ONE UNION SOLDIER'S ADVENTURES FROM KEENE ENLISTMENT TO CAPTIVITY IN THE CONFEDERACY!

THE WILCOX DIARY

AN ONLINE COMIC BOOK CREATED BY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE MONADNOCK REGION OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR CIVIL WAR COMICS CAMP WITH THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY (KEENE, NH) AND COMICS WORKSHOP.
ABOUT THIS PROJECT:

In August 2016, middle school students from around the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire gathered at the Historical Society of Cheshire County in Keene to create their own unique sense of history through art. In the Civil War Comics Camp, students worked as a team with Society staff and with cartoonist/Civil War musician Marek Bennett (www.MarekBennett.com) to become citizen archivists and comic artists. They developed new skills in: historical research, cartooning, storytelling, music, performance, transcribing 19th century cursive handwriting, and self-publishing. The end result of this week-long camp is this comic book based on the real-life experiences of a young man from Keene during the Civil War.

The diary of Charles W. Wilcox, preserved in the archives at the Historical Society, was the lead primary source used by students to create this book. Students verified Wilcox’s personal tales with additional primary and secondary sources throughout the week. They learned popular Union and Confederate songs from the 1860s, performing for guests using 19th century folk instruments such as the bones, triangle, donkey jaw, and frying pan. They visited the Civil War encampment of the 6th NH Volunteer Regiment and practiced drilling as Wilcox may have done. They toured Cheshire County to learn the stories of local men who fought in the war and see sites related to their lives, including Wilcox. Students were able to explore American culture today by examining its past.

The Historical Society of Cheshire County would like to thank the National Historic Preservation & Records Commission (National Archives), the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, an anonymous business donor, Keene State College, and Thomas Charters of Swanzey for supporting the camp. Many thanks to Theresa Stack, who transcribed the diary pages we used in this camp! We would also like to thank Marek Bennett, Alan Rumrill, members of the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers, Eric Howley, Becky Barton, and Tyler Kosakowski for your hands-on lessons and historical research.

Jennifer Carroll, Director of Education
Historical Society of Cheshire County
Keene, NH / August 5, 2016

*This booklet pairs student artwork from our August 2016 camps with related quotes from Wilcox’s diary (‘diary’) and the History of the 6th Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers (‘HHR’).*
"As suddenly, as swiftly, and as terribly as the cyclone sweeps over the smiling country, leaving death and desolation behind, did this open rebellion and its consequences come upon the nation." ~ H9R, p.2
AUGUST 03, 1862 - Wilcox meets his close friend on Central Square in Keene.

“Good Tuesday mornin’, Henry!”

“Mornin’, Charles! Yes the day has finally arrived!”

The 9th is in town!

Time to enlist?

To Capt. Babbitt’s recruiting office!

“Now you may have met up with all the other expectations of joining our regiment, but do you swear an oath that you are over 18?”

“Earlies

I’ll just write 18 and put it under my shoe.”

“Of course!”

“Early I’m 18.”

“Early”

“This same Parsons was the man who helped save the colors at Spottsylvania, who was promoted to be color sergeant for his bravery, and who was killed while carrying the colors at Petersburg, July 20, 1864.” ~ H9R, p.385
“One day a sheriff appeared in the camp, and attempted to arrest a young contraband who was acting as waiter for Lieutenant Copp” ~ H9R, p.274

“Just then, somebody sung out " A rail ! " ... His honor, the high sheriff of Lincoln county, didn't seem to particularly fancy this idea of a rail, and looking very pale and sheepish began to edge off as fast as possible...” ~ H9R, p.274
“cold & wet, snow 3 inches deep. officers without Tents or Blankets.” ~ Diary, March 1st, 1864

“Remained in Camp all day. Wether pleasant and warm.” ~ Diary, March 2nd, 1864
March 5th, 1864 / Art by Griffin

"Wether cold and wet, remained in camp near London [KY]...
Sent a letter to Mother" ~ Diary, March 5th, 1864
“The night before, the guerrilla party had noticed a mule with the U. S. brand at one of the places they had visited, and... Quartermaster Moses was anxious to secure the animal to replace one lost from his teams...” ~ H9R, p.335-6

“He asked Captain Buswell to let him have a man to go back with him to get it. The captain suggested Lemar, one of the French recruits, as a good one for this duty” ~ H9R, p.335-6
March 16th, 1864 / Art by Moses

“Before noon they rejoined the regiment, the Frenchman riding the mule, and looking every inch a conqueror.” ~ H9R, p.335-6

May 4th, 1864 / Art by Emily

“Halted and remained there until dark...” ~ Diary, May 4th, 1864
May 5th, 1864

“Revellie at ½ past 2 o'clock AM...”
~ Diary, May 5th, 1864

Leaving Brislaw Station at 3 o'clock PM
marched a mile halted then went to Camp

May 1864

At 2 o'clock AM
they marched 20 miles
to the bank of the river

got to camp very dirty
very tired

“The first day of the advance only a few
Confederate pickets were seen and scarcely a shot was fired.” ~ H9R, p.359
Background:

At 6 oclock PM Marched and counted Marched until midnight then formed Line of battle and slept.

All tired out from marching all day.

