Table of Contents

Overview

Grade Level

Objectives

Standards

Lesson 1 - Enlistment

Rousing Up Support for the War
“90 Additional Volunteers!” Broadside from Chatham

To Enlist or to Stay Home?

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, August 19, 1862*

*Letter from “Bob” to Carrie Niles, May 27, 1862*

Being Accepted Into the Army

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, August 19, 1862*

*Muster Roll, 6th Regiment of NY Volunteer Cavalry, October 12, 1861*

Camp Kelly, Hudson, NY

*1873 & 2011 Maps Showing the Location of the Fair Grounds*

*Camp Kelly Historic Marker*

Getting Uniforms and Equipment

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, September 2, 1862*

*Photograph, Company G, 93rd NY Volunteer Infantry*

Shipping Out From Hudson

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, September 5, 1862*

Off to New York City on the Steamer Oregon

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, September 6, 1862*

*34 Star Flag from the Steamer Oregon*

Lesson 2 – Camp Millington

*George Coffin Letter, October 23, 1862*

*Diary of an Enlisted Man, September 27 & 28, 1862*
Lesson 3 – Camp Life – Rebels, Rations, and Risk

Map of the Campaign of the 159th NYSVI in Louisana, 1862-1864

Diary of an Enlisted Man, May 18, 1863

Wood Engraving, Ships in the Forest; New Madrid Canal, 1862

Wood Engraving, Engagement with a Rebel Ally

Diary of an Enlisted Man, May 19, 1863

Letter, J.W. Griswold to Carrie Niles

Make Your Own Union Hardtack

Lesson 4 – Home Front

Parents

Excerpts from the Diary of Gideon Lathrop, 1863

Photograph of the Lathrop Children, c. 1860

Photograph of Robert Lathrop, c. 1861

A Letter to a Soldier Boy

Letter from Ephraim Lasher to his Parents

Homefront

Diary of an Enlisted Man, March 17, 1863

Newspaper, The Hudson Weekly Star, March 10, 1864

Newspaper, The Volunteer, April 9, 1862

Lesson 5 – Recording the War

Newspapers & Magazines

Cover of Harper’s Weekly, August 8, 1863

Artists on the Battlefield

Drawing, My Studio, Edwin Forbes (Collection of the Library of Congress)

Photography

Letter from “Bob” to Carrie Niles, July 22, 1862

Carte-de-Visite, Charles A. Burt (Collection of the New York State Military
Overview:
This unit will help provide a local focus to the study of the Civil War. Students will investigate primary source documents, including letters, diary entries, and engravings, to learn about the everyday life of Columbia County men who served, as well as that of the men, women, and children who were left on the homefront.

Grade level: 7th, 8th or 11th

Objectives:
Students will map information about people, place, and environments.
Students will develop an understanding of the relationships between people and environments and the connection between people and places.
Students will identify and collect economic information related to the Civil War from standard reference work, newspapers, periodicals, computer databases, textbooks, and other primary and secondary sources.
Students will study the geographic factors that influenced the war’s progress and outcome.
Students will consider the sources of historic documents, narratives, or artifacts and evaluate their reliability.

Need Help Getting Started?:
CCHS educators are available for in-school programming to introduce or teach entire units to your students. We also offer professional development to help incorporate elements of these lessons into your classroom. Interested in setting up an in-school visit, or have a question? Contact us by e-mail (educator@cchsny.org) or phone (518-758-9265).
Standards:

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Writing Standard
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive
details, and clear event sequences.
   a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters;
   organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
   b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of
   characters to situations.
   c. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
   d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
   e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Craft and Structure
4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a
grade level topic or subject area.
5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution) of
events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.
6. Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the
differences in focus and the information provided.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams,
timelines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes
to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

Speaking & Listening
1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with
diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases,
including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., quizzed, whined, stammered) and
that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., wildlife, conservation, and endangered when discussing animal
preservation).
**NYS Learning Standards for Social Studies**

Standard 1 – History of the United States and New York

3. Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural, and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups.

4. The skills of historical analysis include the ability to explain the significance of historical evidence; weight the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept of multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments.

   - Students identify individuals who have helped to strengthen democracy in the United States and throughout the world.
   - Students view historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts.

**NYS Learning Standards for the Arts**

Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Visual Arts

3. Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the ways in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed through the visual arts with the ways they are expressed in other disciplines.
Lesson 1: Enlistment

Shortly following the start of the Civil War, the young men of Columbia County began to feel the call of patriotism. There were many factors that influenced their decision to either go to fight for the Union army, or stay in the county to work their farms or businesses. Once men enlisted, they began their military life at Camp Kelly, located at the fairgrounds, in Hudson (off of Fairview Avenue today). At Camp Kelly, the men were given medical exams, swore their allegiance, and were issued uniforms. When it was time to head off to war, the men, in their new uniforms, were given a rousing send-off by the people of Hudson. When they got to the Hudson River, they boarded the Steamer Oregon for the first leg of their trip, to New York City.
Rousing Up Support for the War

Broadside from Chatham, August 20, 1863
This broadside (an advertising poster) announced a meeting in Old Chatham (formerly called Federal Stores), to encourage the town’s young men to enlist. Volunteers for the army received a payment from the town or the county of $300 or more. One way that we know that this poster is from later in the war (1863, to be exact) is because of the line about the draft. Congress passed the Enrollment Act of 1863 in response to a growing need for soldiers in the third year of the war. This allowed men to be drafted for the war effort. Leading citizens of towns like Chatham, whose names are listed on the bottom of the broadside, hoped to avoid having young men from their town drafted, by first encouraging them to volunteer.

