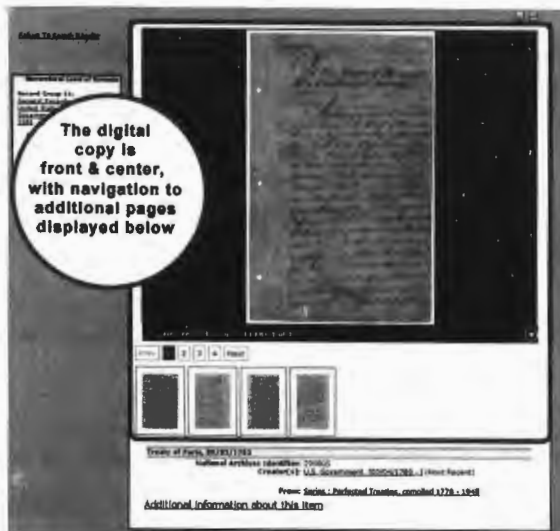# TEACHING WITH ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCES: DOCUMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES: USING THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES' NEW "ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS" SYSTEM

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The National Archives' holdings are immense. In our continuing effort to make them more electronically accessible, we have launched a new feature on our website named Online Public Access (OPA). OPA is focused on your needs, whether you are a teacher, researcher, or student. It enables a user to search across the various online resources at the National Archives, including all records from the Archival Research Catalog (ARC) (http://www.archives.gov/research/arc), selected electronic records from Access to Archival Databases (AAD) (http://aad.archives.gov/aad/), all of the web pages from *Archives.gov* (http://www.archives.gov/), and the Presidential libraries (http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/). These might include copies of some of our records online. Since its launch on December 27, 2010, OPA has received almost 200,000 visits.

With OPA, we have made a fundamental change in how we display our records. Of particular interest to teachers will be the placement of digital copies front and center on the results page. They are now readily available for use in the classroom. The new display for digital copies in OPA puts a large version of the first image, motion picture, or sound file at the top of the page. You can't miss it.

Users will also benefit from the following additional features:

- You will be able to zoom in and pan digital copies in OPA. This is vital for viewing handwritten documents online and helpful for photographs and maps as well.
- You will be able to share results via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- You will be able to register for an account in OPA and add subject tags to catalog records. In just three months, users have added over 1,000 tags to records in OPA.
- You will be able to run a search and bookmark the results.

Your search results will also be more comprehensive. If you were in a hurry and made a typo or misspellings, NARA's former search function would often return zero search results.

During an OPA search, the system includes misspellings. In effect, the system will be able to say, "Did you mean …?" and in some cases even guess what you meant to type. If, for example, you searched Dorothea Lange but misspelled her name, you can still find her photographs in the new catalog. This means better access!

We welcome users to try our Online Public Access at http://www.archives.gov/research/search and let us know what you think! All comments can be submitted to search@nara.gov.