

Process Paper

All the participants in this project have a deep appreciation for history, specifically the kind of events that are often forgotten or simply not given enough credit for their lasting effects on today's world. We wanted a topic that outlined the relationship between science and history. We chose our topic by agreeing that each member of our group would spend a few weeks looking for suitable topics. In the end, we decided that the story of the Radium Girls fit perfectly.

We conducted our research by first familiarizing ourselves with the story of the Radium Girls. We read books, watched documentaries, and found primary sources from the time. Next, we learned about the discovery of radium. We found that it was actually considered a cure-all, and was used in thousands of everyday items including cosmetics, tonics, and more. We dove into online archives to find as many primary sources as we could, such as advertisements and photographs of these radium products. Our group then learned about the personal stories of individual Radium Girls; we looked through many compensation files, court cases, interviews with the fortunate survivors and photos of their workplaces. Finally, we researched how the sacrifices of these women changed workplaces and general safety for people today. We compiled all of our images, quotes from interviews, pictures, videos, and knowledge into our website.

We decided to do a website format because we think that it is the best way to efficiently organize our information, and it allows for the information we provide to be easily accessible. Choosing a website enabled us to use fonts, pictures, maps, and more tools to make our project more exciting. We created our website by first constructing the layout and basic organization. Next, we added in all of the information that we gathered from our research and all of our images, documents, speeches, and posters. Finally, we focused on the more detailed aspects of our site, like cohesiveness, organization, and appearance.

Our topic fits perfectly within this year's theme: Triumph and Tragedy. The tragedy is blatant: most people died excruciatingly painful deaths due to the absorption of radium in their bones, ultimately giving them radium poisoning. On top of this, they faced trials in court where they fought for financial compensation, which didn't come close to replacing the years they lost. Their triumph came years after their tragedy: it all led to the improvement and creation of workplace safety laws, and an increase in awareness of the effects of radium on the human body, which saved many from the struggle of radium poisoning in many generations to come.