- What was the purpose of the town meeting, advertised by the poster?
- What are some of the words and phrases used in the poster to give people ownership in the cause and convince them to come to the meeting?

*Extension Activity:* Students can create their own broadsides to encourage their fellow classmates to “show their patriotism” and help the Union cause.
To Enlist or to Stay Home?
Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, August 19, 1862, Pages 1-2.

“Hudson Camp Grounds. I have enlisted! Joined the Army of Uncle Sam for three years, or the war, whichever, may end first. Thirteen dollars per month, board, clothes and travelling expenses thrown in. That’s on the part of my Uncle. For my part, I am to do, I hardly know what, but in a general way understand I am to kill or capture such part of the Rebel Army as come in my way.

I wonder what sort of a soldier I will make; to be honest about it, I don’t feel much of that eagerness for the fray I am hearing so much of about me.

It seems to me it is a serious sort of business I have engaged in. I was a long time making up my mind about it. This one could go, and that one, and they ought to, but with me, some way it was different. There was so much I had planned to do, and to be. I was needed at home, etc., etc. So I would settle the question for a time, only to have it come up to be reasoned away again, and each time my reasons for not taking my part in the job seemed less reasonable. Finally I did the only thing I could respect myself for doing,-- went to Millerton, the nearest recruiting station, and enlisted.

I then threw down my unfinished castles, went around and bid my friends good-bye, and had a general settling up of my affairs, which, by the way, took but little time. but I never before knew I had so many friends. Everyone seemed to be my friend. A few spoke encouragingly, but the most of them spoke and acted about as I would expect them to, if I were on my way to the gallows. Pity was so plainly shown that when I had gone the rounds, and reached home again, I felt as if I had been attending my own funeral. Poor old father and mother! They had expected it, but now that it had come they felt it, and thought they tried hard, they could not hide from me that they felt it might be the last they would see of their baby.”

Letter from “Bob” to “Miss Carrie E. Niles, Spencertown, Columbia Co.” May 27, 1862

“I feel all excitement this morning. It is the happiest; and yet the sorriest day of my life. Happiest, because I am about to engage in the glorious cause of freedom; going to fight for the Union and the constitution. Sorriest because I am about to leave the friends I love most; with no certainty of ever seeing them again.”

- What were some of the reasons that soldiers left Columbia County to fight in the Civil War?
- What were some of their hesitations about leaving?

Writing Prompt: Imagine that you are a young person from Columbia County, trying to decide whether or not to enlist in the army. Create a pros/cons chart to organize your thoughts for and against enlisting. Then, write a letter to your parents or a friend explaining your decision, and your reasons for making that decision.
Being Accepted into the Army
Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, August 19, 1862, Pages 3-4.

“The next morning we had breakfast and then reported at the camp grounds ready for the next move, whatever that might be. We found crowds of people there, men, women and children, which were fathers and mothers, wives and sweethearts, brothers and sisters of the men who have enlisted from all over Dutchess and Columbia counties. Squads of men were marching on the race track, trying to keep step with an officer who kept calling out “Left, Left, Left,” as his left foot hit the ground, from which I judged he meant everyone else should put his left foot down with his. We found these men had gone a step further that we. They had been examined and accepted, but just what that meant none of us exactly knew. We soon found out, however. Every few minutes a chap came out from a certain building and read from a book, in a loud voice, the names of two men. These would follow him in, be gone a little while and come out, when the same performance would be repeated. My name and that of Peter Carlo, of Poughkeepsie, were called together, and in we went. We found ourselves in a large room with the medical examiner and his clerks. His salutation, as we entered consisted of the single word, “Strip.” We stripped and were examined just as a horseman examines a horse he is buying. He looked at our teeth and felt all over us for any evidence of unsoundness there might be. Then we were put through a sort of gymnastic performance, and told to put on our clothes. We were then weighed and measured, the color of our eyes and hair noted, also our complexion, after which another man came and made us swear to a lot of things, most of which I have forgotten already. But as it was nothing more than I expected to do without swearing I suppose it makes no difference.”
**Muster Roll, 6th Regiment of NY Volunteer Cavalry, October 12, 1861**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mustered In</th>
<th>Mustered At</th>
<th>Discharged</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Doe</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Countyville</td>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>Company A</td>
<td>No remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Roebling</td>
<td>Company B</td>
<td>Discharged due to illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Johnson</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Gloversville</td>
<td>Fort</td>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>Promoted to Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Remarks:**
- All officers and privates present and accounted for.
- Roll call conducted by Captain John Smith.
- All members in good health and fit for duty.
- Discharge notices to be sent to the Adjutant General within 24 hours.
A muster roll like this one would have been filled out when the men first enlisted, and then daily during their military service.

- Why do you think the army gave the men who enlisted a medical exam before they swore their allegiance?

- Why was the medical exam so brisk? What kind of problems might have been created because the process was so rushed?

- Why do you think it was important that would-be soldiers swear their allegiance?

- What information can we learn about the men who enlisted from the muster roll?

