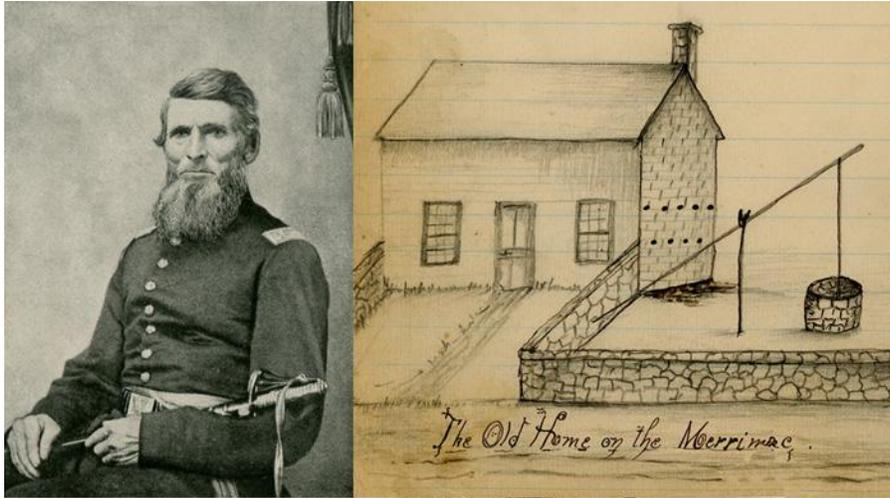


**THE AYER FAMILY – 1802 TO 1903**  
**VOLUME 2 – IRA AYER, JR.**



**Bill Scholtz**  
**Draft**  
**April 21, 2013**

## Contents

### Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	ii
Table of Figures .....	iv
Ira Ayer, Jr. ....	1
Young Ira .....	2
Ira Goes to War .....	7
The Start of the Civil War.....	7
Ira Is Mustered In.....	11
Washington, DC.....	15
In Enemy Territory .....	18
The Battle of Dranesville (20 December 1861).....	20
Peninsula Campaign (March – July 1862).....	23
The Seven Days Battles (25 June – 1 July 1862).....	25
The Second Battle of Bull Run (29-30 August 1862).....	33
Major Ayer.....	35
Ira and Jennie Get Married .....	43
Jennie and Ira Meet.....	43
Ira and Jennie **** .....	45
The Battle of Gettysburg (1-3 July 1863).....	49
In Pursuit of Lee (July – December 1863).....	53
Lieutenant Colonel Ayer.....	58
The Wedding.....	60
The Love Letter Period .....	69
The First Phase.....	69
Jennie Goes to War .....	75
The Second Phase .....	77
The Battle of the Wilderness (5-7 May 1864) .....	81
The End of the War.....	85
Young Jennie is born in NY.....	86
Ira Re-enlists .....	86
Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction.....	90
Post-War Richmond.....	90
A City in Ruins .....	90
Reconstruction .....	93
The House Across from the Railroad.....	94
Ira In the Military Round Two.....	96
Ira Transfers to Georgia ***** .....	96
Ira Transfers to Ashland *****.....	100
From Brock Collection at the Lib of VA ***** .....	103
Ira Ayer, Special Agent for the Treasury.....	105
Ashland and 1870 census.....	108
Moving North.....	109
Ira and Jennie move to New Jersey and New York (1881) ***** .....	109
“Keeping the Wolf From the Door”.....	110

## Contents

Jennie and Ira in New Jersey .....	113
Jennie and Ira move to Brooklyn .....	116
Alice and George 1897 .....	118
Appendix.....	120
Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania .....	120
The Battle of Gaines' Hill by: Amanda Theodocia Jones (1835-1914).....	123
Ira's Civil War Battles.....	127
Letter from Ira Ayer to Mr. L. Matthews.....	128
Murders and Outrages reported on by Ira Ayer .....	130
Article About Ira Ayer and the Tin-Plate Industry .....	133
Bibliography .....	134
Endnotes.....	135

## Contents

### Table of Figures

Figure 1 - Allegheny College: On the left is Bentley Hall (built around 1830) and the school's second building Ruter Hall (built in 1854). Both building still stand. (from 1870 drawing) .....	2
Figure 2 - Course of Study of Allegheny College Peparatory Department 1853-4 (from 1854 yearbook) .....	3
Figure 3 - Allegheny Flag.....	10
Figure 4 - Ira's Sword.....	11
Figure 5 - The Great Comet of 1861 by E. Weiß.....	14
Figure 6 - Washinton DC during the Civil war from Harpers Weekly 27 July 1861 .....	16
Figure 7 - Typical camp in Washington, DC from Harpers Weekly 25 May 1861 .....	16
Figure 8 - Third Brigade structure, Fall 1861 .....	17
Figure 9 - Troops on review form the Library of Congress.....	18
Figure 10 - Diagram of the Battle of Draneville from Ord' report – Ira’s regiment is marked by the blue D.....	20
Figure 11 - The Battle of Dranesville from Happers Weekly 11 January 1862 .....	22
Figure 12 - March from Washington to Fredericksburg (modified map from Library of Congress) .....	25
Figure 13 - Fifth Corps Peninsular Campaign 1862 .....	26
Figure 14 - The Peninsula Campaign (from PBS.org).....	27
Figure 15 - Seven Days Battles map for 26-7 June – On 26 June Company I was where the name Seymour is (from Wikipedia).....	28
Figure 16 - Battle of Malvern Hill and subsequent retreat (from Wikipedia) .....	32
Figure 17 - Second Battle of Bull Run - 5pm on 30 August – Ira was in Reynolds’ Division (from Wikipedia).....	34
Figure 18 - Miner's Hill - Review of 17th New York Infantry (from Library of Congress) .....	40
Figure 19 - Ira Ayer, Jr. in undress uniform – he is likely a Major or Lieut. Colonel here (the only difference in the uniform between Major and Lieut. Colonel is the color of the shoulder strap).....	46
Figure 20 - Ira's new girl, Jennie James .....	48
Figure 21 - Actual Civil War Era Guitar .....	49
Figure 22 - Fifth Corps Gettysburg 1-3 July 1862.....	50
Figure 23 - Battle of Gettysburg - 3 July (from Wikipedia).....	53
Figure 24 - In Pursuit of Lee - 5 July - winter of '63-4 (modified map from Library of Congress) .....	54
Figure 25 - Bristoe Campaign – Ira saw actoin at Bristoe Station and Rappahannock Station (from Wikipedia) .....	56
Figure 26 - Scenes from the Battle of Mine Run - Harpers Weekly 2 January 1863 .....	58
Figure 27 - Ira's Oath of Office as Lieutenant Colonel - 27 February 1864.....	59
Figure 28 - Ira on the left with other regimental or brigade officers .....	60
Figure 29 - Order extending Ira Ayer, Jr. leave by 15 days.....	64
Figure 30 - Wedding Announcement for Jennie James and Ira Ayer, Jr. ....	64

## Contents

Figure 31 - Jennie possibly at her wedding .....	66
Figure 32 - The Great Sanitary Fair of Philadelphia – 1864 (from Library of Congress)	71
Figure 33 – Fifth Corps Wilderness 5-7 May 1864 .....	81
Figure 34 - Battle of the Wilderness afternoon of May 6 - Ira was in the woods in Fisher's Brigade at the bottom of Warren's line (from Wikipedia) .....	82
Figure 35 - Battle of the Wilderness 5 May where General Wadsworth was mortally wounded and where Ira will be wounded the next day (drawing by Alfred R Waud) .....	83
Figure 36 - Birdseye view of Lincoln General Hospital (from Library of Congress) .....	84
Figure 37 - Camp Fry.....	89
Figure 38 - Pass for Jane F. James to travel to Richmond only 5 days after the end of the war. The number on the pass is only 949 indicating that they were issued only rarely. .	90
Figure 39 - Burned districts of Richmond near the James River April 1865 (From shorpy.com) .....	91
Figure 40 - James family home in Ashland, VA – This picture was either taken around 1880 or more likely in the 1920s when William and Jane’s grandkids came to Ashland for a visit. ....	95
Figure 41 - James property .....	111
Figure 42 - James Property sub-division ownership.....	111
Figure 44 - Train going by .....	112
Figure 43 - The house around 1880s or 1920s and 2007 .....	112
Figure 46 – Inside .....	113
Figure 45 - Inside .....	113
Figure 47 - Letter head of a letter written by Samuel while at the hotel .....	114
Figure 48 - Blizzard of 1888 in New Britain, CT (Wikipedia) – couldn’t find a picture of New Jersey.....	116
Figure 49 - The illustration that may have accompnied the poem in Frank Leslie's Weekly .....	123

## Ira Ayer, Jr.

### Ira Ayer, Jr.

One of the amazing things about Ira, Jr. is that except for the few years as a youth living on the farm, I have records of where he was and what he was doing on an almost month by month basis for his whole life.

