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:**
- Official Proceedings at the Dedication of the Statue of Commodore George Hamilton Perkins at Concord, New Hampshire on the 25th day of April 1902. Concord, NH, 1903. 920 P4484d
- Tomes, Robert. *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.* New York: Virtue and Yerston, 1862. 973.7 T656 3v

**Museum Collection:**
- Military Badge, NH Veterans Association Reunion, Weirs, 1907 1957.059.01
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:
http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/navy-hub/navy-history/ten-facts-about-the-civil-war.html

https://archive.org/details/georgeperkinscomm00alderich

“The Civil War in Four Minutes: Naval Tech,” Civil War Trust, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyX8mDz01n8

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


http://www.portcolumbus.org/

http://www.teachthecivilwar.com/