*Extension Activity:* Take class attendance using an adaptation of the muster roll (see attached form).
Camp Kelly, Hudson, NY:
These historic and contemporary maps show the location of Camp Kelly, which was located at the fairgrounds in Hudson, NY. For volunteers from Columbia and Dutchess counties, enlisting in the 128th regiment, Camp Kelly was their first stop.
• Based on the 1873 map, why would the fairgrounds have been a convenient location for Camp Kelly, with soldiers coming in from all over Columbia and Dutchess counties?
Getting Uniforms and Equipment

Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 2, 1862, Pages 13-14

“We are all togged out with new blue clothes, haversacks and canteens. The haversack is a sack of black enameled cloth with a flap to close it and a strap to go over the shoulder and is to carry our food in, -rations, I should say. The canteen is of tin covered with gray cloth; in shape it is like a ball that has been stepped on and flattened down a cork stopper and a strap to go over the shoulder. It is for carrying water, coffee or any other drinkable. Our new clothes consist of light blue pants and a darker shade of blue for the coats, which is of sack pattern. A light blue overcoat with a cape on it, a pair of mud-colored shirts and drawers, and a cap, which is mostly forepiece. This, with a knapsack to carry out surplus outfit, and a wollen blanket to sleep on or under is our stock in trade. I don’t suppose many will read this who do not know from observation how all these things look, for it seems as if all creation was here to look at them, and us.”
This photograph, which shows Company G of the 93rd regiment, gives a good view of the soldiers in their uniform.

- Uniforms were issued to soldiers after they received their medical exam and swore their allegiance, and before they left their training grounds in Columbia County. Weapons were issued later, when they arrived in Camp Millington. Why do you think it was done in this order?

- How do you think being issued a uniform changed the way the new recruits thought about being a soldier?
**Shipping Out From Hudson**

**Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 5, 1862, Page 16**

“Crowds upon crowds of people lined the way from the camp ground to the steamboat landing. The windows and the house tops were also full. I don’t see where so many people came from. Men, women and children were waving flags, handkerchiefs or anything else that would wave. They cheered us until hoarse. Bands played, every steam whistle in Hudson was blowing, in fact everything that could make noise did so. Through it all we marched, reaching out every little while for a final handshake, and a last good-bye. Everyone seemed to know everybody else. I presume I shook hands with a hundred that I never saw before and may never see again. But the heartiness of it all, and the sincerity showed so plainly, that by the time the landing was reached the tears were washing dust from our faces. I am glad it is over. No matter what comes next, it cannot be more trying than that march through Hudson.”

- Why was Lawrence Van Alstyne “glad it is over”? Why did he find the march through Hudson “trying”?

**Extension Activity**: Have students read modern articles about soldiers leaving for, or coming home from war. Compare and contrast a soldier’s experience today to what was done in the Civil War.

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**Off to NYC on the Steamer Oregon**

**Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 6, 1862, Page 17**

“We had an all night’s ride, passing many large places. So many knew the names of them, we greenhorns only had to listen to find out where we were all the time. Some did not want to sleep, and the rest were not allowed to. The boatmen must be glad to see the last of us. We passed laws for their observance as well as for our own. The officers kept out of sight. I suppose they were asleep somewhere. May be it is well for both them and ourselves that they did not interfere, for the devil in each man seemed to have got loose. We didn’t try to run the steamer but we ran everything else in sight. We took turns riding the walking beam. Some wanted to and the rest had to, and the wonder is no one was killed, or at least crippled. We landed at the foot of Harrison Street, and marched to the City Hall Park, where I am now seated on the front porch of a tremendous great building, writing about it in my diary.”

- Do you think the author did a lot of travelling before he enlisted? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the “devil in each man” “got loose”?
- Writing Prompt: Imagine that it is your first trip outside of Columbia County, on the Steamer Oregon, heading off to fight in the Civil War. Use a map to find places you might see from the boat. A Google image search of “Hudson River” or “Hudson River Panorama” will provide some visual prompts of towns as they look from the river. Write a diary entry about what you see, and your thoughts about going off to war.
Flag from the Steamer *Oregon*
This flag design became the official United States flag on July 4, 1861 and was to remain so until July 3, 1863. Abraham Lincoln was the only President to serve under it. This particular flag was sewn by Sarah and Clara Clark to fly on their father’s steamboat, the Oregon. It was flying over the boat when the soldiers from the 128th were on the boat on their way to New York City. The stripes are made out of wool, and the stars of cotton.

- Count the stars on the flag. What do they stand for? Why did this flag design only last for two years?
- Why do you think the Clarks made the flag for their father’s steamboat? Why didn’t he just buy a flag?
- Extension Activity: Have students create flags to fly in the classroom while studying the Civil War.
Lesson 2 – Camp Millington:

Letter from George Coffin to his parents, October 23, 1872
Camp Wellington Oct 23  

Dear Parents,

I have bought three pictures of this camp which I send you by this mail so you can get one the Panoramic View and one to Davis Davis they are very correct indeed the large building in the back is the Officers Asylum and the camp is 3rd of June Regiment the building in front where the horses and away you is is the kitchen and the small building at base those three tents were the grand house but they have been moved The night of the picture is Baltimore this building where the little flag is at the right is the hospital in front of it will be Company E on the right of this flag and the tent that is
marked as our tent. Montour's box on the end of the row on the second side. The company are arranged as we will be in battle, so you see we are in the second company from the flagman the seventh company. The long point in the back is the hospital on the right where the barrels are. The Quartermaster I have given you a good description so I can by good care and writing you will do more than I think if 1 can and I am in a great hurry and don't take much pains. The next house you will find on the left we are all well all the families here in it is very cold here. I wish you would send me my coat and half a pair of boots to be worn and get me a good pair of keep boots with good legs and send me your stuff of mine, I wish you would send them much.
The first chance you get never mind if you happen to get some thing at 50 cts or less be sure and send me a pair of boots no size (6) Kip skin double soles as my old boots are worn out now our War is going to make for some things I think you should better send shoe all to get then be sure not in a hurry and then write and let us know of the war. Remember to all inquire for friends from your son George
1862
Camp Millington Oct 23

