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Clara Barton revolutionized healthcare all over the world, and paved the way for female leaders everywhere. While the historical record does justice to her accomplishments, the truth about Clara Barton's personal life is indeed concealed. Barton struggled with mental illness throughout her life. She was very open about it to her friends, family members and coworkers. Early biographies of Barton speak honestly about her struggles and her melancholy demeanor, but from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onward, Barton's truth was concealed.

I was fortunate to take History 208M: Maryland in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with Ms. Cate Brennan. She taught me about conducting research and citing sources, and provided guidance as I wrote my research paper. Ms. Brennan designed four research assignments which introduced the class to the nine types of sources listed below. The first two assignments were designed to simply give us experience with research, we were instructed to avoid following one topic. The last two assignments were for our specific research questions.

We began the class with simply learning how to research. Elizabeth Novara, the historical manuscripts curator, introduced us to our first primary sources. She pulled boxes of archival material for us to look through, and designed an exercise with questions for us to answer based on what we found in our sources. After familiarizing us with the Archives in Hornbake, she introduced us to the Digital Archives.

As part of the first research assignment, we had to arbitrarily choose six manuscripts, write their citations and explain their historical significance. It was in this assignment that I stumbled upon the Barton papers. Initially, I had planned on researching the Siege of Baltimore,

but I changed my course completely after finding Clara Barton's manuscripts. The first source I found was a letter that she wrote to Harriett Reed, a very close friend of hers. Barton sounded very depressed, saying, "The mental part of this winter has been hard... the weight so heavy, the way so dark, the abyss so deep..."<sup>1</sup> I continued to read through her manuscripts, discovering that her tone really never changed from burdened and melancholic. I was confused. I'd never heard about this side of Clara Barton before. History books present her as a brave, charismatic, heroic woman, and nothing more. I had never heard mention of her struggles with mental health.

Barton's manuscripts lit a spark in me. I passionately continued through my research for about eight weeks. I felt a need to reveal the real Clara Barton and highlight the discrepancy between the truth about Barton and the way she is presented in historiography. My research took me through nine major types of sources, all of which I found through the University of Maryland Library system. Primarily, I used the Print Archives in Hornbake Library, as well as the Digital Collections. I also used digital collections found through Research Port. Research Port also led me to periodicals, scholarly journals, and other secondary sources. From McKeldin, I used encyclopedias, secondary source books, book reviews, scholarly journals and microfilm.

My primary source material came mostly from the Digital and Print Archives of Hornbake Library. It was there that I found the Barton Papers, which provided me with an abundance of Clara Barton's diary entries and personal correspondence. From Research Port, I was able to access other archives with personal manuscript materials. Research Port also led me to periodicals with valuable interviews between journalists and Clara Barton. These interviews

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Barton to Harriette Reed, April 1900, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1, University of Maryland Hornbake Library, College Park, MD, accessed February 25, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/12621>.

provided firsthand accounts of how Barton started the American Red Cross, and answered the questions that did not come up in Barton's personal manuscripts.

Chester Arthur was integral to the founding of the Red Cross, and he and Barton corresponded frequently. I poured over the Arthur Papers on microfilm looking for their correspondence. I did not find correspondence between the two of them, but the process of searching took me through countless files pertaining to Chester Arthur. By the time I was finished, I felt like I had a comprehensive understanding of who Arthur was, from his letters to James Garfield, down to his dry cleaning receipts. I'll admit, my experience with microfilm was frustrating, however, I left McKeldin feeling like a real historian. Even though I didn't find what I wanted to find, the material was still very useful.

The main function of my secondary sources was actually to highlight the discrepancy between truth and Barton's modern presentation. The articles that I found in encyclopedias were useful because their presentations of Barton were so inaccurate. It was satisfying to take parts of an encyclopedia entry about Barton and debunk them with primary sources. The only major challenge in my research came when I found a book about Barton by Elizabeth Brown Pryor in which she does discuss Barton's mental health history. At first, I thought this weakened my thesis, and I was also selfishly disappointed that I wasn't the first one to discover this side of Barton. I had to take a break from the paper after finding this. The way I integrated this into my paper was through reviews of Pryor's work. In the reviews, scholars lauded Pryor as being the first person to uncover the truth about Barton's life. This actually helped me because Pryor's book was written in 1987. I had proof that nothing had been written about Barton's mental health before 1987, and nothing since. Barton's nephew's biography of her addressed Barton's health,

and it was published in 1912. With Pryor's work, I could narrow the margin down and say that between 1912 and 1987, the historical record changed Clara Barton's story.

Conducting this research helped me to become a much better student and historian. The most important lesson I learned was not to commit myself to a thesis before beginning my research. Instead, I dove into my sources and let my thesis form itself. If I had committed to a thesis before starting my research, I would have missed many valuable sources. It is important to be open to what there is to find in primary sources, and to maintain integrity. Looking back, I only wish I had more time. The sheer volume of material I could have looked through was overwhelming. Better organization in the beginning would have helped me to comb through my sources more efficiently, and talking with a librarian could have helped me find what I needed more efficiently. The only thing I would change about the University Library system is Research Port. I found it frustrating that I could only search Research Port by database name and not by topic. The only way I knew which databases to look through was from guidance from Elizabeth Novara and Cate Brennan. A topic search function on Research Port would be incredibly helpful.

When I turned in my final paper, I felt like I had only just begun. I feel that I've discovered a lapse in historical integrity that needs to be addressed and publicized. Concealing Barton's truth reinforces the stigma that surrounds mental health by sending the message that her struggles should be hidden. Clara Barton is a role model to all, especially young students. It would be very beneficial to give children with mental health challenges a role model. Barton's accomplishments are even more impressive when we consider the fact that she was struggling personally while working on the battlefield and founding the American Red Cross. She has the

potential to be a beacon of hope to the mental health community, if we as historians share the truth.