

History Hidden in the Paper World of EPHEMERA

Today we are used to learning of important events hours and even minutes after they occur. On television, we can actually see the news “live” while it is happening. We can also read about it in the newspapers.

During the Civil War, between 1861 and 1865, it took days and sometimes weeks for news to reach Vermont. Sometimes newspapers printed the letters that soldiers sent home because these letters brought the first news about a battle.

Would you want to wait for weeks to find out the news?

Here are some broadsheets by Vermont printers during the Civil War. They are one kind of ephemera, notices printed to be read and then thrown away.



In this cartoon, two dogs representing Union General Winfield Scott and Confederate President Jefferson Davis haggle over a bone marked “Washington.” How are the two sides shown? How do you think the cartoonist felt about the Confederates?

LAMOILLE COUNTY BOYS BEFORE RICHMOND.

Capt. Benton writes to us from Camp on James River, July 4th, and sends a copy of the official report of the casualties in his company, in the action of Sunday night, June 29th:

Killed.—2d Lieut. Samuel Sumner, No. Troy; private John T. Davis, Morristown; private Alanson P. Steinberge, Eden.

WOUNDED.

Capt. R. C. Benton, Hydepark, arm.
Corp. J. C. Eaton, Morristown, shoulder, slight.

Private Edgar Bullard, Hydepark, both legs.

John P. Bedell, Elmore, arm.

Byron Draper, head, severely.

James Estus, Elmore, probably fatal.

Jason O. French, Johnson, severely.

Ira S. Gray, Montpelier, “

Edward H. Maroy, Craftsbury, head.

Ephraim B. Maroy, “ “

John Manning, Hydepark, head, severely.

Dennis Shortslear, severely.

Corp. H. A. Davis, missing, probably killed.

Of the wounded, R. C. Benton, J. C. Eaton, Edgar Bullard and J. P. Bedell, are with the Company or in the hospital. The rest are prisoners.

In addition to those reported, ——— Luce, of Stowe, was slightly wounded on the shoulder by a shell in camp.

Benton His arm troubles him so as to prevent his writing to all who might expect to hear from him.

This is how Lamoille County residents learned of their friends and relatives killed or wounded in a battle. How much time passed between the battle and the writing of this letter? How do you think people felt as they waited for news about their soldiers?