Dear Parents,

I have bought three pictures of this camp which I send you by this mail you can give one to Pennie Van and one to Delia Davis they are very correct indeed the large building in the back is the Orphan Asylum and the camp is the 38th Mass Regiment the building in front where the horse and wagon is is the sutler and the other building a barn those three tents were the guard house but they have been moved on the right of the picture is Baltimore the building where the little flap is on the right is the hospital where Morehouse is you will see Company E on the right of the flag and the tent that is marked is our tent Morehouse tents in on the end of the row on the same side the companys are arranged as we will be in battle so you see we are the second company from the flag or are the seventh company. The long tent in the back is the hospital on the right where the barrels are is the Quarter masters I have given you a good a description as I can if you can read the writing you will do more than I think you can I am in a great hurry and don’t take much pains the cook houses you will find on the left we are all well all the matter how is it is very cold here I wish you would send me my vest and hat a pair of boots No. 6 brown and get me a good pair of kip boots with good legs and send me that scarf of mine I wish you would send them the first chance you get never mind if you happen to get some thing to eat in also be sure and send me a pair of boots no six (6) kip shin
double soles as my old boots are most
dowed out Wm Doty is going to write
for some things I think you had
better send the all together I am
not in a hurry anytime within two
weeks will do. Remember me
to all inquire my friends from
your son George

Write soon
P.S. Excuse the writing as I am
in a great hurry I will try and
do better next time be sure and
send me the boots hat vest and
my scarf that I wore for a week

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 27, 1862, Pages 37-38

Our old tents were taken down and our new ones are up. Each one is trying to outdo the other in making them look homelike. Boards are in great demand for flooring, and already complaints are coming in from the natives, that every loose board or one that could be loosened from their fences or outbuildings is missing, and they have reason to think they came this way. We are delighted with our new tents. Each holds four men. Walter Loucks, George and Jim Story and myself make up our family. We have to lay straight, and at that there is no room to spare. But we are protected from rain, and the heavy dews that are almost as bad, and the best of all, we can shut up tight and keep out the mosquitoes. Those that do get in we can smoke out in short order.

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 28, 1862, Page 39

Aside from our daily drill, which is not much fun, we manage to get some amusement out of everything that comes along. We visit each other and play all sorts of games. Fiddling and dancing take the lead just now. The company streets, now that the ground has been smoothed off, make a good ballroom. A partner has just been swung clear off the floor into a tent, onto a man who was writing a letter, and from the sound is going to end up in a fight. “Taps” are sounded at 9 P.M. which is a signal for lights out and quiet in the camp.

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, September 28, 1862, Page 40

After inspection in the morning we had nothing to do except to go to meeting and dress parade, which I believe we are to have regularly. We march to the parade ground, which is just back of our camp quarters, and form in line. The colonel with the major and adjutant on his right and left, station themselves in front, the colonel opposite the colors, which are in the center, between Companies C and H. The fifer and drummer pass along in front and back again when the colonel put us through the manual of arms. A great many civilians come out and it must be a pretty sight, provided the orders are well executed. If we do well, nothing is said, but if not, we are cautioned to better next time.
Print, *Camp Millington, Baltimore, MD, 1862*
Key for the Print of Camp Millington
• Analyze the map of Camp Millington. Is there anything that you would have included in your description of the camp that these soldiers did not?

• What are the similarities and differences of these men’s accounts of Camp Millington?

• **Writing Prompt**: Imagine you are a soldier in the 128th Regiment during the Civil War. Write a letter home or a diary entry to tell about your experience in training camp.
Lesson 3: Life on Campaign, Rebels, Rations, and Risk

Map Showing the Battles of the 159th Regiment of New York State Volunteers in Louisiana, from *The 159th Regiment Infantry, New-York State Volunteers, in the War of the Rebellion, 1862-1865*, Page 16.

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, May 18, 1863, Page 39

We slept in a drizzling rain, but the mosquitoes kept us so busy we took no cold. A boat came in the morning and we loaded the stores and started up the river, reaching a small lake called Lake Manapaugh (don’t know how these names are spelled, so put them down according to sound), which is rather a widening of the river than a lake. The river is narrow and very crooked. The boat would run up on a bank send a rowboat across with a line, which was made fast to a tree and the boat turned around a corner. This was done many times on the way up. Alligators lay on fallen trees and on the bank and many were swimming in the river. One came close to the bow of a barge which was lashed to the steamboat, and I hit him a whack on the snout with a piece of coal. From his actions he didn’t seem to like it. The water and the land seem to be on the same level. The tall cypress trees grow thick all the way and no opening appeared of any size. Some trees hang over the water so it was all we could do to get past and one did sweet the commissary’s scales overboard. We finally came to hard ground and the live oaks and other trees took the place of the cypress, which only seems to grow in wet ground. A curious thing about the cypress is the way the roots grow up out of the ground. Cypress knees, they call them. They grow straight up, sometimes as high as ten feet and all the way down from that. No branches or shoots grow from them and they vary in size as much as in height. We finally tied up at a place called Wadensburgh, a small village which proved to be the end of our journey by water. Sergeant Drake and a couple of men went back in a boat and were fortunate enough to hook onto the scales that were lost and bring them up. In getting ashore I landed right beside a cotton-mouth moccasin snake, said to be as
poisonous as a rattlesnake. He lat in some weeks and raised up as if to strike at me. I still had hold of a pole I had used to jump off with, and with it I hit him and broke his back. A man standing by told me what it was. Quartermaster Mace, who came up with the regiment, soon appeared with some reams and as soon as loaded we started for Ponchatoula, where there regiment is. It was dark when we started. It was said to be three and a half miles, but they were long ones. We got stuck in the mud, the wagon broke down, and we were wet to the skin with rain before we reached our destination. We had no lights and only knew we were in the road because we were not in the bushed which grow thick along it. We reached Ponchatoula about ten o’clock, wet, tired and hungry, but not cold, for the weather is quite warm. Our coming alarmed the guards and the entire force turned out to receive the enemy. We lay down on the floor of an empty building, and wet as we were, slept soundly till morning. The sun shone bright the next morning, May 15th, and as soon as our joints began to limber up, hunted for and found company B. They are in good spirits and have enjoyed the outing from camp very much. But they were glad when the cook called them up for coffee and hard-tack. The ground is high and dry for this country. A pine forest of immense trees is close by on one side and is sight everywhere. The Jackson & Mississippi R&R goes through here, and is the one that the troops came on. A picket line is somewhere outside and cavalry videttes outside of that. Fresh beef is plenty and there is not and then a chicken. The people are civil and respectful as can be expected, when we remember what a lot of uninvited guests they are called upon to entertain.