There are a huge number of sources. First we get genealogies from two of his daughters, Alice and Clementine, his two youngest and the typical censuses and military records. Then there are significant mentions in his father's "Reminiscences" and the memorial to him. There is a 3 page biography in "Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania" and several other books mention him including a significant number of mentions in a history of Allegheny College. There are many mentions of him in the Congressional Record, first for the military and later for the Treasury Department. Plus, there are over 100 letters to and from him, from before, during and after the Civil War. And, there are about 100 newspaper articles about or mentioning him including some about two medical operations he had. This is not to mention a ton of other available pieces of information on the internet.

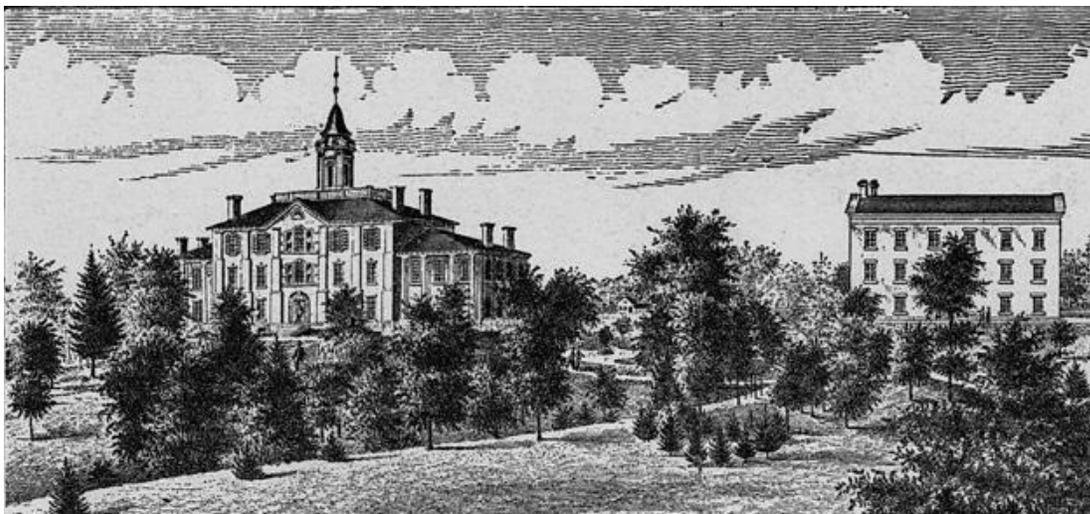
I've put the letters and some other artifacts together in a collection I call "[Project Ayer](#)". They span from 1845-1899. There are about 160 letters, of which 130 are from or to Ira. Almost 50 are from Ira to his sister Vinnie and/or her husband George from before the war until Vinnie's death. There are only 4 letters from Ira to Jennie, all after the war. Jennie must have thrown out or lost her letters from Ira. There are 36 letters Jennie to Ira, most from the few months from their marriage to Ira's injury. No letters from Vinnie or George to Ira are known to exist. There are about 30 letters from Jennie's parents, William and Jane James.

## Young Ira

### Young Ira

Ira was born on his father's farm 14 July 1836. It was originally his grandfather's farm. His grandfather, James Ayer died 2 years before Ira was born, but he knew his paternal grandmother, Sarah Bradley Ayer for 8 years before she died. On the other hand, his maternal grandmother, Nancy Davenport Wadsworth, out lived his mother and died when Ira was 29 years old. We don't know who his maternal grandfather was, but maternal step-grandfather was John Wadsworth who died in 1841.

We know nothing of his years on the farm. We first hear of him is at age 16 he entered Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. School records say that he arrived in the fall of 1852 but it was more likely the spring of 1853.



**Figure 1 - Allegheny College: On the left is Bentley Hall (built around 1830) and the school's second building Ruter Hall (built in 1854). Both building still stand. (from 1870 drawing)**

Allegheny College was founded in 1815. At the time Ira was in school, it was under the patronage of the Pittsburgh and Erie Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The previous decade, in a time of crisis, a fund raising program was set where a donation of \$25 entitled one person to a lifetime scholarship. The program was so successful that it had been continued in Ira's time, although the donation had been increased to \$35. This was even though the cost of 4 years was about \$100.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the \$35 the students had to pay \$2 per term for expenses. Those students not living at home boarded with local families or in boarding houses for a cost of around \$2 per week. Ira boarded with a family named Black.

At the time, Allegheny was made up of two schools, the normal four year college program and a 4 term, 1 1/3 year College Preparatory program. The program starts with the spring term and continues through the spring term the next year preparing the students for college starting in the fall.

## Young Ira

The faculty consisted of the president and five other professors, all Methodist Clergymen and three tutors. There were about 100 students in the college program and almost 200 in Ira's preparatory program. Allegheny had one building when Ira entered school, Bentley Hall and was building a second, Ruter Hall.

The 1854 yearbook lists a wealth of information about the programs at Allegheny.<sup>i</sup>

PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT.	
<b>FIRST TERM.</b>	<b>THIRD TERM.</b>
Bullion's English Grammar, Bullion's Latin Grammar, Bullion's Greek Grammar.	Bullion's Latin Reader, Bullion's Greek Reader.
<b>SECOND TERM.</b>	<b>FOURTH TERM.</b>
Bullion's Latin Reader, Bullion's Greek Reader, Adams' New Arithmetic, Mitchell's Geography.	Anthon's Caesar, Bullion's Greek Reader, Loomis' Algebra.

Figure 2 - Course of Study of Allegheny College Preparatory Department 1853-4 (from 1854 yearbook)

The first we actually hear from Ira is the day after he arrived for his second year. On 27 August 1853 he wrote a letter to his big sister Vinnie. Among other things, we learn what classes Ira will take:

Well; I went back to College and got my studies which are Geometry, Algebra, Adams' Arithmetic, and Latin, besides receiving Browns Grammar, at home, and if I have time Comstocks Philosophy<sup>ii</sup>, and perhaps Study Physiologiy, and Hygiene.

Ira does not want his parents to worry:

Now tell pa and ma that they must not worry themselves. Take every thing Cool, that's the way, don't worry; theris a good time a coming, now do take the advice of your Only Son, and be aisy. How do all the rest of the folks stand it.

<sup>i</sup> I've collected a couple of Ira's yearbooks and all the books required for his courses as listed in the 1854 yearbook here: <http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/Allegheny.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Comstock's Philosophy is a textbook written by John Lee Comstock in 1853.

## Young Ira

I love that he tells his parents to take everything Cool. That seems so far ahead of his time. I don't know what he means by aisy though. Did he mean airy?

To get to school, Ira takes a train along the lake from Evans, New York to Eire, Pennsylvania, a distance of about 70 miles. From there he takes a stagecoach to Meadville, a distance of 37 miles, taking about 7 hours. Only 35 years earlier, the only way for his father to get from Evans, New York to Haverhill, Massachusetts (500 miles each way) and back was to walk. Now, Ira make a journey of over 100 miles in a little as 9 hours.

In Ira's next letter from September 11 we learn that he has been named one of the speakers (Declaimers) of the Allegheny Literary Society. He needs to come up with a good speech and asks Vinnie for help. She ended up sending Ira a speech that he read before the school. Although he was very nervous, he says it went very well. Of his studies, he says:

I am getting along well in all my studies excepting Algebra. Those Quadratic equations are turning my head up side down. However they are easy if I had time to spend on them. I doubt not when you come to receiving I shall understand them thoroughly. I like Latin firstrate, also Geometry is very nice.

In the next letter:

Latin I like first rate, everything does come out so slick, there is no ambiguity or anything of that kind, it is perfectly plain out and easy, that is after I have studied it out, Geometry is beautiful, it trains the mind with reason with things in abstract, and in fact is perfectly to strengthen the mind every way,

Early in the next term Ira has found religion on a whole new level. In a letter to Vinnie on 17 February 1854<sup>iii</sup> Ira says that there had been something missing in his life when two weeks earlier he found out it was his connection with the Lord. Ira had always believed in god and the afterlife (a few months earlier he had talked about seeing his deceased brother again). But now he had a faith that he would take with him throughout the rest of his life.

In June Ira attends the graduation ceremonies and talks of coming home for vacation. This implies that he was intending to go back to school, but he did not. After just two years, Ira left Allegheny. For the next five years we know almost nothing of him.

