

Posters on the Hill Address

This past summer, I was awarded the Adrian Tinsley Undergraduate Research Grant from my college, Bridgewater State University, in Bridgewater, MA. I was a senior at the time, getting ready to enter into my final semester at BSU; and what an amazing way to end an undergraduate academic career. As a history major, I had developed a strong interest in studying the female experience, particularly here in the United States. Guided by several wonderful professors, including my to-be mentor for my undergraduate research, Dr. Margaret Lowe, I began to form a specialty surrounding the fight for women's suffrage, in other words, their right to vote. So when Dr. Lowe mentioned applying for the Adrian Tinsley Undergraduate Research Grant, my vision was clear. However, it would not be until I stumbled upon some invaluable primary sources at a local historical society that my research really took off.

My ability to participate in the ATP program, produce my research on the local suffrage story, and speak here to you today in Washington, has transformed me. I have been given the opportunity, and as a history major I believe this is vital, to feel like a true historian. I started my suffrage search on a broad scale, exploring the history of the movement in Massachusetts. Little did I know, I was about to uncover a primary source that would serve as an incredible window into the past; offering a detailed view of the fascinating local story of the heated campaign for suffrage. There I sat, eagerly waiting, at the small desk in the Beverly Historical Society in Beverly, MA (a city located on the north shore), white archive gloves and all, for the research assistant, to return with what I believed, would be the ultimate catalyst to my summer research. A few minutes passed and there it was: *The Beverly Beacon*, a one-time issued, women's newspaper published for and by the women of Beverly, MA. In the newspaper, were two articles that discussed both sides of the suffrage debate, written by Beverly women in 1913. Although amazing, *The Beverly Beacon* wasn't the only treasure this local historical society had to share with me.



Congressman Tom Marino and Brian Michael Culp of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania discuss his poster "Integration of Quickbird Satellite Imagery and GIS to Map Subzones within a Salt Marsh Near Wallops Island, VA."

On a day of research that seemed well on its way to being a total failure, having already spent hours at the Beverly Public Library going through newspaper microfilms with little to show for it, I decided to swing by the Beverly Historical Society in an attempt to save the day from being a total wash. Not only did my day turn around at the moment when the curator brought out a dusty old notebook from 1915, my entire project blossomed. I NEVER would have thought a person could get so excited over an old notebook and some newspaper clippings. But Ms. Mary Boyden's, the secretary and treasurer to the Beverly Anti-suffrage Association, notebook brought me utter joy. It was a rich and beautiful source at the age of ninety six; a true testament to the wealth of the Beverly Historical Societies collection and the amazing history

of the town. On that day, and many others, I felt like a true historian.

The opportunity to pursue my research has also made me a better educator. This past fall was spent doing my student teaching at Amesbury High School, in Amesbury, Massachusetts. Now a licensed high school teacher in history, I have already found uses for my research in the classroom, an example of how my project, in an attempt to conserve the beautiful history of a small town, is also being used to help build student knowledge and perspective. I have held debates in which my students use the primary source documents I found while doing my research, to represent the pro and anti-suffrage arguments. It is always a fun moment when the students realize that many anti-suffragists were women. It challenges our contemporary expectations and experiences, part of the suffrage story not always told in the normal history text book. My research has been the catalyst to many vibrant classroom discussions with students of diverse ages, and there is nothing more rewarding than seeing your students learning before your eyes. My research has helped me to facilitate this.

As an educator it is always important to assess yourself in the role of student, and my experience with Adrian Tinsley Undergraduate Research Program at Bridgewater State University, this past summer allowed me to do that more than ever. I now realize the rewards of real hard work. From tears, revisions, and blank stares at the computer screen, to journal publications and conference acceptances, I now, more than ever, know what I am capable of. Nothing stands in my way. This academic success has pushed me to now pursue my M.A. in history, and possibly, if I can handle that much more school, my PhD.

A better historian, educator, student, and now a better woman thanks to my experience of completing humanities-focused undergraduate research. I am proud and do not take any of my liberties for granted, knowing the fight that was waged to win the rights I have, especially my right to vote. On April 19th, 2007, my 18th birthday, I drove 10 minutes to my local town hall and filled in a simple form, resulting in my registration as a voter. At the time, I thought little of the magnitude of this experience, as I'm sure most young women of my generation

did as well. But what I have come to understand through my research done in Beverly, MA, is that American women fought valiantly for years and years – 72 years in fact-- to secure my right to vote and more broadly, my feeling that I have unlimited opportunity as a female in this country.

I feel that through my experience with research this summer, I may serve as an ambassador for the Bridgewater State University undergraduate community. The Adrian Tinsley Program is such a treasure. Not only was I able to have this amazing experience, they have helped me with applying for graduate school (my project became my writing sample), and they have helped to bring me here, to our nation's capital. Finally, the humanities are feeling the love. My nana, who upon hearing the news of my acceptance to Posters on the Hill, made me realize the importance of my accomplishment. She said to me, "Sarah, you are finally bringing these women's words to Washington." Ladies, it may have taken 100 years, but your story is being told, and I am honored to be the messenger. I am honored to be here today, to share with you the research I have completed, and how it has transformed me as a person. I will carry the knowledge and experience I have had through undergraduate research with me the rest of my life, especially into the classroom, where I hope to educate the future and share with them the importance of conserving and creating knowledge.