

New Hampshire in the Civil War Lesson Plan

George Hamilton Perkins

Created by: New Hampshire in the Civil War workshop participant Simon Parsons and the New Hampshire Historical Society, 2014–15

Topic: George Hamilton Perkins’s Experiences and Career during the Civil War

Level: 7th grade

ABSTRACT / SUMMARY

George Hamilton Perkins (1836–99) is perhaps the most famous character in Hopkinton/Contoocook’s history. During the Civil War, he served under Admiral David Farragut in several naval engagements. After the war, he attained the rank of commander, was promoted to captain, and finally earned the retired rank of commodore. A large statue of him was erected on the rear side of the New Hampshire State House. By researching George H. Perkins’s experiences, the students will explore what life was like for sailors during the Civil War.

QUESTION/ISSUE/PROBLEM/TASK

- Trace Perkins’s rise in ranks during his career in the U.S. Navy before, during, and after the Civil War
- Research a question related to George Perkins

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Use primary and secondary sources to answer research questions
- Learn about life in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War
 - Understand what experiences were required to be an officer
- Explore New Hampshire’s connection to the naval battles in the Civil War through the life of George H. Perkins

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

1. Read through the biography of George H. Perkins on the Destroyer History Foundation website. Record Perkins’s “rise in ranks” using a ladder graphic organizer.
 - a. Acting midshipman in October 1851
 - b. Master in 1859
 - c. Lieutenant in February 1861, on the eve of the Civil War
 - d. Commander in early 1871
 - e. Captain in 1882
 - f. 1896 retired in rank of commodore in recognition of his gallantry and skill during the Battle of Mobile Bay three decades earlier
2. Arrange a visit to the statue of Perkins behind the Concord State House, or have students view images of the statue on the New Hampshire Historical Society’s website. Students should take notes and write down their observations of the statue.

3. Have students develop research questions based on the experience of viewing / analyzing the statue.
4. Arrange a visit to the New Hampshire Historical Society to conduct research using the George Hamilton Perkins Papers, 1837–1902. Collection information is found at the website under Resources. Contact must be made with the Historical Society to organize a “guided” research opportunity for students.
5. Students use their research to create a presentation on their question and findings.
 - a. Discuss the career of Perkins and the lives of sailors in general

ASSESSMENTS

- Graphic organizer for “rise in ranks”
- Student research and presentation of findings

PROJECT DURATION

In-Class Time (estimated): 2 class periods

Out-of-Class Time (estimated):

- Field trip to statue of Perkins behind the State House (1/2 hour on site)
- Time at the New Hampshire Historical Society to view George Hamilton Perkins Collection

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Archives & Special Collections:

George Hamilton Perkins Papers (1837–1902)	1982.068
George Hamilton Perkins, carte de visite	S 1993.541.2

Library Collection:

Alden, Carroll Storrs. <i>George Hamilton Perkins, Commodore, U.S.N., His Life and Letters.</i> Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1914.	920 P4484a
<i>Official Proceedings at the Dedication of the Statue of Commodore George Hamilton Perkins at Concord, New Hampshire on the 25th day of April 1902.</i> Concord, NH, 1903.	920 P4484d
Perkins, George Hamilton. <i>Letters of Captain George Hamilton Perkins, U.S.N.: A Sketch of His Life by Comm. George E. Belknap, U.S.N.</i> Concord, NH: Ira C. Evans, 1886.	920 P4484 / 920 P4484 2 nd ed.
Porter, David Dixon. <i>The Naval History of the Civil War.</i> New York: Sherman Publishing Co., 1886.	973.75 P844
Tomes, Robert. <i>Great Civil War: A History of the Late Rebellion with Biographical Sketches of Leading Statesmen and Distinguished Naval and Military Commanders, Etc. Continued from the Beginning of the Year 1864 to the End of the War.</i> New York: Virtue and Yerston, 1862.	973.7 T656 3v

Museum Collection:

Military Badge, NH Veterans Association Reunion, Weirs, 1907	1957.059.01
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Confederate Belt Buckle	2003.015.02a-b
Belt Buckle belonging to Commodore George H. Perkins	2003.015.03
George H. Perkins, engraving	2010.501.0812
Sword	2003.015.01a-c
Uniform belonging to Commodore George H. Perkins	1978.030.49

ADDITION RESOURCES

Secondary Sources:

“10 Facts about Civil War Navies, January 9, 1861–November 6, 1865,” Civil War Trust, 2014. Accessed July 21, 2015.

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/navy-hub/navy-history/ten-facts-about-the-civil-war.html>

Alden, Carroll Storrs. *George Hamilton Perkins, Commodore, U.S.N.: His Life and Letters*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914. Accessed July 21, 2015.

<https://archive.org/details/georgeperkinscomm00alderich>

“The Civil War in Four Minutes: Naval Tech,” Civil War Trust, 2014.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyX8mDz01n8>

“Civil War Navies,” Civil War Trust, 2014. Accessed July 21, 2015.

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/navy-hub/civil-war-navies.html>

“Commodore George Hamilton Perkins, USN (1836–1899).” Destroyer History Foundation, n.d. Accessed May 12, 2014.

<http://destroyerhistory.org/goldplater/ussperkins/index.asp?r=37700&pid=37701>.

National Civil War Naval Museum, n.d. Accessed July 21, 2015.

<http://www.portcolumbus.org/>

“Teaching the Civil War with Technology,” n.d. Accessed July 21, 2015.

<http://www.teachthecivilwar.com/>