A year after leaving school, Ira, like his father before him, joined the New York Militia. He was commissioned as 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of the Sixty-Seventh Regiment, Thirty Second Brigade, Eight Division, NY Infantry. I don't believe this is a full time position. He held it at least until 1861.

---

<sup>iii</sup> <http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/PreCivilWar.htm#AyerIraII007>

## Young Ira

During this period, Ira's sister Vinnie got married. From his letters to her, we get the impression that she was living and/or going to school in Buffalo. We could tell that she was not living at home with the rest of the family. Ira was very close to Vinnie because they were separated by only two year of age (Vinnie was older). The other two sisters, Sarah and Julia were 6 an 9 years younger than Ira.

Vinnie married Georg W. Barr on 8 August 1858. George was a doctor and he and Ira became very close friends. While George had been born in about 200 miles east of Buffalo, he had grown up in Evans so he and Vinnie must have known each other well. They lived in Gowanda, just southeast of Evans.

Then, in August of 1859, Ira was back in school. This time he was in Lima, New York, just south of Rochester. I believe he was at Genesee College. Genesee Wesleyan Seminary had been formed in Lima in 1832 as a result of the many revival meetings of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Reminiscences – Chapter 3 – Life in the New Country). In 1850 they added the Liberal Arts school Genesee College. I don't know if Ira was attending the Seminary or the Liberal Arts College but I believe it's Genesee College.

Ira is now 23 and upon arrival, he writes to Vinnie:

I am now well settled and have this moment for the first time found leisure to expand upon the abstract I so hastily sent you. You will of course tell the friends the regulations in the [Same] suffice it to say I have a pleasant room and roommate, furnished good enough board very satisfactory and everything pleasant. The surroundings are indeed beautiful. I have never seen a country that would begin to compare with it. The woods are all beautiful groves, and the farms with their appendages are each models of perfection. I have entered regular Freshman with the expectation of making up during the year. Have not failed yet though I shall not be able to read Herodotus under three or four weeks. I am also in Prof Hoyt's class in Greek. I like the faculty very much and the school is far superior to the one at Meadville. In fact there is nothing I could wish for different. Everything is pleasant and calculated to make one happy and contented. Please tell ma I have marked all my things and shall take good care that none are lost.

While at school, Vinnie gave birth to Iris Barr. So, Ira becomes an uncle for the first time and his parents become grandparents for the first time.

Ira says his school in Lima is far superior to Allegheny, but he is only here for one or two terms. In the fall of 1860 Ira is back at Allegheny and like the first time he arrived and when he was in Lima, he couldn't be happier. He is very pleased with the new headmaster:

Our new President, Dr. Geo W. Loomis, is a noble man. He is more than six feet tall, somewhat portly, hair just a little frosted, and an expression of benevolence

## Young Ira

as scholarly dignity which it seems to me could not be surpassed. Vinnie, he is my ideal of a perfect man, – a profound scholar, an earnest Christian, and an accomplished gentleman. I think he cannot fail to raise the reputation of the college, so that it will take its stand among the first of Western Institutions.

This time Ira has enrolled in the Bible Studies Department and at 23 he is older than most of the other students. He writes to George and Vinnie:

Dear Brother and Sister, I find religion to be more precious to me, it would seem, than ever before. I love the Bible and love to meditate upon its teachings. They seem to me very sublime and precious.

He is also boarding away from campus this time, about a mile. He enjoyed the winter weather that year:

I shall never forget the winter; I enjoyed myself very much the whole time. This has been a beautiful winter day. The snow is about eight inches deep and of course we have fine sleighing. The day after my arrival here we had a heavy rain, which changed into snow and by some melting and freezing formed quite a coat of ice. Owing to this, though we have had a thaw and rain now and then, we have had good-sleighing I believe, every day this winter. This has made my boarding away from college a mile no inconvenience, but just a pleasant walk. I am enjoying myself much. I think never better.

Little did Ira know how much his world was about to change.

## Ira Goes to War<sup>iv</sup>

February's letter to George and Vinnie was all about how happy Ira was with his religion, studies and life in general. Within a few months, these things couldn't have been further from his mind.

### ***The Start of the Civil War***

On 12 April 1861 Fort Sumter was fired upon and the Civil War began. Life at Allegheny changed. From Ernest Ashton Smith's "Allegheny – A Century of Education":

Over the college community in the days of 1861 ran the fire of patriotism quite as fiercely as in other assemblies of men. To Allegheny, in the Fifties, had come not a few youths from Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Virginia, yet, as the political lines became more sharply drawn in the nation over the slavery issue, the college halls were in the main free from sectional controversy. The boys from the South were good students, spirited and loyal to the homeland. But the tension, after the firing on Ft. Sumter, became accentuated beyond bounds. Rash words were spoken about the campus. Bitter recriminations then followed and an indignation meeting of the Northern students, which resulted in a committee of three with R. N. Stubbs, '63, as chairman.

The ultimatum was, "Retract, or leave within twenty-four hours for your homes"- The Southern blood was too heated to make apology and President Loomis in vain urged conciliation. Within the allotted day, the group that had applauded the attack in South Carolina bade farewell to Meadville. Right on the heels of this episode came the flying of the Stars and Stripes from the cupola of Old Bentley. The students gathered in force on Saturday morning, April 20, and James E. Stubbs, a stalwart six-footer, bore the colors over the roof to the top-most point. Then the door to the tower was securely barred, so no unfriendly hand could remove the banner of the North.

The flag raising brought the sentiment of the college to the highest pitch. It followed irresistibly that on the same afternoon the boys of Allegheny met at the Court House. A few addresses were made, but the time was one for action. D. V.

---

<sup>iv</sup> Most of the information in the Civil War sections comes from the following:

- "Project Ayer", A collection of letters and documents relating to Ira and Jennie's families managed by Bill Scholtz. <http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/index.html>
- Smith, Ernest Ashton, Ph.D., "Allegheny – A Century of Education, The Allegheny College History Company, 1916
- Helmrieck, Jonathan E., "The Flag of the Allegheny College Volunteers", 2002
- Bates, Samuel, "Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania", T. H. Davis & Co., 1876
- Bates, Samuel, "History of Pennsylvania Volunteers", B. Singerly, 1869
- McCracken, First Lieut. and Adjutant George W., Address at the Dedication of the Monument to the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves (39<sup>th</sup> Regiment Infantry) at Gettysburg, 2 September 1890

## Ira Goes to War

Derickson, as brigade inspector of the First Brigade, 20th Div. P. M., had called for volunteers under the proclamation of Governor Curtin. The first to inscribe his name on the roster was Alexander Ashley and the second, Octavius L. Williams, son of Professor Williams, and then they came in quick succession until seventy-eight of Allegheny's daring sons had enlisted to become defenders of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and later of the Union. The College Company organized by electing Ira Ayer, Jr., of Buffalo, N. Y., as captain, Sion B. Smith of Alexandria, Tenn., first lieutenant, Oscar Henning, the instructor in German, second lieutenant, George H. Norris of Windsor, O., third lieutenant.

Ira was selected captain, in part, because of his experience with the New York Militia. They called themselves the Meadville Volunteers. Again from Smith:

The Crawford Journal declared, "No finer band of young men has gone to the war than those who compose the college company, and they have the warmest wishes of the community." Ira Ayer, Jr., though an under-classman, was experienced in military tactics and his selection to lead his comrades was a wise choice. A gentle spirited man in private life, on the firing line he was the incarnation of courage.

Ira's brother-in-law George had enlisted and on 26 April sent Ira a letter offering him the opportunity of a commission in his regiment. Ira was flattered but turned him down since he was already engaged. He wrote to George on 2 May:

Yes, I am ready to fight or pray, as occasion requires. – in proof of which, I will tell you something. a little more than a week ago, the students of the college called a meeting and organized a military company. We are on drill regularly. the officers meet at Central Hall, (a fine drilling room) at half past five in the morning, and drill one hour. All the members of the company meet at four in the afternoon and drill one hour. We have at present but about 20 men. But they are true as steel. Our first Lieut is a member of the senior class, - a native of Tennessee and will probably be thrown out of eight or ten thousand Dollars by the step he has taken. But he believes it to be his duty to enter the Army of Freedom, and is determined to fight and die for liberty if need be. He is also an owner of six or eight slaves. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut is the Proff of modern languages in College. He is a finished scholar, and has seen service in seven battles. We are anxious to be off, but as yet have received no call from the state. The Captain of the "Allegheny College Volunteers" is no other than your brother. Should God call me to the field, I expect to lead my men to victory or Death. Braver spirits never breathed than been in our ranks. Thoughtful as well as patriotic, they counted the cost beforehand, and sacrificed their all upon the altar of their country...

