New Hampshire in the Civil War
New Hampshire Nurses in the Civil War

Created by New Hampshire in the Civil War workshop participants and the New Hampshire Historical Society, 2014–15

Topic Women and Nursing Practices during the Civil War
Level Middle School and High School

ABSTRACT / SUMMARY
Prior to the Civil War professional medical care and treatment of the sick and wounded was the responsibility of men. Women were able to nurse their families within their own homes but were prevented from serving as nurses in hospitals. During the Civil War men were needed on the battlefields, opening the opportunity for women to work as nurses in military and battlefield hospitals.

Several women from New Hampshire served as nurses during the Civil War. Their letters and journals shed light on their experiences treating the sick and wounded, and their sometimes tense interactions with the male doctors and surgeons. The letters contain details of the horrors of war, the wounds received by the soldiers, and the women’s views on the importance of their positions.

QUESTIONS / TASKS
What was it like to work as a woman tending the injured, wounded, and ill under the direction of male doctors and surgeons during the Civil War?

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
• Learn to use primary sources and secondary sources to answer research questions
• Discover the experiences of New Hampshire women serving as nurses during the Civil War

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES
1. Research the lives of female nurses during the Civil War.
2. Invent a fictional woman from the town or city where you live in New Hampshire. Give her a name that was common in the Civil War era.
3. In the persona of your invented character, write a journal including historically accurate details telling of at least four days of her experiences as a nurse. Refer to a Civil War timeline and maps so you can include mention of battles and other events taking place at the time you are writing.
4. Go back and fact-check to make sure you have been accurate and have not included any details from our own time that would not have been a part of your character’s experience.

Alternative assignment: Students can dress in period costume and read their journal or an actual nurse’s journal in persona to the class.

ASSESSMENTS
The journal will comprise historically accurate and believable details consistent with medical treatment and social expectations of the time.
PROJECT DURATION
In-Class Time: 2 class periods
Out-of-Class Time: 6 hours or more

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Archives and Special Collections:
- Adeline Chadburne Papers, 1862–1863
- Harriet Patience Dame Papers, 1866–1897
- Dame Family Papers, 1824–1951
- Letter from James M. Hawks and Esther H. Hawks, 1861
- Sarah Low Papers, 1844–1965
- Frost-Sawyer Collection: Sarah Low

Library Collections:
- Edmonds, S. Emma E. *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army*. Hartford: W. S. Williams & Company, 1865.
- Documents relating to Civil War Service of and Pension for Harriet P. Dame of Concord, NH

Museum Collections:
- Bandages and cloth fragments
- Civil War Reunion materials, haversack and utensils, cartridge bag
- Cliffordurne Hospital in Washington, DC, lithograph
- Commemorative medals and ribbons worn by Harriet Dame
- Esther H. Hawks, engraving
- Nurses’ station at military hospital, painting
- Portable writing desk

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Re: Dr. Esther Hill Hawks from New Hampshire, worked as a female doctor
[http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=26563739](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=26563739)

Re: Sarah Low, nurse from Dover, NH, worked briefly at Union Hotel Hospital, then Armory Square

Re: Hannah Ropes, matron at Union Hotel Hospital with Sarah Low. Ropes was born in Maine and married a New Hampshire school teacher, who left the family.


Re: Armory Square Hospital
“All Armory Square Hospital was a military hospital that sprang up in Washington, DC, during the Civil War, from 1862–1865, which recorded unprecedented numbers of soldier causalities and deaths,” History Engine, n.d. Accessed July 15, 2015. http://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/5393


Re: Louisa May Alcott, from Concord, MA, author of Hospital Sketches and Little Women. Wrote about nursing experiences at Union Hotel Hospital in Washington, DC


Re: Harriet P. Dame, nurse from Concord, NH


see pp. 296–302 for information re: Harriet Dame

http://exeterhistory.blogspot.com/2012/05/harriet-patience-dame-and-2nd-new.html

Re: Civil War nurses and women in general


http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/nursing_1.html
Smithsonian online exhibit focusing on Amanda Akin from Quaker Hill, NY, who worked as a nurse at the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, DC during the Civil War.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufdcQVVFkbc
