

Process Paper

When I was first introduced to National History Day, my teachers had us write down lists of what interested us and things we liked. While this was helpful, nothing was really standing out. I didn't really like any of the options that I had and I was stuck. I talked to my mom about my dilemma, and she gave me the idea of the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. This topic really jumped out at me. We had recently moved from the Tacoma/Peninsula area, so I already knew about the bridge. I also liked this idea because it was a turning point in history. When the bridge collapsed, a lot of effort was put into researching why it collapsed, and how engineers could make it better. The collapse forever changed the way suspension bridges were built. All in all, this topic seemed like the perfect idea.

To start my research, I did a quick google search and found some really great websites that the Washington State Department of Transportation made on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. I was able to get books from my public library on the subject, and those books had really thoughtful information. Although this was good, my research didn't really start until our school took a field trip to the McKay Library at BYU-I. There I was able to find really great websites full of primary sources. I mainly used Chronicling America to get all of my newspapers, and the Digital Public Library of America for all of my pictures. Our school made us do a book project to go along with NHD, and the book I chose had really good information. It described exactly how the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge was a turning point in history. It really helped back up my project.

I knew I wanted to make a website so I could integrate pictures and multimedia. I thought that making a website would be fairly easy, but I was completely wrong. After trying to navigate and problem solve through the bugs that came up, things got a little easier. I had looked at past websites to see how they organized things, and I based my layout on previous websites. It was a little rough and took a bit of rearranging, but after a little bit, everything turned out okay and I was able to get the content I needed.

Altogether, my historical argument is that through the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, important studies of aerodynamics and suspension bridges were conducted that helped refine engineering equations and help keep the public safe. The significance of the research, studies, and refinement that went into Galloping Gertie proves that the Tacoma Narrows Bridge is a turning point in history, since it changed the way engineers designed suspension bridges. The groundbreaking work done in the field of aerodynamics helps keep people safe everywhere.