But it was not so easy to form a company. The Allegheny students got together to form the company in the end of April, but by the end of May, they had not gotten their regiment accepted. To that end, Ira wrote a letter to Samuel P. Bates on 20 May. Bates was the State Superintendant of Schools of Pennsylvania. Bates would later become the great historian of Pennsylvania's

## Ira Goes to War

part in the Civil War. He wrote the 5 volume work "History of Pennsylvania Volunteers" and "Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania". The latter work was biographies of notable officers in the Pennsylvania Volunteers, including Ira Ayer. Ira wrote:

My Dear Sir,

Can we receive an assurance from the Gov in his own hand, that we shall be called at once into Camp, and placed under the efficient drill officers, we will most joyfully wish for the specified time. I trust I shall do nothing improper in saying that we feel we should have been called before now, among the first to offer our services we had assurances that we should be accepted which little more than a week ago were removed. Now the first we have acted in good faith, and as we have striven to know our duty as men, we believe that our connection with college should have little to do with the final decision.

Hoping that you will write soon,

I am, Dear Sir,

With much Respect

Your humble servant

Ira Ayer Jr, Captain

From Jonathan Helmreich in "The Flag of Allegheny College Civil War Company"<sup>v</sup>:

Until the issue of duration of enlistments was resolved, Governor Andrew Curtin delayed acceptance of the College Company. The lads drilled, parading occasionally on Chestnut Street in Meadville, and chafed at the delay. Some say that special appeals were made to Senator D. A. Finney, class of 1840, to use his influence with the governor. Significant also in the matter was Professor Samuel P. Bates, a Meadville native and Deputy State Superintendent of Education, who personally carried to Harrisburg papers tendering the service of the College Volunteers and who telegraphed home that on 24 May the company was accepted for three years' service. Before it could depart for training, however, time was required to make arrangements and to bring the company to its full size by the addition of volunteers from the county. (A Meadville short-term company that included several college students had already formed and left for training.) It was the determination of the Allegheny lads that no one should be accepted into the company unless he were a student at the time he enlisted. They sent to neighboring academies (post-grammar schools, the fore-runners of today's high schools) for recruits and were especially successful in gaining help from the southwest area of the county, including nine youths from tiny Espyville Academy.

---

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.allegheny.edu/civilwarflag/index.php>

## Ira Goes to War

The company was now ready to be accepted and had a full complement. Again, from Helmreich:

On the eleventh of June the community bade farewell to its own. Faculty, townspeople, and President Loomis all spoke as the Allegheny Company stood in formation before the College's great hall. Miss Hattie Bain presented the volunteers with a large flag of fine wool bunting, sewn by the ladies of the town.



Figure 3 - Allegheny Flag

With seven stripes of red and six of white, it showed 30 gold stars in its blue corner field in an elliptical disposition, with single stars in each of the four corners of the field. Thus the 34 states of the Union before secession were represented, demonstrating the desire of both the women of Meadville and those about to march away that the Union be preserved. On one side of the flag, within the starry ellipse, was inscribed in gold lettering the phrase "Our Country." On the other side appeared the Latin words, "Semper Fidelis" ("Always Faithful"—later to become the slogan of the U.S. Marine Corps in 1883). President Loomis's valedictory to the volunteers was brief and emotional, reminiscent of the farewell the Spartans paid to their troops departing for the battle of Thermopylae. With tears streaming down his cheeks, this physically imposing man growled in his deep voice, "Come back with the flag, boys, or come back wrapped in its folds."

This was carried throughout the war and was embroidered with the battles the company fought in. After the war, the flag returned to Allegheny and eventually disappeared. That is until 2002 when school historian Jonathan Helmreich found the flag hidden in a cupboard in the college library.

At the parting ceremonies, the school president said, "Come back with the flag, boys, or come back wrapped in its folds."

Again from Helmreich:

Having received their flag, the volunteers were served a sumptuous meal on the campus green, then marched to Dock Street, where they boarded a canal boat. An immense crowd cheered them off that Tuesday evening. Each youth's name was announced as he boarded the boat, and each received from the ladies a "Handy Betty" (a sewing kit), a New Testament, and a white muslin Havelock to protect his neck from the southern sun (an item that did not last as far as Pittsburgh). A cornet band played, and girls sang patriotic tunes. Few slept that night as they were towed along the canal on the *J. D. Gill*, dodging the spikes of the bridges.

## Ira Goes to War

The barge was headed for Camp Wilkins, near Pittsburgh and south of college.  
From Smith

The form of transportation was not rapid, but it was sure, and after three days the destination was reached. This march by canal boat was largely a triumphal procession. Every town along the route strove to do honor to the young soldiers and war in anticipation was one long holiday. On the morning on the twelfth of June at six o'clock the company left "the raging canal" for a hike of a mile to breakfast at Sherman's Corners. At Hartstown, a bevy of twenty young ladies came on the boat and rode to the next lock. At Greenville, a mile from town, the local brass band met the college recruits and escorted them to supper and addresses by the pastors of the place. By night to Sharon, the second day brought more dining, speeches and patriotic songs by the ladies. At Middlesex, the private homes welcomed the Allegheny boys to their hospitality and a gathering of a thousand loyalists cheered them off on their boat again. From New Castle to Camp Wilkins the journey was rapid and uneventful.

### ***Ira Is Mustered In***

Here, Ira was mustered in on 14 June 1861 for three years of service. The company was merged with what would become the Pennsylvania Thirty-ninth Regiment, Tenth Reserve, commonly known as the 10th Regiment, P. R. V. C. as Company I. Each company had about 120 members and there were 10 companies in the regiment. The companies were formed from eight western Pennsylvanian counties.

According to Wikipedia, Pennsylvania had easily met its quota from Lincoln's call for volunteers. However, since the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, was a political enemy of Pennsylvania's Governor Curtin, Cameron refused to accept the extra volunteers. So, at state expense, Curtin created the Pennsylvania Reserves, made up of 15 regiments, the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>.



Figure 4 - Ira's Sword

## Ira Goes to War

Camp Wilkins was an especially filthy camp with too many people and too few facilities. From Smith:

The barracks at Camp Wilkins were originally built and used for the Allegheny County Fair. The buildings were simply rough wooden structures. Stalls, pens and sties were fitted up along the sides with boards two or three feet wide, and upon these the boys slept. Of these stoic couches one of the boys writes, "I never before realized just how hard a plank was, or how sharp were bones until I had occupied one of these bunks for a couple of nights. I imagine the soldiers of today would set up a mighty protest if they were turned into such an enclosure like animals, with no more than we had, and told to make themselves comfortable! But disagreeable as were our surroundings, what a paradise we would have struck if in March, 1862, when moving from Hunters' Mills to Alexandria, we could have turned into such a structure. It was here that we began to cut our eye teeth and to thoroughly comprehend the difference between home comforts and the uncomfortable things of a military camp, between the meals our mothers served, yes, and the ones Old Allegheny provided, and the fare of a soldier.

"After we had each drawn a tin plate, a knife, a fork, a large and a small spoon, and a tin cup, we were ready for our several portions of hard tack, salt pork, beans, coffee and sugar, with occasionally corned beef instead of salt pork. 'Embalmed beef, which we hear so much about now-a-days, had not yet been discovered. After a few days, we were more accustomed to the ways of camp life, had a company cook, and were occasionally treated to such luxuries and delicacies as fresh beef, potatoes, bean or vegetable soup, and soft bread, as bakers' bread was called to distinguish it from hard tack. Furthermore, either the planks we slept on grew mellowed somewhat, or the sharp points of our hip bones must have become rounded off, for it was not long before we could lie down and sleep comfortably any place."...

When the Allegheny Company reached Camp Wilkins, it was in a filthy condition, rations were poor and irregular and consequently much sickness prevailed. But under the energetic efforts of the commandant, Colonel Hays, '40, it was soon made clean, the food became wholesome, plentiful and regular, so that the camp quickly attained a military appearance... Alexander Ashley wrote to Meadville of his impressions as follows : "I like the Tenth Regiment , there are more God-fearing men in it than in others. Camp life abounds in swearing, obscenity and gambling, but our chaplain, Rev. J. M. Green, of the Erie Conference, is an energetic leader. He is holding religious services and our Allegheny boys are active."

