

Media Relations

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University of New Hampshire Civil War Exhibit at Portsmouth Public Library

DURHAM, N.H. – Letters from New Hampshire soldiers written during the Civil War and gifted to the University of New Hampshire form the basis of an exhibition now on loan to the Portsmouth Public Library.

“Confronting the South: New Hampshire People During the Civil War” will be on display at the library through February. The exhibition is a collaboration between the University Museum and UNH’s Milne Special Collections, recipients of the correspondences.

New Hampshire’s 18 regiments lost 4,882 men during the Civil War. The 5th New Hampshire Volunteers Regiment saw more casualties than any other unit. And yet, in the day-to-day life of battle, there was the ordinary. Soldiers wrote home of the beautiful countryside; of resentments at missed promotions; of playing cards and football, and what they had for dinner.

The former shopkeepers and farmers and teachers and blacksmiths wrote of their eagerness to fight. They wrote of death. Of lost limbs and men’s cries so “horrible to hear.” The letters, written between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and men and their mothers, tell a story like no other of those historic years.

“We’re excited to share the exhibit with our friends in Portsmouth. Putting together an exhibition takes a lot of work so it’s wonderful when the effort can receive more exposure and be reinterpreted at different venues,” says Dale Valena, UNH Museum curator.

The Portsmouth Public Library has paired the exhibition with a commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863.

“We’re happy to share the work of the university with a broader audience, and of course, it’s an honor to be a part of the conversation about this time in history,” says Mary Ann List, director of Portsmouth Public Library.

Kyle Murphy ’12 worked with Valena and Bill Ross of the Milne Special Collections to transcribe the letters. All attempts were made to preserve the correspondents’ words as they appeared in the original letters.

“Confronting the South: New Hampshire People During the Civil War” will travel to the Hudson Public Library during the summer of 2013.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state’s flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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