Life on the front lines meant that you were traveling light. The only things you carried with you were the things you absolutely needed. The soldiers were given two uniforms when they joined the army however by the time they arrived in the South most of them had gotten rid of there second uniform so that they would not have to carry it. Soldiers would not have carried many personal items, only the few that were very important to them. Some letters may have been saved but most were destroyed. The journal of Lawerence Van Alstyne, which is now a book titled *Diary of An Enlisted Man*, was sent home when a new book was full. A soldier might have carried a bible or cartes de visites which were small photographs.

- What do you think you would have carried with you? Why would you have carried these things?
When studying the Civil War people often do not think about the fact that the soldiers from the North were heading down South into a whole new world. These boys were not just fighting rebel soldiers they
were encountering new plants, bugs and animals that they had never seen before. This image titled *Engagement With a Rebel Ally* shows the a Union soldier fighting off an alligator. We also have diary entries from *Diary of an Enlisted Man* speaking about the strange animals and bugs that he was seeing in the South. It was not all bad, J.W. Griswold wrote to Carrie Niles and sent her seeds from flowers that he found beautiful in the South.

**Wood Engraving, Engagement with a Rebel Ally**

![Image of a Union soldier fighting off an alligator](image-url)

**Excerpt from Diary of an Enlisted Man, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, May 19, 1863, Pages 106-107**

Night. Camp Parapet again. We started from Ponchatoula about 4 A.M. and at 11 reached Pass Man Shak, by way of the railroad. The trestlework is burned in places across there we passed the best we could. One man dropped a frying pan he had stolen and in getting it stirred up at alligator, and decided he didn’t want the frying pan after all. Several fell and were nearly the rest of the day being taken across in small boats. Then without mishap we came on to a point opposite camp and were soon here. The trip has done me a world of good. I don’t ask any odds of any now that I am well again. I guess I only needed parboiling, and that I got sleeping in clothes soaking wet. The men are all feeling fine and the stories they are telling such as did not go are wonderful to hear.

**Letter from J.W. Griswold, Co. G 44th Regiment, Camp Butterfield to Carrie Niles, December 19th, 1861**

There is a little bush grows here in the flower gardens called the ‘fire bush’ and I have picked some seeds and will send them to you. They are very beautiful, also, I will send you a pod of seeds of a vine called, ‘Passion flowers’ they are a large blossom, about the size of a saucer, shaped like a parasol, with a fringe hanging down from the edge about a fingers length. I believe the blossom is of various velvet colors, it is indeed beautiful, I would advise you to plant some of each kind of seeds as soon as you get them and some in the Spring, very early providing you care anything for them. The Passion flower, has a long vine, which is very nice to run upon a stoop, or veranda, or upon a terrace. The weather is very warm here, yesterday the flies were flying about out doors, the weather is exceedingly pleasant for Dec.”
• If you were writing a letter home do you think you would have focused on the positives and sent send home like J.W. Griswold did or do you think you would have written about the different snakes you were seeing?
• The South was a whole new land for the men coming down from the South, new bugs, animals even the weather was different. How do you think you would have coped with the homesickness that being in a strange place would have caused?
**Make Your Own Union Hardtack**

2 Cups Flour  
1 Cup Water  
Salt (3-4 Pinches)

Mixing Bowl  
Rolling Pin  
Cookie Sheet

- Mix all ingredients together. Make sure you add enough flour so that the dough is no longer sticky, but be careful not to make it too dry. Knead the dough a few times. During the war, hardtack was about an inch thick, so when you are rolling the dough, aim for this thickness. It is easiest to roll the dough directly on an ungreased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes.
- Remove the dough from the oven, cut the large square into smaller three-by-three inch squares. Poke 16 evenly spaced holes in each square. Flip, return to the oven and bake for another 30 minutes. Turn off the oven and allow the hardtack to cool in the oven with the door closed. Allow to completely cool, and then enjoy!
Lesson 4: The Homefront

In the lesson you are going to explore the feelings of the parents who were left behind and the war effort focused on the home front. Imagine sending your son or sons to fight for their county and knowing that they may never come back and the person who comes home may be different from the one who left. At the beginning to the lesson we are going to look at journal entries from Gideon Lathrop and a few images and we are going to look at a letter written from a soldier to his parents at home.

