

VERMONT IN THE CIVIL WAR





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When students study the American Civil War, it is easy to find out about some of the national issues and big battles. However, learning how this conflict impacted Vermonters both on the battlefield and at home is more difficult.

Through objects, letters, maps, art and music, this lending kit helps students comprehend the impact the war had on nearly every person in the nation and the state. Through documents and reference books, the kit also introduces students to using primary sources for historical inquiry so they can explore Civil War topics in their own communities.

This history kit has three major goals:

1

To demonstrate the role of Vermont in the Civil War and to show the impact of that war on the State of Vermont and its communities;

2

To integrate local, state, and national history by emphasizing how they were (and are) interconnected;

3

To help teachers use local primary source materials in the classroom.

The kit provides a hands-on complement to an existing Civil War unit. It should be used in conjunction with such curriculum and is not intended to replace it. For those who would like guidance with curriculum development, please consult with the Vermont Alliance for Social Studies or the Vermont Department of Education.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This history kit was created through the Flow of History, a US Department of Education Teaching American History grant, under the direction of Fern Tavalin and Sarah Rooker and in collaboration with Amy Cunningham, Director of Education at the Vermont Historical Society.

Howard Coffin not only penned the essay for the kit, but provided feedback and access to his personal collection of Vermont Civil War documents. Teachers participating in the Flow of History project provided inspiration and guidance. **Jennifer Boeri-Boyce** from Hartford Middle School, **Dot Gorenflo** from Brattleboro's Green Street School, and **Beth Hayslett** of Woodstock Union Middle School were instrumental in creating lesson plans and testing the kit in their classrooms. Nine additional Flow of History educators, attending a retreat in August 2005, fine tuned the materials and provided critical suggestions for improvement.

Fern Tavalin created the beautiful reproductions of the primary sources and contributed her significant knowledge of working with primary sources in the classroom. **Sarah Rooker** interpreted these primary documents to write brief historical summaries to generate examples of how an historian makes sense of primary sources and uses

secondary sources to provide context. **Katie Graves** and **Heather Taylor** helped to scan newspapers and town records. **Andy Boyce** prepared the illustrated map and all graphic design is thanks to **Jessica Butterfield**.

The history of Vermont is pieced together through the remaining letters, records, and artifacts of Vermonters. These primary sources are the "raw material" of history and their inclusion in the kit allows students the opportunity to be historians by looking carefully at and thinking critically about these materials. Repositories throughout the state made their collections available for use in this kit. We would like to especially acknowledge Howard Coffin, the Vermont Historical Society Research Library, Special Collections at the Bailey/Howe Library at the University of Vermont, the Waterbury Historical Society, Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro, the Woodstock Town Clerk's office, and the Woodstock Historical Society for making their collections accessible to us.



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Section 1

A **Soldier's Haversack** explores everyday life in the camp (food, housing, and music) and the intensity and misery of battle through letters, pictures, recipes, and artifacts. The haversack section may be used in conjunction with *Mr. Lincoln's Drummer*, a historical fiction account of young Willie Johnston from St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Classroom Connections provide instructions for researching other soldiers.

Section 2

The **Soldier's Aid Society Package** highlights the role of Vermont women during the Civil War. In 1861, Abraham Lincoln issued a plea to the "Loyal Ladies of America" to help provide supplies to the Union Army. This section contains a reproduction package that one of these societies might have sent to the troops.

Section 3

The **Medical Haversack** explores medical practices during the Civil War. Here again, Vermont features prominently in this story as Henry Janes, of Waterbury, VT,

served as the Head Field Surgeon at Gettysburg. He later became director of the Sloan General Hospital in Montpelier—one of three hospitals built for recuperating Civil War soldiers in Vermont.

Section 4

The **Town Archive** box represents the typical files that might be found in any Vermont community. An historian has created brief summaries based on the documents in this box to describe common Civil War topics that might be gathered from local sources. The primary source materials and historical summaries can be used as self-contained lessons or to prepare students for fieldwork of their own.

Appendices

Because the kit emphasizes the "doing" of history, the appendices provide lists of related places to visit in Vermont, websites, and a bibliography. Maps, posters, music, and reference books are added to aid students in building a context for their explorations and research.

In each of the sections of the Teacher's Guide, Classroom Connections support the inquiry process in studying history. These are drawn directly from *Grade Level Expectations for Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

- ▶ **Exploring Primary Sources** offers tools for reading and interpreting primary sources so students can conduct their own investigations of the local story.
- ▶ **Asking Questions** helps students to wonder about what they read and to generate focusing and probing questions for further research. This section also provides suggestions for where to find information.
- ▶ **Connecting the Past to the Present** prompts students to make contemporary connections to their discussions and research.
- ▶ In each of the **Classroom Connections** there are suggestions for how students might communicate their findings.
- ▶ **A Town Archive**, the last section of the kit, provides activities that lead students step-by-step through the process of "doing" history. Beginning with activities that enhance reading and comprehension skills and moving to activities that help students ask questions and synthesize information, the guide helps students gain the skills needed to conduct an in-depth research project in their own community.



PREFACE TO THE CIVIL WAR

From the beginning, Vermont's constitution outlawed adult slavery and from the 1820s, the state legislature passed numerous resolutions denouncing slavery as a "moral and political evil."

While many Vermonters opposed the institution of slavery, they disagreed over what exactly should be done. Some thought that purchasing slaves and returning them to Africa was the best choice and formed "colonization societies." Others thought that gradual emancipation was the more appropriate choice. The New England Anti-Slavery Society, formed in 1832, argued that slavery was sinful and should be abolished immediately. This more aggressive approach drew mixed reactions in Vermont and it was two years before the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society was formed in Middlebury. Even then, antislavery speakers found themselves silenced in some communities by unruly mobs.

In 1836 Congress imposed the "Gag Rule" whereby all petitions regarding slavery would automatically be tabled. While Congress was tabling discussion of slavery, that same year Vermonters heard numerous sermons opposing slavery, such as at Woodstock's First Congregational Church where slavery was declared "a violation of the law of God altogether and at variance with our Declaration of

Independence." Vermont's representatives gave speeches on the floor of Congress denouncing the rule.

By 1850, with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act that forced citizens to participate in the capture of runaway slaves, a majority of Vermonters opposed slavery. In fact, the Vermont legislature passed a bill to impede the execution of the new law. The debate over slavery in Vermont now shifted from a moral and religious debate to a political one.

The 1850s saw the coalescing of the Republican Party and in 1860 Abraham Lincoln won in Vermont with 42,419 votes over Vermont-born Democrat Stephen Douglas with 6,849 votes. In 1861, after the fall of Fort Sumter, Abraham Lincoln telegraphed Vermont's Governor Erastus Fairbanks: "Washington is in grave danger. What may we expect of Vermont?" Fairbanks replied "Vermont will do its full duty." The decades of debate had prepared Vermonters to respond to the crisis in a very generous way.

Information drawn from Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont

For more information on the Antislavery Movement in Vermont see:

▶ *Yours in the Cause of the Slave*, a document packet included in this kit.