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A Hypochondriac Investigates the Evolution of Medicine

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A Hypochondriac Investigates the Evolution of Medicine

Abstract

This exhibit will open to the public in February 2014, but until then I have my work cut out for me. I am currently researching various aspects of medical history spanning from the mid-1800s, through the Civil War, to WWI. Thus far I have read accounts of women volunteers during the American Civil War, important changes that went into effect during WWI, and an overly detailed description on how to perform tooth extractions according to the latest science of the 1860s. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Exhibits Intern, Fortenbaugh Internship, Civil War, Civil War Medicine

Disciplines

History | History of Science, Technology, and Medicine | Library and Information Science | Museum Studies | United States History

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library captured their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. Over time the blog has featured Fortenbaugh, Smith, and Holley interns. They shared updates on semester long projects, responded to blogging prompts, and documented their individual intern experience.

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Blogging the Library

The Interns @ Gettysburg College's Musselman Library

A Hypochondriac Investigates the Evolution of Medicine

September 26, 2013

Natalie Sherif '14



“Scenes from the Battle-Field at Gettysburg, PA”

Taken approximately three weeks following the famed Battle of Gettysburg, this picture depicts a Civil War Field Hospital. Courtesy of Musselman Library Special Collections.

Happy Wednesday Evening, all! I write this post from the reading room of Musselman Library's Special Collections. My name is Natalie Sherif and I am a senior History major, Civil War Era Studies and Writing double minor, here at Gettysburg College. This semester I am fortunate enough to be the Fortenbaugh Exhibits Intern and am embarking on a semester long project revolving around the history of medicine. I grew up in sunny Southern California with my mother, a trauma nurse. Ironically, I hated blood, needles, pain, and sickness. Throughout my childhood, I developed an increasingly severe case of hypochondria that culminated during my sophomore year at Gettysburg College when I took Biology 102: The Biological Basis of Disease. Everyday after class I would call my mom and proclaim: "My professor went through the list of symptoms and I swear I have that!" "No, sweetie," she would say. "You're not suffering from a rare tropical disease." Naturally she was right, but despite my paralyzing fear of pain and insistence that I will contract a deadly disease tomorrow, I have always been fascinated by medicine. My mom would tell me stories from the hospital and, when she did stunt standby for movie sets, would come home with

outlandish stories of beheadings on construction sets and gruesome compound fractures. I simply couldn't get enough! When I realized that I could curate my own exhibit in Musselman Library's Special Collections, I knew it had to be on the history of medicine.

This exhibit will open to the public in February 2014, but until then I have my work cut out for me. I am currently researching various aspects of medical history spanning from the mid-1800s, through the Civil War, to WWI. Thus far I have read accounts of women volunteers during the American Civil War, important changes that went into effect during WWI, and an overly detailed description on how to perform tooth extractions according to the latest science of the 1860s.

It is my intention to not only research, design, and install this exhibit, but to take you all on the journey with me. Look for updates on my research and progress as I move forward with this exhibit and please, keep me sane as I realize that my dream of living in nineteenth century America would be a gnarly, germ-infested existence.

Until next time,
Natalie Sherif

Titillating Medical Fact of the Week: Did you know that Gettysburg College, then Pennsylvania College, had its own department of medicine? Founded in 1839 and first open in 1840, the Pennsylvania Medical College of Philadelphia taught the latest practices in anatomy, surgery, and medicine until 1861 when war commenced. In a letter written in 1949, George A. Hay described the Pennsylvania Medical College of Philadelphia a "casualty of the Civil War."

<http://blogging.musselmanlibrary.org/2013/09/>