

Name _____

Comparing multiple primary documents

Census records can be great tools to help researchers track where people are living and find out other demographic information about them. However, researchers must be cautious—historical census records often contain errors. Some of these errors are basic mistakes. Ages and the spelling of names can be especially unreliable. Other errors can be more purposeful. Sometimes people might have had reasons to lie or misrepresent things to the census takers. Look at these two census records from the Coos Bay area, one from the 1860 census and one from 1870. See what information you can find about Juila, Amanda, or her father Ammon and whether that information confirms Bensell’s report in the diaries. Use the charts below to organize your research.

| | 1860 Census information | 1870 Census information | Does the census confirm or complicate the account in the diary? How? |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Where is Julia living? | | | |
| How does the census identify her race? | | | |
| How old is Julia? | | | |
| What job does Julia have? | | | |
| Where is Amanda living? | | | |
| Who is Julia’s father? | | | |

Name

Comparing multiple primary documents *(Continued)*

Using your observation and inference skills, answer these questions:

1. Did Julia go to school as her father promised?
2. Do you think the census had an accurate account of the true number of people living in the area?
3. Why might people not have wanted to be truthful on the census at this time?