You are also going to look at the effort made by the men and women at home that could not go to the front lines to fight the war. These people’s contributions are in many cases as important as what the soldiers were doing. The women formed Sanitary commissions which made items that soldiers needed, sent food and raised money for the War effort. Local newspapers donated advertising space so that the Sanitary organization could ask for what they needed. In this lesson you are going to see a Columbia County newspaper that had two issues which focused on a fair that was being given in Hudson to raise money for the troops. Also you are going to look at some of the items soldiers were looking to have members or their family and friends send them on the front lines.

Parents:

Robert Lathrop was born in 1840 to Gideon and Elizabeth Lathrop. In the CCHS collection we have 39 of Gideon’s diaries including the ones he kept during the Civil War. The following passages are from diary entries which were made during the Civil War. The passages chosen for this lesson are the entries focusing on Robert’s death and the months following when Gideon was in Louisiana to locate his son’s body and bring it home.

Excerpts from Gideon Lathrop’s Diary, 1863

**May 4** - “Recd. letter from Revd. Mr Kipp about Roby he was killed the 14th April.”

**Saturday May 9**

“Yesterday I pd. Clark for [Phosphat] 11.70
Pd. Boat last night on apples &
Express 3.38 of Breakfast with Frank
& Joe Wilds. Map 8/- Medicine 10/-
Passage on Cromwell $75. Frit.
On Case & Apples $12.50 Pd. for
Lead Coffin $35
Total $128.13
Left N.Y. at 3 P.M. Cold day.
Lonisania expenses $54.28

Charged 27th June”

**May 19** - “Cars to Brasher City......”

“No intercourse with Franklin or Berwick City, the Rebels have control of the whole Country. I could only look far away to the West where my poor son is buried.”

**May 21** - “Major Burt gave me a ring he took from my poor Roby’s finger.”

**Oct 20** - “Recd. a letter from Mr Burnham & the cap of my dear lost Roby.”
The image above shows the Lathrop family about a year before Robby joined the army. He is the oldest child in the image and is sitting with his leg crossed. The image next to the family photo is of Robby when he joined the Union Army.

- Imagine that you are a parent during the Civil War and you have found out that your child was killed in combat over a month before. How do you think that you would have been feeling? Would you have been willing to travel all the way to Louisiana to find the body of your son?
- Look at the picture of just Robby. In the lower right hand corner the year 1863 is written with a symbol that looks like a cross. What do you think that symbolizes? Why do you think that the family added the year of his death to the image?
A Letter from Your Soldier Boy:

Letter from Ephraim Lasher to his parents.

Dear Father & Mother,

I thought you would like to hear from your Soldier Boy. I have written to so many of our folks that I thought it was time to dictate one to you. Since I have been down here I have enjoyed fair health and if I knew that you did give me I would be quite happy by all appearances we shall stay here all winter so you see I shall have the best of you or it is not so cold here as it is up there. It has been quite cool here to day everyone thinking I wish you could see drill this is 3,000 for the drills in one lot about as large as Daniel's pasture lot down below our house this year were 3
going to have a brigade drill
then there will be six thousand
soldiers in the lot,

We have had
gate on an excution since gone
six days and in the six days we
went 150 miles I like a soldier's
life but it's not the same with
me better than teaching school
or to be clock in a store I have
not had the headache since I
have enlisted and I do not need
to stand guard any more. We do
not drill any when it rains
Phone to write so many letters
that I do not know what to write
any more, I want you to find
me out a gal so that when
I come back in the spring I
can get married right away
If you can't get one in Germantown
You can go to Fredsbrook
I do not want you to give up more for me but it is wrong if it is God's will that it should come back again and see you again so it will be and I think it will be so and if you will look on the bright side and cheer up then I will have something to make me try to come home again.

There is nothing new about the war I suppose but this is quite busy picking apples and grapes

There is no more to write but remain Your most affectionate son (uncle to before) Ephraim Lanks

Excuse this writing as a hand which makes a hard writing desk.

O, Bear Yours
Head Quarters 128th Regt
Camp Millington

Dear Mother & Father

I thought you might like to hear from your Soldier Boy I have written to so many of our folk that I thought it was time to [---st] one to you [Since] I have been down here I have enjoyed first rate health and if I know that you did [grieve] for me I would be quite happy by All appearances we shall stay here all winter so you see As it is not so cold here as It is u[ there is has been quite cool here to day very nice Drilling I would you could see us Drill there is 3,000 of us that Drills in one lot about as larde As [Danils] pasture lot down before Out house tomorrow we [are--]

Page 2
Going to have a brigade drill Then there will be six thousand Soldiers in the lot. We have bad quite an excursion we were gone six days and in the six days we went 152 miles I like a soldiers like first rate it agrees with me better than teaching school or to be clerk in the store I have not had the headache since I have enlisted and I do not need to stand guard any more. We do not drill any when it [rains] I have to write so many letters that I do not know wbt to write anymoer. I want you to pick me out a gal so that when I come back in the spring I can get married right away if you can’t get to Germantown you can go to Redhook.

Page 3
I do not want you to grieve any more for me for it is
wrong if it is Gods will that
I should come back again and
see you again so it will be
and I think it will be so
and if you will look on the
bright side and cheep up then
I will have something to make
me try to come home again
There is nothing new about the
War I suppose father is quite busy
picking apples and grapes.
I have nothing
more to write by Remail

Your Most Affectionate Son
Ephraim Lasher

Excuse this writing as a knapsack,
makes a hard writing desk. E.L.

