Generalization

- Involves 2 axes: Scope & Precision
- Works through logic of anomaly
- Strategies upon anomaly
 - Alter probability
 - Explore variety
 - Redefine scope of generalization
 - Elaborate conditions

Narration

- The telling of the story
 - Explains how and what happened

Narration

- The telling of the story
- A good narrative must:
 - Compel development. It moves.
 - Provide the “experience”; not understanding
 - “Why” is in plot, not characterization

Narration

- The telling of the story
- Rules for good narratives
- Guidelines on writing Narratives
 - Concentrate on the becoming; not on what it became
 - Dynamism: Divergence of choice or direction
 - Resist clocks and calendars: narrative time
 - But locate events in time & space w/ precision

Judging Narrative

- Plot
 - Movement
 - Denouement
 - Pace
- Images
 - Clarity
 - Consistency
- Character
 - Consistency?
 - Inconsistency motivated
 - Choice frames

Narration

- The telling of the story
- Rules for good narratives
- Guidelines on writing Narratives
- Write dramatically
 - Rounded statement: act, agent, agency, scene, purpose
 - Qualities permeate the narrative
 - Drama from disruption of quality

Causation

- Think in terms of influences, forces that shape, antecedents
 - Simple cause in history is a myth
 - Ask: If this factor was different, would things have changed?

Causation

- Think in terms of influences, forces that shape, antecedents
- Guidelines for causal reasoning
 - Post hoc fallacy
 - Multiple Cause; Conditional Cause
 - Work with probability

Causation

- Think in terms of influences, forces that shape, antecedents
- Guidelines for causal reasoning
- Learn to write the vocabulary of causality
 - Verbs of influence
 - Metaphors of forces
 - Narrative as causation