

Emily Billett

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### Library Award for Undergraduate Research Essay

I performed the research for my paper under the guidance of Allison Finkelstein, the instructor for HIST 208L: Historical Research and Methods Seminar: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Interpretation in the United States, which I took in the fall semester of 2013. This class required me to read about historical memory, the study of the ways in which people remember and commemorate past events, and to choose a topic relating to historical memory in the United States for a research paper.

The topic of my research was the historical memory of Fort Ticonderoga, the site of battles during both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. I considered other topics, such as the USS Constitution battleship, but I chose Fort Ticonderoga because of my personal experience in visiting and exploring the fort. When I visited, I found the legacy of the fort and the legends of the Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, who took the fort in 1775, very interesting. While researching, I wanted to explore both the actual history of Ticonderoga and the myths about the fort and to investigate how public perception of the fort has changed.

I discovered my sources primarily through the university libraries' online databases. I initially used WorldCat UMD to find books and journal articles in the university's collections about Fort Ticonderoga and Ethan Allen. Although McKeldin Library had few books written specifically about my topic, I found a souvenir booklet from the Fort Ticonderoga Museum. I then expanded my search to online books on Google Books and WorldCat, which allowed me to

access key scholarly books about historical memory in the early United States. I also requested books from other libraries within the Maryland system and through interlibrary loan.

The primary sources for my paper consisted mostly of newspaper and periodical articles. I read the footnotes and bibliographies of the secondary sources and followed leads to primary sources. For example, one scholarly book mentioned Nathaniel Hawthorne's account of visiting Ticonderoga, so I found a book with that account. Most of my primary source material, however, came from my searches on the America's Historical Newspapers, ProQuest American Periodicals, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers databases. To find the sources I needed, I restricted the date range to newspaper articles written after 1774 and also narrowed my search to time ranges for which I was lacking information, such as the period between 1800 and 1850. I read through these documents and organized them into categories by time period and type of source, such as newspaper articles, pamphlets, and letters to the editor. While written sources formed the majority of my research, I also found paintings, photographs, and maps of Fort Ticonderoga in the digital archives of the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library.

Allison Finkelstein, my instructor, gave me the most assistance in performing my research. She introduced me to the different types of sources that could be used for my paper and helped me determine where to look for those sources. Ms. Finkelstein aided me in focusing my research on the historical memory of Fort Ticonderoga itself, rather than of both the fort and Ethan Allen, and she advised me to restrict the time period of my research to before 1950. Eric Lindquist, the history librarian subject specialist, instructed my class on how to use the library databases and interlibrary loan system and told us which databases were best for our research.

My selection of sources was based on both the validity of the sources themselves and their relevance to my topic. I selected sources based on their scholarly merit, in the case of

secondary sources. For example, I favored more recent academic publications over books written about Ticonderoga during the nineteenth century, which generally neglected to identify their source material. I used keyword searches to find newspaper articles and periodicals closely related to my topic. For example, I combined “Ticonderoga” with “battle” to exclude results about the town of Ticonderoga, and I searched for “Ticonderoga” and “centennial” to find information about celebrations commemorating the centennial of the American Revolution. I also tried to find multiple primary sources of the same type, such as travellers’ accounts of visiting the fort, in order to compare and contrast them. I supplemented some sources with other sources that criticized the reliability of those accounts. Whenever possible, I attempted to research the authors of the material I found and take into account their biases, such as a desire to promote heroic tales about the American Revolution.

During the research process, I learned how to navigate both the university libraries’ databases and online archives. By looking through online archives, I improved my ability to find and categorize primary sources, and I discovered which databases are most useful for historical research. I acquired knowledge about evaluating both primary and secondary sources. I will probably use the library databases for research in future history classes at the University of Maryland. Also, because I am considering attending graduate school in library science, my personal experiences in performing research would allow me to understand how to help other people in their research.

Looking back on my research experience, I would change my initial approach to doing research. I should have narrowed my research focus much sooner in the process so that I would not have become overwhelmed with the quantity of sources I found. Also, I would spend more time finding secondary sources that discussed my topic, not the general history of the period, and

I would make a greater effort to find scholarly journal articles about my topic. Most of the secondary sources I found were books, rather than journal articles. I am not sure if there are journal articles about my topic or if I just had difficulties in finding them. The library could assist in my research needs by providing more online access to books because I found online books essential to my research.