On 1 July the company moved 12 miles up river to Camp Wright. While at Camp Wright, war was not the only thing on Ira's mind. Just before the company left Meadville, Ira had made a trip home to see his mother. She was sick and was thought to have little time to live. By July, she was worse. On 6 July Ira wrote a

## Ira Goes to War

letter to his mother saying goodbye and the next day he wrote a poem about her<sup>vi</sup>.

On 14 August 1861, his mother was dead.

In Ira's 8 July 1861 letter to Vinnie Ira talks of liking camp life more than he expected:

Let me first assure you that I am very comfortable and pleasantly situated. We have plenty that is good to eat, and find a board a very convenient thing to sleep upon. Never slept more soundly than I do in camp.

He also talks of seeing what has been called the Great Comet of 1861. This was an amazing comet whose tail went more than half way across the sky before the Earth actually passed through the tail. Ira says:

I observed the comet the first evening it made its appearance and have watched its progress ever since. It is indeed a mysterious visitor. How sublime are those phenomena! How they do fill the soul with the emotions of the grand! It seems to me that the contrast which the sweet scenery of nature forms with the surroundings of camp life greatly heightens the enjoyment which I receive from the contemplation of the former; so that in one moment I seem at times to drink to the full from the cup of peaceful enjoyment. It seems to me, Dear Sister, that if I survive war I shall endeavor more assiduously than ever to acquire knowledge and maintain that temper of mind by which I may continually refer all that is beautiful and good to the great author of Nature. It is by this recognizing God in the Universe, in Revelation, and in the lives of the living, and the illustrious dead, that we become as it were to realize his ever living, present agency and his power over the hearts and happiness of men.

---

<sup>vi</sup> <http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/CivilWar1861.htm#AyerIraII037>

## Ira Goes to War

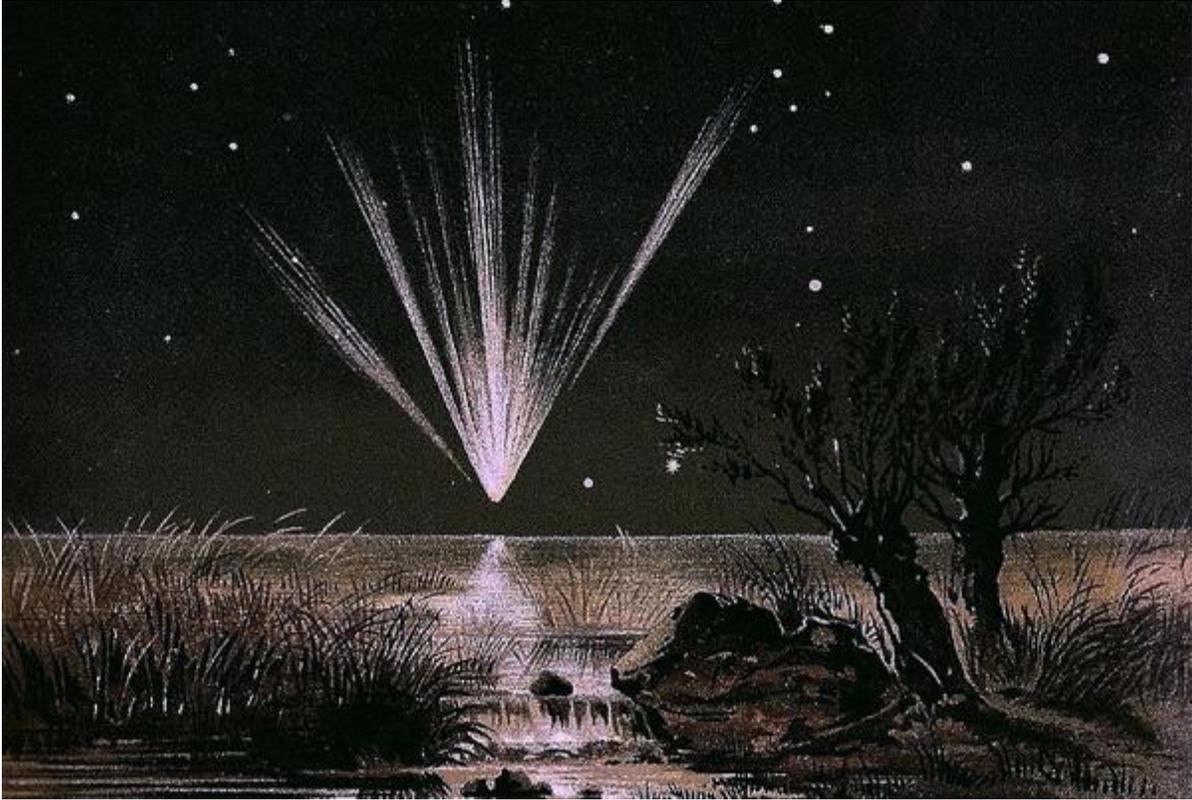


Figure 5 - The Great Comet of 1861 by E. Weiß

On 21 July in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania the 10<sup>th</sup> was officially accepted into United States Service for three years. This was the same day as the terrible Union defeat in the first Battle of Bull Run. The regiments were eventually renamed. Ira's went from the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves to the 39<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers. The names are very confusingly used interchangeably.

On 22 July the regiment headed for Washington by way of Baltimore. While in Baltimore the police told them to keep off the streets because a Massachusetts regiment had been attacked by an angry mob a few weeks earlier. Maryland had wanted to join the South but to prevent Washington from being in the middle of Confederate territory Lincoln proclaimed Martial Law in Maryland. From Smith:

But Colonel McCalmont, declining to entertain any such a proposition, ordered the distribution of twenty rounds of shot and then with the significant order, "Fix bayonets, route step, march", led his men directly through the city unmolested, with bands playing and flags waving. It was on this march that the regiment secured its mascot in the shape of a little darkey boy who, attracted by the martial music and the sound of tramping feet, fell into step at the head of the column. When they broke ranks, he made himself so useful in holding horses, finding tools, pegging tents, etc., that he was allowed to accompany the men, with whom he was a great favorite, during their long and arduous campaigning extending

## **Ira Goes to War**

over three years. They never knew any other name for him than that of 'Baltimore', with which the soldiers christened him.

Ira's impression of Baltimore was much better:

Our whole Regt was greatly pleased with Baltimore and we hoped to remain there a few weeks; but were ordered off the next day after arriving there. It is indeed a most delightful city, looking as though out in a holiday dress. The fine marble casings and in many instances fronts, give a very neat appearance to the houses while the streets are very nicely paved and perfectly free from dirt. I may say I did not observe a cross, homely, or dirty looking person in Baltimore – nor even a discontented one,...

### ***Washington, DC***

On the 24<sup>th</sup> the regiment moved on to Washington. From Bates:<sup>2</sup>

While at the depot it met a regiment of New York troops, which had been engaged at Bull Run. A single battle had made sad havoc in its ranks: Many were maimed, and hobbled along as best they could; some were borne upon stretchers, and here and there one who had lost a leg or an arm. Later in the contest such things were scarcely noted, but they produced a deep impression then.

The regiment eventually bivouacked at Camp Tennally, a camp in an area of northwest Washington called Tennallytown. It was the highest point in the city. From a 5 August letter to George:

We are very pleasantly encamped about a mile east of the Capitol. The weather for the past week has been exceedingly warm, a number of degrees higher than the highest in NY during the warmest part of the season. I judge from sensation as I have seen no observations. There is certainly however a great difference in the temperatures. The tents would be almost unendurable were it not for the raising them a foot or two around the bottom which invariably makes quite a circulation, in this way they are very cool and comfortable. I have not been "right" sick two hours since entering camp, though for the last two weeks I have had quite a severe cold which amounted to [catarrh] and has made me feel quite dull and stupid much of the time, I have however been off duty but one day (last Sunday) and trust I shall soon wear it entirely away....

A large force is concentrating at this point, almost every hillside being dotted with the neat white tents of some Regiments awaiting farther orders.

