

Chronicles of the 16th

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This is a look into the manuscript collection of the 16th New York Volunteer Regiment, which was recruited from St. Lawrence, Franklin, and Clinton Counties in the North Country of New York State. These men provide insight into the service of North Country men during the deadliest war in American history. The manuscript collection of letters and reports held in the St Lawrence University Special Collection provided a starting point for an examination of the regiment's combat service and the experiences of men like Newton Martin Curtis and Joel J. Seavor who were raised in the area. The collection also led to research on the medical aid provided to soldiers during the Civil War. Thus, our episode topics are men who served in the regiment, the combat chronicle of the regiment, and the medical services of the Union during the war.

Keywords: Civil War, North Country, Podcast, Colonel William Howland, Newton Martin Curtis, Manuscript Collection

In the spring of 2024, Duncan, Remick, and Elijah joined Professor Regosin's "Podcasting History" class. The three historians had previously taken Professor Regosin's "America's Civil War" class in the fall of 2023. The "Podcasting History" class included a large final project of a multi-episodic podcast to present a semester-long research proposal. Along with this came the requirement of creating a website to showcase the podcast, which would allow fellow St. Lawrence historians and students to access this creative material. The class is also a 300-level History course, which presents itself with the goal of independent research and study to prepare History Majors and Minors for their future endeavors.

Duncan, Elijah, and Remick were soon presented with an archival box containing letters, battle results, and muster reports of the 16th New York Regiment. This regiment is very particular to St. Lawrence because most of the men mustering in were local to the North Country. The recruitment locations included Potsdam, Ogdensburg, and Plattsburg, all geographically important to upstate New York. Throughout this regiment, stories of love, death, illness, and war were drawn out by soldiers marching hundreds of miles far from home, and farther than they had ever been before. The leader and role model of the 16th New York Regiment was Colonel William Howland. Originally from Fishkill, 50 miles north of New York City, Howland was promoted to Colonel because of his economic class and charisma, a common trend in the American Civil War.

In addition to the papers from the regiment, the group used sources such as a book written by Newton Martin Curtis on his time in the regiment, books created by the state of New York to detail the service of its citizens in the war, and secondary sources written by experts on the war. These sources provided valuable information that was usually not found in the collection. The book by Curtis and the books compiled by the State of New York gave information that was not contained in the collection due to the limitations of knowledge the men had while they were on the front lines during the war. Additionally, the secondary sources used provided knowledge on some of the figures we discussed, which could not be gleaned from the primary sources. These secondary sources also provided important context on what was happening in the war while the 16th was deployed in Virginia. The collection does not provide the plans of the generals leading the Union armies, so it was vital that sources were obtained.

The importance of sharing the experiences from this small and local regiment from upstate New York come in two main clauses. First, this research provides stories from a microcosm of the American Civil War. The life of the soldiers in the largest and bloodiest conflict on American soil is given to contemporary historians in primary source documents from the soldiers themselves. Every single soldier had many letters written to them from their family, as well as their responses back to their loving wives, children, and parents. Second, these stories

can connect the North Country to 2024 and beyond. The stories are told by families who built the towns resided in by St. Lawrence County citizens.

One of the largest challenges of this project was writing and producing a podcast, which is something none of us had ever done before. First, writing a script presented a very unique challenge to the group. While research papers can be dense and flow quickly, a podcast needs to have a natural rhythm for the speakers to interact, as well as for the audience to picture the scenery at the moment. To help us in this process, we utilized resources found in the ODY Library of St Lawrence University. These included the podcasting studio, the resident expert on podcasting Nicole Roche, and the computer programs provided courtesy of the university. Additionally, to enhance the audio quality of the podcast, we used external websites such as Pixabay and Internet Archive. These sites provided wonderful sound clips and recordings of Civil War-era songs. Moreover, Duncan composed our theme song, which creates a more exciting podcast experience. To present our completed project, the group created a WordPress website using the St. Lawrence University database. This process included designing an easy-to-read webpage including our podcasts, sources, photos, cover images, author biographies, and extra information about each topic.

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