New Hampshire in the Civil War Lesson Plan

Travel in the Civil War

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

Topic: Travel in the Civil War: How far did they go? How did they get there?

Level: Middle School and High School

ABSTRACT / SUMMARY

Personal memoirs, journals, and letters telling of New Hampshire people’s experiences in the Civil War often report how they traveled. Reading for details about how people traveled and mapping their journeys tell us much about the technologies and hardships of their days and nights on the road. Even though few battles took place in the North, railroads and ships allowed soldiers and supplies to travel to the front in a matter of days.

QUESTIONS / TASKS

Taking part in the Civil War, where did New Hampshire people go and how did they get there? How would their experience compare with how we travel today?

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

• Use primary and secondary sources to answer research questions
• Learn about travel and transportation during the Civil War

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

1. Read letters, journals, and memoirs from people during the Civil War describing when, where, and how they traveled.
2. Choose one account and draw a map of one of their journeys, including where they started, their route, and their destination.
3. As much as possible from the account, write an itinerary of their journey, including times and destinations, distances/miles covered, and mode(s) of transportation.
4. Research each kind of transportation that they used. For instance, if they used horses, find out how fast a horse walks, trots, and gallops. How many miles can a horse and wagon travel in a day before having to stop and rest? Where did railroad lines go in New England and to the South? How fast did trains go? What kinds of ships did soldiers and others use between New England and the South? How far could an army walk in a day? A week? And so on.
5. Using paper maps or online travel sites for reference, make yourself a travel plan, map, and itinerary for covering the same route today with today’s transportation. Using your maps, itineraries, and research as evidence, write a page explaining at least three differences between travel now and travel during the Civil War. Is anything the same?

ASSESSMENTS

Students will create comparable maps and itineraries with details. Written explanations will cite at least three details to compare the transportation of today and Civil War transportation.
PROJECT DURATION
In-Class Time (estimated): 2 class periods
Out-of-Class Time (estimated): 6 hours
• Dependent upon source chosen and length of journey covered

RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Archives and Special Collections
Cate Family Papers, 1831–1917 1981.110
George F. Towle Papers, 1861–1865 1980.015
George H. P. Rowell, 1862–1863 1967.024 (m)
Hiram Wentworth Diary, 1865 2008.024 (m)
John Gray Foster Papers, 1841–1877 1981.115
Julian More Diary, 1863 2008.026 (m)
Kate Sanborn Correspondence, 1864–1879 1995.053 (m)
Ruthven W. Houghton Papers, 1861–1864 1997.029
Sarah Low Papers, 1844–1965 1965.010

Library Collection
Carr, Clark H. 8th Regiment, Company H, New Hampshire Volunteers: Letters to His Wife, 1861–1863. 920 C311
Freedom Sanborn’s Diary, 1862–1863 920 S1985f
Spicer, William A. The Flag Replaced on Sumter: A Personal Narrative. Providence, 1885. 973.73 S956f

Museum Collection
Boot, 1861–1864 2014.010.16
Campaign Desk, circa 1862 1983.002.03
Campaign Desk, 1863–1864 2003.027
Canteen, 1862–1865 1965.545.01
Document Box, circa 1861 1946.037.13
Document Box, circa 1840 2012.031.11
Military Coat, 1861–1864 2005.002.01
Saddle, 1861–1862 1958.088
Saddlebag, 1860–1865 1966.545.289
Spur, 1860–1865 2013.005.01
Suitcase, 1825–1850 1922.007.02
Trunk, 1860–1890 1991.075.02
Wallet, circa 1863 1969.014.03
Writing Box, circa 1860 1948.003.03

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Primary Sources:
Read pp. 18–24

Read pp. 5–17
Note: Wilkinson was a soldier from Great Falls, NH, who had his arm amputated but survived the war.

Secondary Sources:

Read chapters 1 and 2
Note: Alcott was an author from Massachusetts but the route she took to the Union Hotel Hospital (Hurley-Burley House) in Washington, DC, was a common route for travelers to/from New England.

Read Chapters XXII and XXIII
Note: Hamilton was an immigrant from Ireland who served in the U.S. Army in the American West before the Civil War and then re-enlisted during the Civil War. Married and retired to Concord, NH.