Art by Aidan

“Throwed up Breast works and laid the works supporting the 14th NY... but saw no fighting...” ~ Diary, 7th May 1864

“All the [hands] pretty well tired out all tired out after marching all day” ~ Diary, 6th May 1864
“Layed on our arms all last night about a mile from the battlefield... Firing commenced on our right early in the morning...” ~ Diary, 8th May 1864

“The reb Cav were in our rear and succeeded in capturing a [few] ambulances...” ~ Diary, 8th May 1864
“My supper of (neck) steak went into the frying-pan warm, but before it was cooked the order to fall in came...” ~ H9R, p.563

“...and on the march and in a Virginia rain-storm I partook of my last meal in 'God's country.'” ~ H9R, p.563
“Moved forward in line of Battle at 5 o'clock A. M. and immediately charged on the Enemies works...”
~ Diary, 12th May 1864

“Myself and 48 men... were taken prisoners and were immediately taken to the rear of the Enemies lines.” ~ Diary, 12th May 1864
"My Sword, Belt, Pistol, Silver watch and Chain... were taken from me... by 31 Va!" ~ Diary, 12th May 1864

"Before I could say more he commanded me to come out of it at once, which I did." ~ H9R, p.566
Terrible muddy with frequent heavy showers

Getting rations

Sleeping

Rained all night

cleared up This morning

Making frittes

“Hungry, wet, and cold, we lay down on the grass to rest.” ~ H9R, p. 566

“Arose late feeling very weak...”
~ Diary, 14th May 1864
May 18, 1864 / Art by Molly

"The men were marched outside of the city to a camp..." ~ Diary, May 18th 1864

Art by Keegan (top) & Sam (bottom)

"Very weak and languid from hunger..." ~ Diary, 18th May 1864
“The officers were quartered in a small, filthy room, on the third floor of a brick warehouse...” ~ H9R, p.569

“Our quarters dark and filthy” ~ Diary, May 18th 1864
“We were suffering intensely from this overcrowded condition, and it was planned to reduce our number...” ~ H9R, p.570

“A double quartette was detailed to ... take the lead in singing patriotic songs... so as to drown the noise made by the cutting.” ~ H9R, p. 570
We hung a rubber blanket over the hole to deceive the guard. But at our second stop a Rebel officer spotted our cover-up.

They counted us angrily and found the missing five men. We had 43, now we had 38.

"Only 38 left!"

At least we stopped more escapes...

"...the blanket being near the color of the outside of the car." ~ H9R, p.570

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CHUGA

This train car is too Emily. There's at least 20 of us!

I've got an idea! How many here have pocket knives?

Me.

NE.

Sounding! The battle cry of Freedom!!

Those two will be saying a hole in the wall with their knives. Then, we jump through and just run away!

Won't the guards near the hole being saved?

May 23, 1864 / Art by EF
When the hole was finished, five men managed to get out and freed some space, making the trip more enjoyable for everyone else... until the guards found the hole in the wall.

“Instantly there was more swearing and threatening than the English language would be supposed capable of...” — H9R p.571
We had corn bread, bacon and bean soup made with warming beans and water. We were confident that the only meat in the soup was the worms.

This was the first notion issued to us, but none of it was wasted.

“Drew more bread and ham and bean soup made of beans and water very por eating but we were glad to get anything…” ~ Diary, May 24th, 1864

“We were better pleased with [Danville, Va] than any place we have been in…” ~ Diary, May 25th 1864
The gaunt were old men and boys.

We again used railroad ties and their chains to hide the cutting. We sang more to distract the gaunts. Right away someone right away.

"Their threats availed nothing, however, only to cause us to sing more and louder, until again a hole had been cut in the rear door." ~ H9R, p.572

TIME LINE

1861 4th July, Wilcox, Civil War begins
1861 4th July, Wilcox, Fort Sumter, April
1861 4th July, Wilcox, Gettysburg, June 2
1861 4th July, Wilcox, Libby, Feb. 6
1861 4th July, Wilcox, prison, Jan 28
1865 4th July, Wilcox, Spotsylvania, April 30
1865 4th July, Wilcox, released, Oct 20
1865 4th July, Wilcox, shot, Sept 28
1865 4th July, Wilcox, killed, June 25
Wilcox's Journey

1. Burnside KY Feb. 27, 1864
2. Cumberland Gap Mar. 12, 1864
3. Knoxville TN Mar. 17, 1864
4. Annapolis MD Apr. 23, 1864
5. Washington DC Apr. 25, 1864
6. Manassas VA Apr. 28, 1864
7. Wilderness & Spotsylvania May 8-12, 1864
8. Gordonsville VA May 17, 1864
9. Lynchburg VA May 19, 1864
10. Danville VA May 23, 1864
11. Charlotte NC May 26, 1864
12. Columbia SC May 27, 1864
13. Augusta GA May 28, 1864
14. Macon GA May 30, 1864

Map & list by Tyler Kosakowski.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

We drew all our comics from these primary sources:

- Wilcox, Charles W., *Civil War Diary* (1864) As transcribed by Theresa Stack (2016) [Abbreviated as: Diary]

Our visual and informational references included:

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- Woodhead, Henry (Editor), *Arms and Equipment of the Union* (1989) [AEU]
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