- Do you think you would have wanted to shelter your parents from what your life was really like when fighting on the front lines? If so why would you have
Homefront:
Some of the most important people who helped during the Civil War were the people left behind helping with the War effort on the homefront. These men, women, and children were facing a different kind of life than they were used to. The men who they often relied on to run the family farm or business were fighting the War. The only ones left were young children, women, and men who were to go to the War. These people sent packages to the soldiers on front, hosted parties and fairs to raise money to help the troops and the War effort and held their lives together while waiting for a family member to come home.

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne March 17, 1863, Pages 87-88
The following is a journal entry from the book *Diary of An Enlisted Man* by Lawrence Van Alstyne. Van Alstyne has gotten a package from home and has decided to list them in his diary so that he does not forget what was sent to him.

Last night I got a little box from home. That I may never forget a single thing in it I’ll put them down now. On top was a New York Sun, next a dear little letter from Jane. A little package of tea, a bottle of Arnold’s Balsam, a pipe, a looking-glass, a spool of thread, a lot of buttons, a good lead pencil, a pair of scissors, a ball of soap, half a paper of pins, a darning needle and a small needle, a steel pen and way down in the bottom a little gold locket which made the tears come. God bless the dear ones at home. How thoughtful and how kind of them to think of so many things, and all useful too.
The ladies of the Soldiers’ Relief Association take great pleasure in presenting to the friends of the Society the following report for the months of January and February:-

January- The ladies gratefully acknowledge the receipt of $640, collected from citizens, and handed to the Treasurer by Mr. Joel Simpson.

1 piece of flannel, 40 yards, from Charles Stott, Esq. C Dubois Association.  
20 gray flannel shirts, from the ladies of Stockport through Mrs. Storrs.  

Quantity of Chocolate from Mrs. John Van Denson.  

Three linen sheers, from ladies in Spencertown.  

(unknown) - 6 glass jars crab apple jelly from Mrs. Stotts.

January- The Ladies have sent to Dr. Win. Y. Provost of the 159th Regiment, by kindness of Quartermaster John Chariot, 

one box containing 1 doz. Papers of corn starch, 1 doz. farina, 1 doz. (unknown), 1 lb. nutmeg, 1 dozen lemon extract, doz.  
vanilla, do granulated sugar dried apples, do raspberries, do plums, housewives, pin cushions.
To Mr. Poler, of Washington, D.C., one barrel containing 4 flannel shirts, 22 cotton do, 20 cotton flannel do, 17 pairs drawers, 30 towels, 10 pairs slippers, 27 pairs stockings, 30 handkerchiefs, 1 doz blankets, 4 needles books, 2 pairs gloves, 2 packages casillo soap, 2 bottles currant wine, jelly.

To Mr. Poler, another barrel, with 20 flannel shirts, do cotton, do flannel, 31 towels, 31 bags containing thread, needles, eat; 5 pairs knitted woolen socks, 2 pairs mitts, quantity of chocolate, 1 lb. tobacco, 1 gallon whiskey, ½ gallon sherry wine.

No N. Bishop, Secretary L.S. Christian Commission, New York, one box containing 225 bags, with needles etc, 28 pairs woolen mitts.

To Dr. A.L. Turner, 1031 N.Y.V., Fully Island, S.C., 16 jars currant jelly, do crab apple jelly, 4 lbs tobacco, 1 paper corn starch, 3 do coco, 30 combs, 11 handkerchiefs, 14 towels, 2 bottles currant wine, 30 sewing bags, 5 pairs drawers, dried pears, do apples, do plums.

Immediately upon arrival of the box sent the 159th, a letter of acknowledgment was received from Dr. Provost, in which he returned the thanks of the men and expressed how much they appreciated the kindness extended to them. The sergeant Major of the Regiment thus writes to the Secretary of the Association:

--- We are pleasantly located and have a well regulated camp. The health of the Regiment if generally good, but few cases in the Hospital, and few of a serious nature. Dr. Provost has a watchful eye to our sanitary interests. We are not performing the usually routine of camp duties, in Camp Provost and Pickett guards. I am sure it would be gratifying to friends at home if they knew what an enviable reputation the 159th bears in the Department. There are but few of us, but we aim to conscientiously discharge all duties.

From Mr. Poler the Indies hear frequently. We make the following extracts from a letter to them and from one to Mrs. Storrs, of the J.C. Dubious Association:

---Your barrel of choice goods has just arrived, in good condition. I thank your society, and promise to do what I can for the men yea, more, for the heroes who have sacrificed home and hazarded life to same my bleeding county. To them I love to box; God protect the common soldier of the Union cause.

---paragraph not legible.

The soldiers themselves do thank us. We copy the following letter to Mrs. Crawford, out townswoman, who though blind and in her 75th year, has knitted 25 pairs of socks and yet is not yet weary of well doing:

Washington, D.C., Feb. 18th 1864

Dear Madam: Having just been made the recipient of an excellent pair of socks, knit by your kind hands, a return to you through the donor, Mr. Poler, my sincere thanks. The label attacked revealed your name. Mr. Poler gave me a pair of drawers, and woolen shirt also from the good ladies of Hudson. Wishing you a long and happy life, allow me to subscribe myself, dear Madam, your humble servant, D.G. Spencer, 1st Mounted Calvary.

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- Above is an article which was printed in the Hudson Weekly Star which lists the items which were sent in boxes and crates to benefit the soldiers. Looking at the list of what Van Alstyne and the newspaper listed which items do you think would have been the most helpful?

- Extension Activity- writing prompt- Imagine you are a soldier from the Civil War and you have received items from one of the aid societies. Write a letter thanking the people from home who made, packed and shipped the crates to help you.