## Ira Goes to War



Figure 6 - Washinton DC during the Civil war from Harpers Weekly 27 July 1861

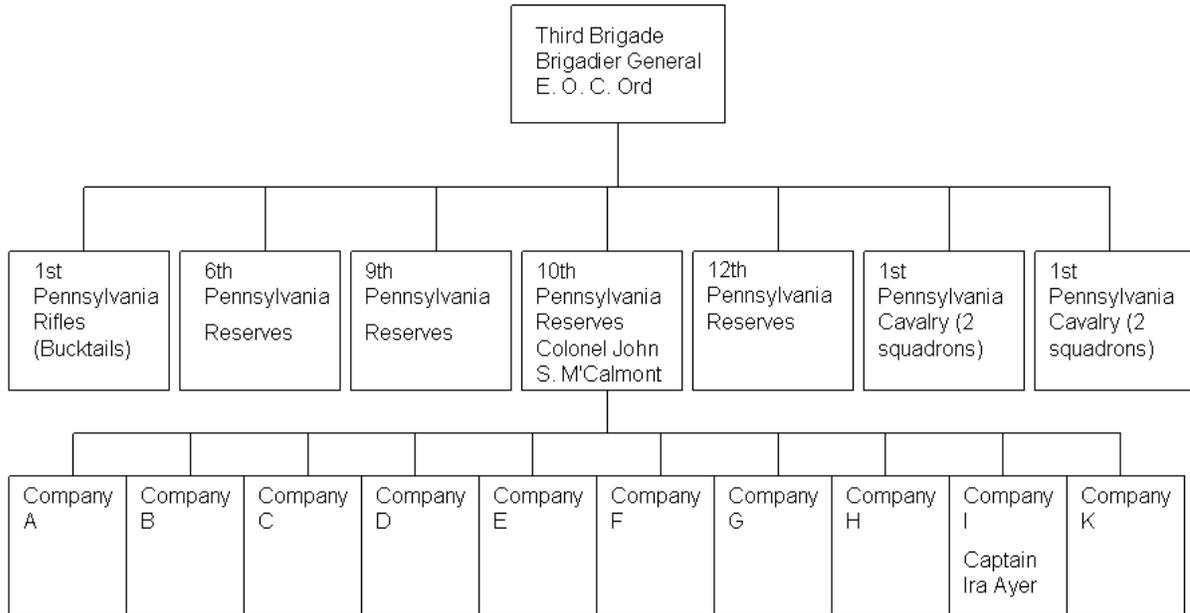


Figure 7 - Typical camp in Washington, DC from Harpers Weekly 25 May 1861

After arriving in Washington the regiment was now officially attached to McClellan's Army of the Potomac, third brigade under Brigadier General E. O. C. Ord. A brigade is typically 2 to 5 regiments. This brigade was made up of Pennsylvania Reserves. Soon Ira's company was Big Falls. In a 20 August letter to Vinnie he says:

We are now encamped at the "Great Falls of the Potomac" about 17 miles above Washington our object being to prevent the crossing of the rebels to this place, which is seems is considered important point and quite subject to attack. I think quite a force of enemy troops had been stationed on the other side of the river before we came, but its thought they withdrew the next night. The nearest we have come to seeing an enemy consists of having found some flattened bullets shot against a rocks from the other side. Yesterday the 2nd Vermont came in to relieve us, and we are now awaiting orders – expecting to return to Camp Tenally.

## Ira Goes to War



**Figure 8 - Third Brigade structure, Fall 1861**

A few weeks earlier the Union forces had badly lost at the first Battle of Bull Run. The company that was relieving Ira's had been at Bull Run:

This Regt was in the Bull's run affair and it is quite interesting to listen to incidents of the fight from eye witnesses. There is a great difference between the manners of the Vermont boys and the "New York Fire Zouaves" whom we encountered the first night of our arrival in Washington. You cannot image the condition of this in W[ashington] at the time. The streets were filled with disorganized soldiers, most prominent which were the sun tanned, rolling, desperate Zouaves. Not one of them but knew how to talk and when circumstances afforded they exercised their powers to good advantage.

Ira no longer expects to see action soon. General McClellan was famous for training an excellent army and going out of his way to not use it.:

Gen McClellan soon took command and having established a patrol both night and day with orders to arrest all straggling solders. The city soon presented a quiet and orderly appearance. The purposes of the War Department for the present, I presume you can arrive at as correctly as I. I do not think a decisive and vigorous movement will be made and once now will it probably be deferred more than three or four weeks. There is a large number of troops concentrating about Washington and it is not to be supposed that a strong forward movement will be long delayed. All the boys seem cheerful amid the hardships of the camp, quite readily adapting themselves to the circumstances, and many of them seem quite anxious for a brush with the enemy.

Ira is not in such a rush to fight. He is here only to fulfill his duty as a Patriot:

## Ira Goes to War

For my own part I am not anxious either way only desiring that the war might be brought to speedy and honorable termination. This of course is a feeling prompted by humanity and religion. I shall never [seek] for military glory Dear Vinnie. There is something more enobling and inspiring. I accept war as a necessity. I engage as a lover of God and my country. I feel that any personal ambition would degrade rather than elevate; and my only desire is to do my duty as a soldier and a patriot. It is this feeling that sustains me. I rely for the issue upon the God of Truth and the God of Battles. In his own good time Peace with all his blessings will once more smile upon us Dear Sister how we shall hail that day with Thanksgiving!

On 10 September the division (a division is several brigades) went to the parade grounds for a review. Pennsylvania's governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin, presented each regiment with a flag. In addition to Curtin, the review was witnessed by President Lincoln, General McCall, General McClellan, General Butler, Secretary of War Cameron and several thousand spectators.<sup>3</sup> This must have been a big deal for all involved.



Figure 9 - Troops on review from the Library of Congress

### *In Enemy Territory*

Ira's company, along with the rest of the regiment finally cross into enemy territory on 10 October 1861. They cross into Virginia to help protect Washington. They set up at Camp Pierpont which is near Langley, across the

## Ira Goes to War

river from Washington. On 17 November Ira tells Vinnie of camp life and the justness of the Union cause:

It is Sabbath afternoon, the wind is blowing quite cold from the north-west, the white fleecy clouds are driving across the deep blue November sky, the golden leaves of Autumn are fast falling from the trees, and everything indicates approaching Winter. The men thus far have managed to make themselves very comfortable in their quarters by building under-ground fire-places [] and they seem as contented as ever. The Union Army are fighting for a Principle as true and unchangeable as it is great and vital. They entered the field – not from a love of conquest, but from the love and severance which they bore to our country's flag and to our time-honored and beneficent institutions. Among them are scholars and statesmen, and history will have to record that in no age of the world has so great an army been gathered so quickly from the peaceful walks of civil life, – from the academy and the quiet farm house, from the counting room and the mechanic's shop, and so rapidly and cheerfully accustomed themselves to the hardships and stern usages of war. Is there not something inexpressibly sublime in the idea of a mighty people arising and buckling on their armor for battle, because they feel that God calls them to the terrible work? Here are patriotism and power and liberty and Union and devotion all embodied in this one great action. Dear Sister what cause have we for rejoicing, that Victory has so recently perched upon our banners! We undoubtedly have much yet to do and much to suffer; but let us cheerfully endure and sacrifice, putting our trust in the Ruler of nations, and accepting of nothing short of perfect triumph. Then having been [puseped] in this furnace of affliction, shall our beloved country take her lead among the nations of the earth, and we shall feel proud of the land of our nativity.

He goes on to describe seeing effects of war (probably for the first time) while at a funeral:

We left him upon a rising ground near a church which but recently was in good condition but it is now almost demolished by the soldiers. You can have little idea how war devastates a country until you have witnessed it. Beautiful farms are laid waste and the country is left barren and desolate. In contemplating war it is usual for us to think of nothing but the shocks of battle. The plume of the warrior, his flashing sword and prancing steed; the groans of the wounded and the mangled dead comprises all which usually to us seems the glory or destruction of war. The immense supplies which are necessary to subsist an army and which require so many thousand hands and channels of trade to furnish, we do not so often consider.

Following the devastating Union loss at the first Battle of Bull Run, both armies were regrouping. McCellan was building the Army of the Potomac into the impressive fighting force that it would become. In the meantime small battles were happening here and there. It was at one of these battles that Ira's company first saw battle! The Battle of Dranesville (20 December 1861)

## ***The Battle of Dranesville (20 December 1861)***

On 20 December General Ord had taking his 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of 10,000 men up the Potomac to clear northern Virginia of Confederate pickets (small group of troops in a forward position to warn of enemy advances). Ord had left half his troops part of the way back to Langley to cover his rear. When they got to Dranesville they met a Confederate force of similar size under the command of General Stuart. They were foraging for food and supplies like Ira describes the Union doing above. The fighting actually started when two Confederate regiments mistook each other for Union forces.

