Have we ever know the true history based on what we have taught? “After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection” studies several different historical events to prove the that the truths behind the history are not always the same from what we thought we have known. While the historians were reconstructing the history, the obstacles that they have faced have brought them to a realization: the historical sources could be the misleading path for people to have a wrong understanding of what has happened in the past. This book has examined the history with oral evidence, photographs, personal letters, and etc. Not most of these historical pieces are reliable; sometimes the photos contained prejudice of the photographer, the interviews were set for the answers that the interviewer wants to hear, and the personal letters could not show the real thinking of the writer. From the reconstruction of the history, James West Davidson and Mark H Lytle concluded that the truths of the historical events are blurred and the history is made up of the selected speculations that were the best suits for the moments.

First of all, one of the obstacles that the historians need to overcome is the missing details in the historical events. When the historians are recording the history, they have to select, analyze, and write about what has happened in the past. This process is constructed. During the process, the historians would only place a certain amount of important facts into the process of selection, which means that the rest of information would be disposed of on most of the time (Prologue xxii). In contrast, James and Mark investigated the historical events with the details that others have ignored and discovered the hidden information behind the stories. The problem of missing historical data is discussed in “The Strange Death of Silas Deane.” Silas Deane was the son of a blacksmith, and later attended Yale University and became a lawyer. After this position, he became a merchant and went on to become a very successful member of Connecticut’s Committee of Correspondence and serve on both of the Continental Congresses. Soon, Silas was labeled a traitor when he was supposedly abusing the power of his position. Deane also took refuge in Flanders and living abroad for the rest of his life. In 1789, Silas decided to restart his new life in America and return home on a sea voyage. While on the way back to America, Silas had complained about the drowsiness, dizziness, and stomach pains. Four hours after being instructed to lie down, Deane was dead. Silas’s lifeline seems pretty clear from here, but the reason for his death remained a mystery. There were lots of rumors claimed that Deane has voluntarily committed suicide due to his desperate situation, but there were also rumors about Deane’s death was because he took enough a lethal quantity of opiums. Yet, these rumors could not be count as a reliable source for historians to conclude the reason for Deane’s death. One of the historians, Julian Boyd, had broken the tradition account of the matter. He made the connection between important facts and the information that seems irrelevant to this case. This is essential in getting closer to the truth of the death of Silas Deane. As Julian brought the historians to a different angle of this event, the historians started to collect the information about Deane’s friends and associates. Although this act seems to be unrelated to Deane’s death, it drew the investigator deeper into Dean's life. Based on the letters that Deane have sent to Bancroft, historians learned that Edward Bancroft was first Deane’s ‘private secretary’ when needed in Paris and a spy for the Americans when in England, (xxv) later had secretly become the spy for British. After the first meeting in Calais, Silas and Edward started to have in contact a lot more often. Due to the high profit of London insurance markets, both men decided to use Edward’s position to make a little fortune. By getting inside information, they started to their gambling game in the London insurance markets, “Deane was in charge of concluding the French alliance, and he knew that if he succeeded, Britain would be forced to declare war on France. Bancroft hurried across to London as soon as the treaty had been concluded and took out the proper insurance before the news went public.” (xxvi) Soon, just like most of the gamblers, Deane lost many wagers and ended up with didn’t make much money at all.