- Extension Activity- Write letters to current soldiers who are stationed overseas. Instruct students to think about what people on the homefront were feeling during the Civil War, as they consider the service of soldiers today. You may also choose to prepare a care package as a class to send along with the letters. There are many organizations that provide suggestions for what to pack and how to send it.
The Volunteer:
The women of Columbia County banded together and published two issues of a newspaper called the Volunteer. It was published from Hudson and was advertising for a fair to help the families who were affected by the War. The image below shows a list of the events that were included in the fair.
Image from *The Volunteer*, April 9, 1862 back page

- Do you think that having a fair to raise money to support the soldiers was a good idea?
- If you were planning a fair what would you have done to try to raise money?
Home on Furlough:


The above image shows a soldier coming home on furlough. Being granted furlough meant that a soldier was allowed to leave the army and travel home or to another area for a certain amount of time. This soldier has managed to make it home to his family for Christmas.

- Imagine that you are a soldier coming home for a visit. What do you think you would have wanted to do while you were home? Would it have been hard to go back and rejoin the army?
- Why do you think being granted furlough was important? Do you think that it would have been helpful in keeping up moral in the army?
Lesson 5: Recording the War
Our knowledge of the Civil War comes from the reporters, photographers, artists, and everyday men, who recorded their experiences in a variety of media. Those left at home during the Civil War yearned for news from the front. They were interested both about how their individual friends and family members were making out, and about how the Union army was doing as a whole. News did not travel as quickly as it does today—people on the home front did not have instant updates from television and internet based news and from social networks. Instead, news got back to Columbia County primarily on paper. Letters from soldiers, newspapers, and magazines all kept those on the home front up to date.

Newspapers and Magazines
Reporters, photographers, and artists all travelled with the troops. Reporters sent back regular messages to newspaper and magazine offices via telegraph.
PORT HUDSON.
We learn that at 8 o'clock this morning the invaders of the Field of Fort Hudson, from throughout the camp of General Lee, took possession of the place.

The following account from the Front will explain the picture:

As the citizens of the Southern States are now very much interested in the capture of Port Hudson, which was taken by the Federal forces on the 26th July last, we have inserted a wood engraving of the captured place.

Saluting the Old Flag at Port Hudson, July 9, 1863—Drawn by Mr. J. R. Hamilton.

FORMAL SURRENDER OF PORT HUDSON.—Drawn by Mr. J. R. Hamilton.
• The heading design, called a masthead, stays the same from week to week. The masthead on *Harper's Weekly* tells a little about what type of newspaper it is. Based on the masthead, what types of articles and pictures would you expect to see in the paper?

• Do you notice any differences in the way the newspaper article is written than the way articles are written in the paper today? In the way the paper is designed and laid out?
Artists on the Battlefield

Newspapers did not have the technology to print photographs, and photography did not have the technology to shoot action shots, so artists were sent to the battle front to sketch battle scenes as they unfolded. Their sketches were sent back to newspaper offices to be converted into engravings on wood blocks, which could then be printed in the newspapers.


- Why do you think Forbes choose to draw his own tent? How do you think his studio, as an artist travelling with the army, was different than his studio at home?

- How do you think the contents of Forbes “studio” were different than those in a soldier’s tent?

- What do you think the challenges were of being a battlefield artist?

Extension Activity: Draw an illustration, or make your own print (using balsa wood or print foam), to accompany one of the diary entries, letters, or newspaper articles from one of the lessons in this unit.
Photography
Although it was not used in the newspapers and magazines, photography, for the first time in an American war, played a major role in recording the faces and battlefields of the war. Many soldiers had their portraits taken for Carte-de-visites (a small, inexpensive type of photograph), which they sent to their families. Photographic technology still did not lend itself to recording battles as they happened—equipment was big and bulky, and the exposure times were too long to capture fast movement. It was used to capture still scenes of life in camp, and of the aftermath of battles. While there were many photographers travelling with Union troops to record the war, Matthew Brady is the most known today.

Excerpt from a Letter, “Bob” to Carrie Niles, July 22, 1862
“We have lately had a man in camp, who has been taking photographs for us. I have been thinking of having mine taken. But there are two difficulties in the way. One is that my hair is very short at present; the other that, the operator left camp yesterday.”

Carte-de-visite, Charles A. Burt, Collection of the New York State Military Museum

- Why do you think soldiers were interested in having their photograph taken in camp, before they went off to battle?

- How do you think the ability to get good, inexpensive photographs make the Civil War different from earlier conflicts? For the soldiers? For their families? For historians as we study the war?
Letter Writing

Letters were the only way a soldier could keep connected with his family and friends on the home front. Soldiers longed for news from home, and sometimes requested items they missed. Writing to family and friends was a way for a soldier to keep busy during long periods of waiting in camp. Families sent both letters and packages filled with useful and sentimental items to soldiers.

Excerpt from *Diary of an Enlisted Man*, by Lawrence Van Alstyne, December 21, 1862, Page 75

“We are thinking and talking of the letters we will get when we have a mail. Uncle Sam keeps track of us someway and sooner or later finds us. We have a regimental postmaster, who is expected every day from the city with a bag full. We have enough to fill him up on his return trip.”

Excerpt from a Letter, J.W. Griswold to Carrie Niles, December 19, 1861
(for full letter, see Section 4, Life on Campaign)

“Please write as soon as convenient, for you don’t know how a letter from an old acquaintance cheers the brave heart of a soldier.”

• Why were letters from home so important to soldiers in the Civil War?

• Now that there are other forms of communication available, do you think letters are still important to today’s soldiers? Why or why not?

• If you were on the home front writing to a soldier, what would you write about? What about if you were a soldier writing home?