

Brookfield Also Gave, in Full Measure

By SANDY VONDRASEK

During the Civil War, thousands of Vermont's husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers—many still in their teens—stepped forward to volunteer.

Many never came back home. The Civil War, the country's bloodiest conflict, cost nearly 1,100,000 casualties and claimed more than 620,000 lives.

For this summer, Brookfield's Historical Society has expanded the extensive Civil War exhibit that it first mounted in 2011. The exhibit, curated by the society's historian Elinor Gray, profiles some of the 173 Brookfield men who went off to the war.

The exhibit may be viewed at the society's Marvin Newton House on Ridge Road, 2-4 p.m. on Sundays in July and August, with special events to be announced.

After combing through the society's archives, Gray selected a dozen or so soldiers to profile. For each selected soldier, or family of soldiers, she created a mini display, photographs, maps, and documents. Gray has also assembled thick binders containing

more source material.

Among those featured in the exhibit is Egbert H. Allis, who served as an assistant surgeon in the U.S. Navy. Allis, of the same family whose name graces the state park in Brookfield, enlisted early in 1862, less than one year after graduating from the University of Vermont Medical School.

Of all of Brookfield's sons that Gray researched, Egbert Allis, she said, "got my heart."

Born in Brookfield, the 11th child of Elisha and Mary (Steele) Allis, Egbert Allis enlisted in the U.S. Navy on January 27, 1862 and was appointed Acting Assistant Surgeon on the USS Westfield, which saw action on the Mississippi River. His commanding officer commended Dr. Allis for "kind and unremitting attention to the sick." The Westfield was later engaged in the blockade of Texas.

Spared, at First

On January 1, 1863 during a battle, the Westfield ran aground and the crew set charges to destroy the vessel rather than let it be captured. Unfortunately, the charges went off early, killing the captain and most of the senior

officers, leaving Allis to report on efforts to save official records.

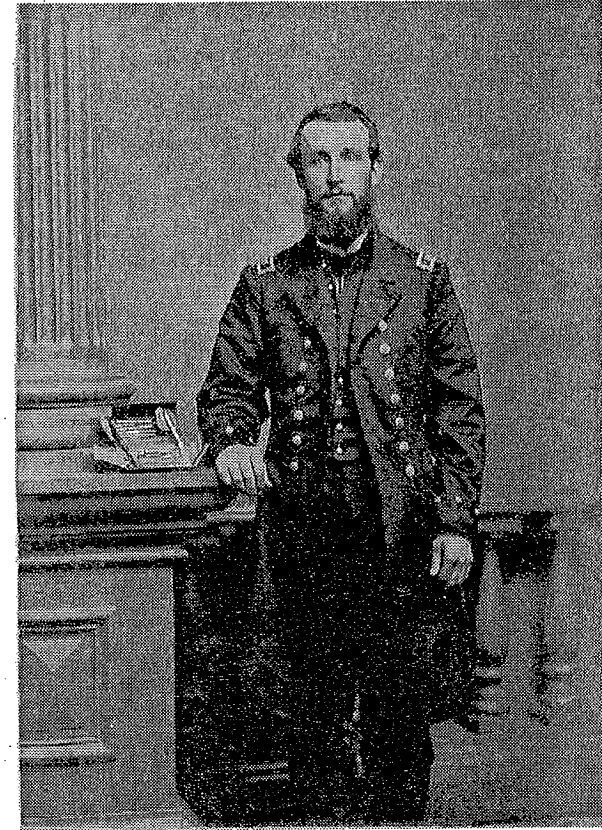
In the spring, Allis was sent home on sick leave, and in August was ordered to USS Bainbridge, then harbored in New York. Traveling with him was S. Horace Smith of Brookfield, 17, who had just enlisted as a surgeon's steward.

The Bainbridge left New York on August 18, encountered a hurricane, and sank off Cape Hatteras on August 21. Allis, Smith, and 98 others in the crew perished. The only survivor was picked up by the brig South Boston, the next day.

The Brookfield exhibit includes Allis's surgical tools, photographs, and copies of handwritten letters.

Other soldiers profiled include Cassius Peck, Zovla Chase, Erie Ditty, brothers Ira and Marshall Carpenter, and Edwin C. Hall, an ancestor of Azel Hall Jr. of Randolph.

Gray recommends the website, vermontcivilwar.org. This virtual museum includes a town-by-town listing of soldiers who served and information on scheduled events for this sesquicentennial year.



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An assistant surgeon in the U.S. Navy, Egbert H. Allis of Brookfield died in August, 1863, when the USS Bainbridge went down in a hurricane. Allis' surgical tools, letters, and other documents are part of the Civil War exhibit at the Brookfield Historical Society's Marvin Newton House.