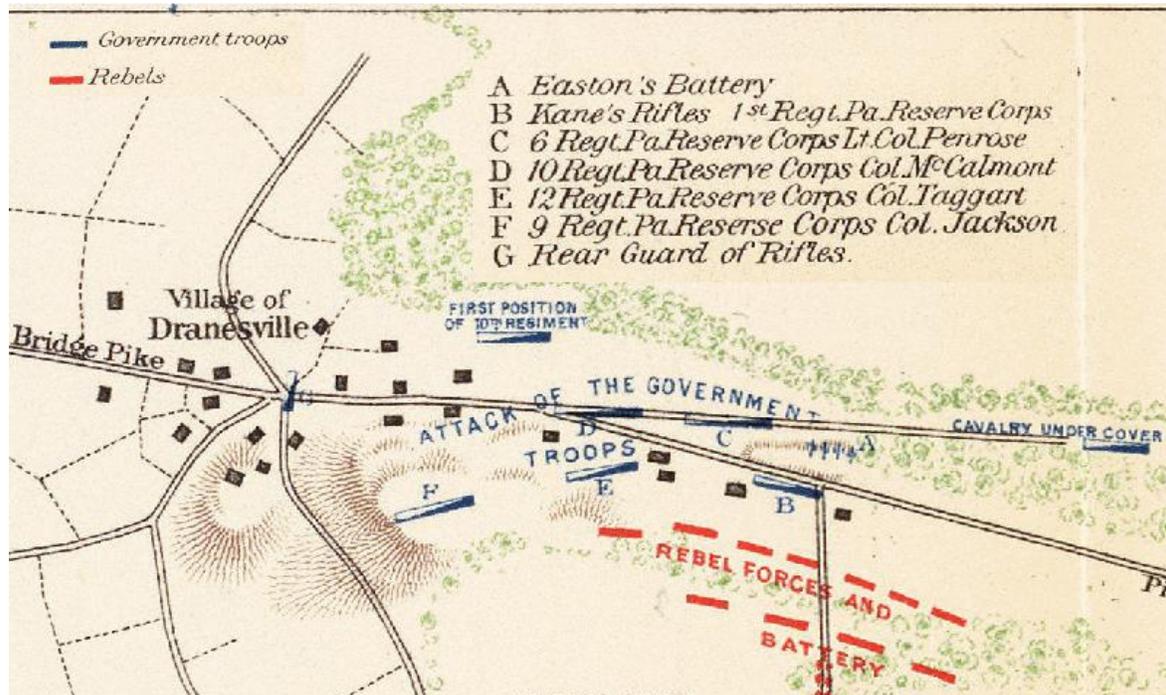


Figure 10 - Diagram of the Battle of Draneville from Ord' report – Ira's regiment is marked by the blue D

Ira's regiment was not initially on the front line. Here is a description of the battle from the memoirs of someone in Ira's company:<sup>4</sup>

"The 10th regiment had come to a halt. General Ord was with Eastman's battery, which was posted beside a small white church, perhaps a fourth of a mile west of where our regiment stood. Colonel McCalmont, knowing we were likely to run into trouble, was instructing the officers and men in the formation of square by platoons of companies to resist cavalry, a movement we had never before practiced. Presently from away on our left through the woods came sounds as of picket firing, and a few minutes later the captain of Company A of the Bucktail regiment came lunging through the woods as though the cannibals were after him and shouted to our commander, 'Colonel, the pickets are driven in and the Bucktails are attacked'. The Colonel replied, 'That's nothing to me; go to the

## Ira Goes to War

general with it.' The last we saw of the captain he was fairly flying up the road towards the battery.

"He had time to get scarcely half way there when the battery limbered up and wheeled into the road, and with General Ord riding beside it, the horses came back down the rough cobblestone pavement at a gallop, making enough racket to waken an Egyptian mummy. The general called to us, 'Men, make a flank movement and let the battery through.' In an instant we were in the ditch and the horses dashed forward at their utmost speed, the gunners clinging to their positions as the wagons bounded over the stones, like monkeys clinging to circus ponies. I remember the order given the colonel as they galloped by as though it were but yesterday—for this was our first engagement. Without slacking his pace, with visor upturned as usual, and mustache more bristling than ever, the general turned in his saddle and said, 'Colonel, march your men to support this battery', and on they sped. Colonel McCalmont immediately brought 'Old Bobtail' to an about face and straightening himself up, gave in his deep stentorian voice the command, 'Ba—tal—lion, At—ten—tion ! Right—face ! Forward—double quick—March !'

"We followed the battery but a short distance, perhaps thirty or forty rods, when, on account of the bend in the road, the colonel, to make a crosscut, ordered the pioneers with their axes to knock down a length of fence and we filed to the left across the field. Up to this time our colors were rolled up and sheath drawn over them. We were about half way across the field, when the color bearer pulled off its covering and unrolled the flag, and scarcely had it straightened in the breeze when a rebel shell came screaming over our heads and burst away off on our left, and though the shell passed probably seventy-five or a hundred feet over our heads, I never before or since saw such dodging. Scarcely an officer or man in the regiment failed to make a very low bow on introduction to that first shell. We had not yet learned that the balls one hears, or sees, are the ones he may laugh at.

"The battery was quickly planted on a knoll and began to respond briskly to the Confederate guns. We took a position directly behind the guns, and while we were nominally supporting the battery, that knoll was supporting us. From our position we could not see what was going on in front, though we could hear the terrible musketry firing by the 9th Regiment close by, and twice or thrice Colonel McCalmont, now on foot, came back from a position where he could observe what was going on, and informed us that Stuart's Black Horse Cavalry was about to charge on the battery, but thanks to the marksmanship of our gunners, a ball struck one of the Confederate caissons and blew it up, killing nearly all the gunners, a number of their horses and scattering the cavalry, brought the engagement to a speedy termination, the enemy beating a hasty retreat. The federal loss was eight killed and sixty-four wounded, though none of the Company I boys figured in the casualties."

## Ira Goes to War

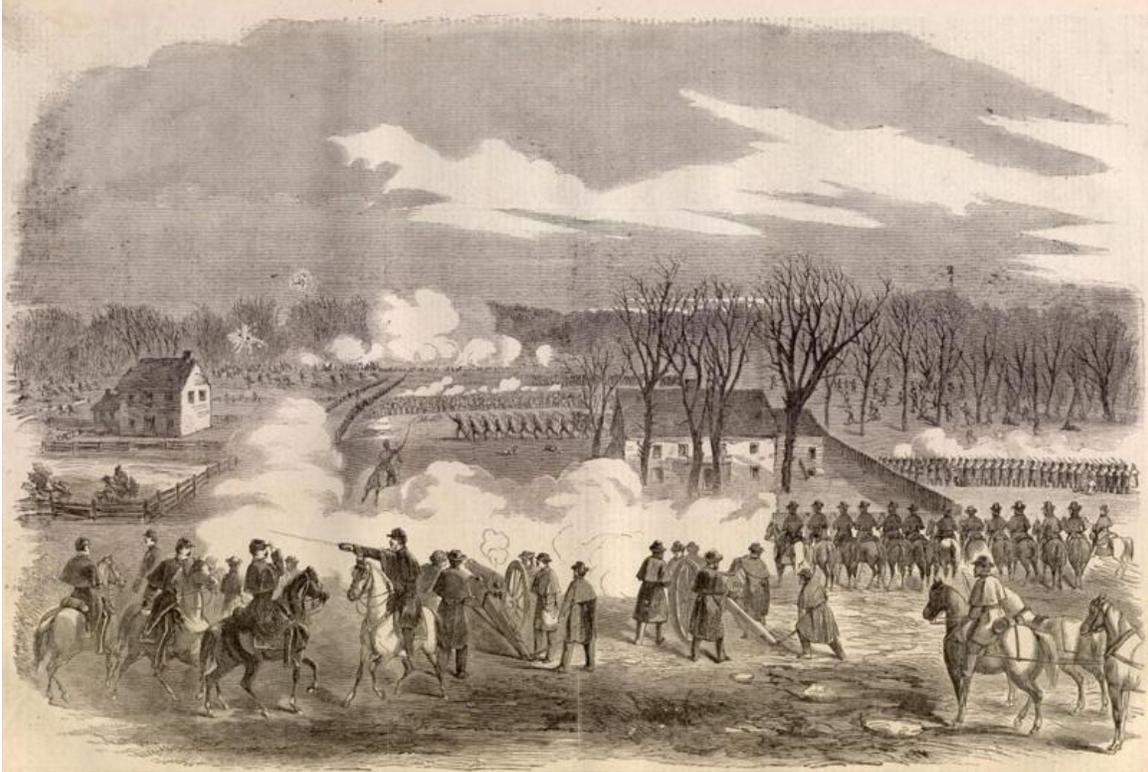


Figure 11 - The Battle of Dranesville from Haprrers Weekly 11 January 1862

From Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania article on Ira.<sup>5</sup>

He was first in action at Dranesville. He seems to have had poetic appreciation of valor; for when General Ord, who commanded in the battle, came galloping forward, leading Easton's battery into action, he thus records his impressions: "Just then Ord came dashing up. 'Make way for my artillery,' he shouted, and without slackening his speed dashed by, while his 'war-dogs' followed close behind. The General was an old artillerist, and knew well how to value this arm of the service. The scene was, I think, the most animated that I witnessed during the war. He was mounted on a beautiful bay, and as he rode up, his eyes flashing fire and every lineament of his countenance betokening courage, his presence inspired all with confidence."

