

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Telegraph During the Civil War

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Resources

If you can read only one book

| Author | <i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. |
|-------------------|---|
| Hochfelder, David | <i>The Telegraph in America: 1832-1920</i> . Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012, 6-31. |

Books and Articles

| Author | <i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year. |
|--------------------|---|
| Bates, David Homer | <i>Lincoln in the Telegraph Office: Recollections of the Unite States Military Telegraph, Corps During the Civil War</i> . New York: Century Co., 1907. |
| Gabler, Edwin | <i>The American Telegrapher: A Social History, 1860-1900</i> . New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988. |
| Markle, Donald | <i>The Telegraph Goes to War: The Personal Diary of David Homer Bates, Lincoln's Telegraph Operator</i> . Hamilton, NY: Edmonston, 2003. |
| Plum, William R. | <i>Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States</i> . Chicago, IL: Jansen, McClurg, 1882. |
| Raines, Rebecca R. | <i>Getting the Message Through: A Branch History of the U.S. Army Signal Corps</i> . Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1966. |

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| Silverman, Kenneth | <i>Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse.</i> New York: Knopf, 2003. |
| Thompson, Robert Luther | <i>Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832-1866.</i> Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947. |

Organizations

| Organization Name | Description, Contact information including address, email |
|------------------------------------|--|
| United States Military Telegraph | The USMT operates a Civil War vintage telegraph in Cambridge City, IN. Their website includes documents, images and re-enacting information relating to the telegraph in the Civil War. Their websites are: http://www.unitedstatesmilitarytelegraph.org/contents.html and http://www.unitedstatesmilitarytelegraph.org/ |
| Signal Corps Association 1860-1865 | The Signal Corps Association 1860-1865 is an organization dedicated to the history of the Signal Corps in the Civil War and has a very large collection of materials and photographs on that subject, including material on the Telegraph Service. Their website is: http://www.civilwarsignals.org/ |

Web Resources

| URL | Name and description |
|---|--|
| http://www.beardsleetelegraph.org/ | The Beardslee Telegraph Machine is a website dedicated to the Beardslee telegraph machine and includes technical information, manuals, photographs and a discussion of the history of the machine. |

Other Sources

Scholars

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|-------------------|--|
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Google Keywords

During the Civil War the telegraph proved its value as a tactical, operational, and strategic communication medium and an important contributor to Union victory. By contrast the Confederacy failed to make effective use of the South's much smaller telegraph network for several reasons. The United States Military Telegraph Service (USMT) handled some 6.5 million messages during the war and built 15,000 miles of line. In contrast the South used the telegraph in only the most limited fashion. Ulysses S. Grant wrote that he had "held frequent conversations over the wires" about strategy with Stanton during 1863, some lasting two hours. William Tecumseh Sherman also recalled the "perfect concert of action" between his forces in Georgia and Grant's in Virginia in 1864. "Hardly a day intervened when General Grant did not know the exact state of facts with me, more than fifteen hundred miles off, as the wires ran." McClellan adroitly used the telegraph to resupply his troops with bullets and shells in the midst of the Battle of Antietam, Maryland, in September 1862. During the battle of Spotsylvania in the Wilderness Campaign of May 1864, Major General George Gordon Meade used the telegraph to reinforce Major General Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps after it had come under heavy Confederate counterattack. Stanton relied on the military telegraph to monitor the actions of generals in the field, and Lincoln spent countless hours in the War Department telegraph office adjoining Stanton's office. For the first time in the history of warfare, the telegraph helped field commanders to direct real-time battlefield operations and permitted senior military officials to coordinate strategy across large distances. These capabilities were key factors in the North's victory.
