

Final Report- Summer 2014

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I was a research assistant for Professor Susan Ridyard of Sewanee's History Department this summer. Her research follows the canonization of her patron saint, Thomas Cantilupe of Hereford, England. Specifically, Professor Ridyard was looking into the relationship between the Hereford Franciscans (of which Cantilupe was one) and the London Franciscans. This is important because during St. Thomas Cantilupe's lifetime, he had feuded with his archbishop, John Pecham, who was one of the London Franciscans. Additionally, Professor Ridyard was writing an article detailing a miracle attributed to St. Thomas, involving the death of a young boy who fell off of a bridge and who was then resurrected by the merits of St. Thomas.

My first responsibility as an intern was to prepare and examine a document from the Vatican Library which holds the details of Cantilupe's canonization inquiry. This document was in the form of a roll of microfilm. Each page first had to be printed and labeled with its respective folio number. I then took these pages and scanned the Latin text, searching for names of people whom Professor Ridyard was interested in. This was important because any of the London Franciscans who were present might have influenced the outcome of the inquiry with their ideas about the life and sanctity of Thomas Cantilupe. As this was a time-consuming activity, it was beneficial to Professor Ridyard to have someone else search the document for the names, instead of having to do it all by herself.

My second responsibility as an intern was to find resources for Professor Ridyard's research. Most of the time, I was researching people connected with St. Thomas in some way.

Many of these people were involved in the canonization inquiry or the miracles themselves, and it was important to have an understanding of their backgrounds in order to see patterns in their words and actions. Also of interest were powerful contemporaries of St. Thomas, who had an impact on the political climate surrounding St. Thomas's life and his canonization. These included the various kings of England at the time, popes, and wealthy landowners such as earls, many of whom St. Thomas feuded with over church property and rights. This research was accomplished mostly online, since most recent, relevant articles were not directly available at the Sewanee library. That said, the Sewanee library was of great use, mostly in looking up background information concerning the culture and current events of that particular period of the Middle Ages. For example, a question arose concerning customs surrounding vigils for the dead in medieval society. While there were no recent articles published online on this topic, the Sewanee library provided me with many sources about medieval customs concerning the dead. Often, when I presented Professor Ridyard with pertinent books or articles, she would have me read the source and make an outline of it, so that she could decide if it would be useful to her research.

My third responsibility as an intern involved proofreading Professor Ridyard's documents. Professor Ridyard had translated the depositions concerning miracles performed by St. Thomas from Latin into English. However, as this was done over a long period of time, the wording and punctuation were not consistent throughout. Professor Ridyard told me how she wished the documents to be worded, and I went through the documents and fixed the inconsistencies.

My fourth responsibility was to write footnotes for Professor Ridyard's paper concerning St. Thomas's miracle. This article is nearing publication.

This summer internship has been a great learning experience for me. First, I learned the basics of professional historical research. I was interested in the many different angles with which one can approach a topic. I was also surprised at the innumerable methods used to collect information. I learned how to access and use online resources, as well as how to use the multitude of resources sometimes hidden in the Sewanee library.

My research this summer helped me to become more proficient at distinguishing useful sources from less relevant ones, or more specifically, how to know if a source has the potential to hold useful information.

I learned that research must not be approached with an end idea firmly in place, and that the best research is done when a researcher asks a question, and then keeps an open mind about the answer while analyzing sources. This helps to produce the most cohesive, interesting results.

While my experiences during this internship did not change my career goals, as I still wish to go into the medical field, I am firmer in my resolve to double-major in history and biology. This internship has instilled in me a fascination for history, research, and general academic discovery. The skills which I have gained will help me in my Sewanee career as well as in future research opportunities.