

The Civil War

The following documents pertain to the Civil War in the town of DeKalb and St Lawrence County. In 1864, as the death tolls mounted relentlessly, President Lincoln issued calls for additional troops almost monthly. In July 1864, the call was for 500,000 men. During 1864, the Town of DeKalb held 8 emergency Town Meetings to consider how to fill their quotas. The citizens of the town tried to avoid drafting citizens. They chose to pay an enlistment bounty of \$600 for each person who volunteered from the Town. This was the highest bounty paid in St Lawrence County. To finance these bounties, the Town borrowed money for the first time in the town's history. More than 300 citizens of DeKalb served in the war. Of these, 88 died in the war.

The minutes of the Special DeKalb Town Meeting of August 17, 1864, together with the 17th Congressional District Quartermaster's Troop quotas of July 26, 1864 for the Towns of St Lawrence County document the burden on the public and their reaction to it. The Substitute Volunteer Enlistment form illustrates a unique portion of the civil war draft: the ability to pay a replacement to serve in your place. The Special Town Meeting Minutes are from the DeKalb Town Clerk's office and the other documents are part of the DeKalb Town Historian's collection.

Suggested Lessons:

Disciplines: Social Studies, Language Arts, and Math

Grade Levels: 4-8

Time Frame: 2 class periods

Materials Needed:

- Copy of Special town meeting of DeKalb August 17th 1864, 2 pages(provided)
- Transcript of August 17th meeting (provided)
- Copy of Quartermaster's quota's for St. Law. Co. (provided)
- Copy of Substitute Vol. Enlistment (provided) 8 1/2 by 14
- 2 worksheets (provided)

Learning Objectives: The students will:

1. Gather information about the Civil War draft and enlistment bounties from meeting notes, recruitment quotas and substitute enlistment forms.
2. Define pertinent vocabulary including enlist and quota.
3. Ascertain the total enlistment quota for the town they live in.
4. Compare the total bounty to the cost of goods at that time to determine the bounties relative worth.

5. Gather information about an individual enlistee and write a diary entry as that person.

6. Examine historical record for clues to local opinions about the war.

Procedures:

Lesson one

1. Distribute copies of the worksheet Civil War Enlistment Quotas, the Special Town Meeting August 17, 1864 minutes and the St Lawrence County Enlistment Quotas. (Have transcripts of the Special Town Meeting Minutes available for those students who have trouble with the original script.)
2. Identify and define any unfamiliar terminology such as substitute volunteer.
3. Direct the students to complete worksheet Civil War Enlistment Quotas by analyzing the two documents.
4. Discuss with the class how it would feel to be in the middle of the Civil War. With many neighbors already killed in the war, would it be easy to fill the quota with volunteers without a bounty?
5. Do bonus question only if it is within your student's capabilities. Or demonstrate as a whole group math activity.

Lesson two

1. Distribute copies of the Substitute Volunteer worksheet and original enlistment form.
2. Have children answer the questions about the form.
3. Point out to the children the personal description of Charles Rice included at the bottom of the form. This may be a good place to begin with their diary entry.
4. When all the children have finished the worksheet, go over it together and ask some to share their diary entries with the class.

Follow Up Activities:

Further research and discussion of the Civil War and your town:
Ask your town historian to visit and share information on Civil War veterans in your town.
Visit a Civil War Reenactment with your class.

Read a book such as:

Charley Skedaddle by Patricia Beatty (Silver Burdett 1987) the story of one boy's involvement in the war. Fast moving.

Daily Life on a Southern Plantation, 1853 by Paul Erickson (Lodestar 1998)

Soldier Heart by Gary Paulsen (Bantam 1998) very violent, not for younger readers.

Across the Line by Carolyn Reeder (Atheneum). Story of two friend; one a slave, and what happens when war and freedom put them at odds.

Unconditional Surrender, U.S. Grant and the Civil War by Albert Marvin (Atheneum 1994) Good teachers background resource. Excellent passages to read aloud to the class.

NYS Social Studies Standards correlation:

Standard 1: Key Idea 4

- Consider different interpretations of key events and /or issues in history and understand the differences in these accounts.
- Explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities, and State.
- View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music and artifacts.

Intermediate

- Consider the sources of historic documents, narratives, or artifacts and evaluate their reliability
- Describe historic events through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.

Standard 5: Key Idea 4

- Explain the role that civility plays in promoting effective citizenship in preserving democracy.