When Stuart was able to secure his supply wagons, he made a retreat. Ord did not follow him far. Stuart returned the next day with reinforcements but Ord had already returned to Langley. Ira said of Col. McCalmont, his commanding officer:

The action was opened by a smart firing between our own and the rebel skirmishers, and very soon the artillery of the enemy opened upon us. Our artillery, Captain Easton's battery, was soon in position and did terrible work, blowing up one of their ammunition boxes, killing eight or nine horses, and doubtless killing and wounding many men. Just previous, Colonel McCalmont had ridden up, and perceiving that they were shooting too high, called out, 'Point your pieces lower, my boys! You are firing over them! You must lower your

## **Ira Goes to War**

guns!' They did so, and with what effect has just been described. Colonel McCalmont was everywhere, where his presence was most needed, during this engagement, displaying great courage and self-possession.<sup>6</sup>

In Col. McCalmont's report on the battle he closed with the following:

Under circumstances new to nearly if not quite all of this regiment, it behaved well, and I believe obeyed with spirit every order. I have occasion to be thankful that I have the honor to report none killed, wounded, or missing. The men doubtless wished to seal their devotion to the Union and their confidence in their generals with their wounds. If the rebellion continues, they will likely have other opportunities.

Ord suffered 71 casualties to Stuart's 230. While this battle was not strategically important, it was important for the Union moral. It was the first victory for the Army of the Potomac.

McCalmont did not last much longer. He resigned on 5 May 1862 due to health reasons. Ira said of him:<sup>7</sup>

Colonel McCalmont was much respected by officers and men. Of fine soldierly bearing and a high sense of honor, his presence was calculated to inspire all with confidence and esteem. A high-toned Christian gentleman, I believe the universal feeling was that of regret that we had lost so brave, considerate, and kind a commander.

When McCalmont resigned he was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel James T. Kirk (I wonder if he is an ancestor of Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise).

### ***Peninsula Campaign (March – July 1862)***

When Ira wrote to George on 4 March his regiment was still at Camp Pierpoint near Langley, Virginia:

The men are beginning to learn how to take camp life, so as to preserve health. We have been under orders for a few days past to have three days rations in haversacks and be ready to march at a moments notice. We have been expecting an advance before now, but is probably deferred owing to the disagreeable weather of the past few days. We await anxiously though patiently the word. When it at length comes why may we not look for victories by our Div of the Army which will not be eclipsed by the splendid achievements in the west. I think we may rest safely in the belief that with a continuance of the Divine favor this unholy rebellion will soon be forever crushed out. Then Dear George we will return to our homes more proud than ever of our country and more jealous of the safety of all its institutions. God grant that that glorious day be not far distant.

## Ira Goes to War

Having built up the Army of the Potomac, it was time for McClellan to take them on the road. McClellan had been building the force since July of the previous year and Lincoln was getting frustrated that they were not fighting. McClellan's first fight was going to be surrounding the Confederate army lead by Johnson that had been threatening Washington. However, they found that not only had Johnson secretly removed his huge force, but that many of the cannon's threatening the Union forces were actually wooden replicas.

So, now the tactic was to take the army down to Fort Monroe and work their way up the Virginia Peninsula toward Richmond. McClellan's forces moved out in early March.

Ira's company having been prepared with their three day rations left Camp Pierpont shortly after his letter to George. They headed west and south, through Fairfax and Centreville. In Centreville they saw the wooden canons still in place. They went through Manassas Junction where Bull Run is and by 29 April they were at Catletts Station, a few miles out of Manassas Junction where he wrote a letter to Vinnie:

We are now in the midst of a delightful rolling country. Twelve miles beyond Manassas and three this side of Warrenton Junction, on the A&A RR. It is twenty six miles to Fredericksburg, where is now a position of McDowell's Corps, King's Div., and we are daily expecting to be ordered there. We do not expect to cross the Rappahannock soon; when we do we may see some rebels – not before...

You must know, dear Sister, that I begin to look forward to the time when I shall once more take a peep into your sunny home. I hope before another Winter that I and your loved husband will be permitted to join our family circle around the familiar fire-side. We are looking most anxiously for the issue at [levunth] and Yorktown: but I believe McClellan and Halleck will work out the nation's safety and bring us speedy peace. Oh! how lovely will be our land when once more relieved of the scourge of War! It seems so to me that every inch of America's soil will, to me, be possessed of a new and peculiar interest.

## Ira Goes to War

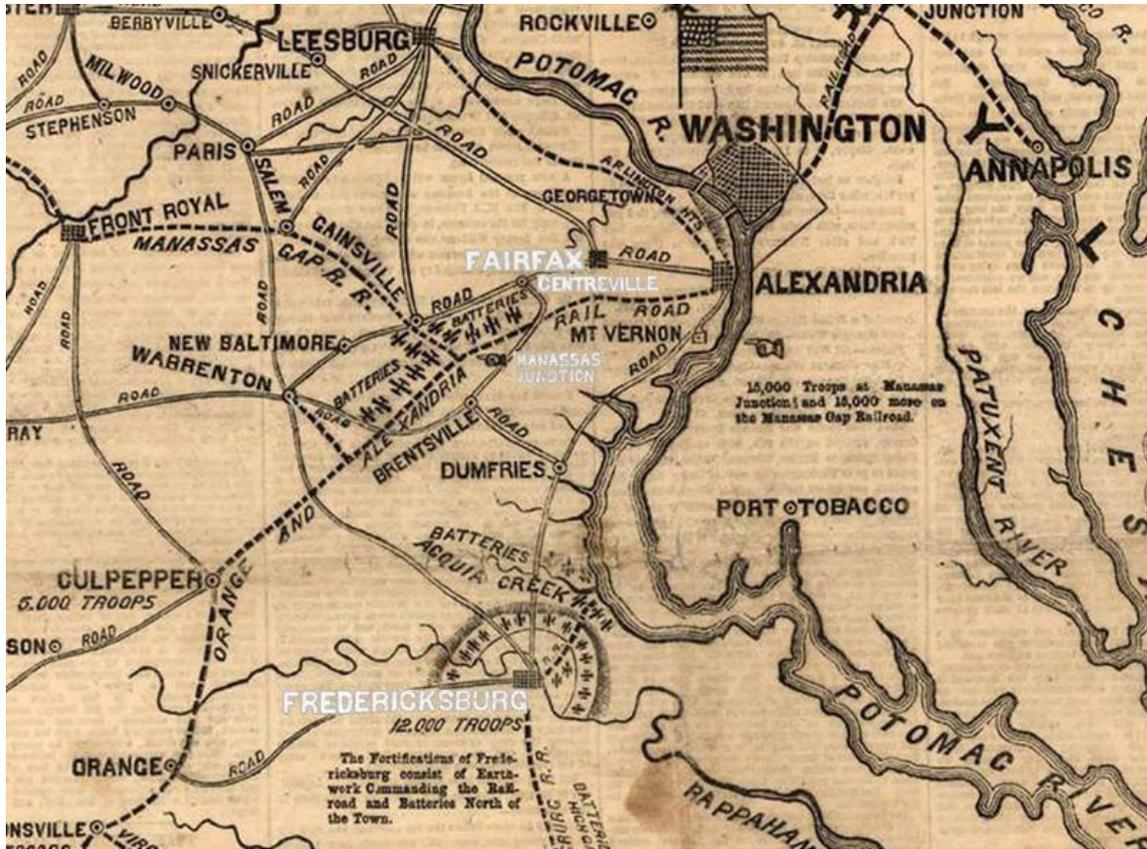


Figure 12 - March from Washington to Fredericksburg (modified map from Library of Congress)

From an 11 June letter to Vinnie we learn that Ira's is in Union Landing, on the Potomac River outside of Fredericksburg. He says, "We marched to this point from opposite Fredericksburg yesterday, through a drenching rain, a distance of about seven miles. We were soon encamped, shoes & socks changed & al very comfortable." People seem overly optimistic because he, his brother-in-law George and his great uncle Joseph Davenport (a civilian) plan to meet soon in Richmond. As it turns out, that will not be possible for nearly three years. Ira expects to embark on a ship within the next 24 hours.

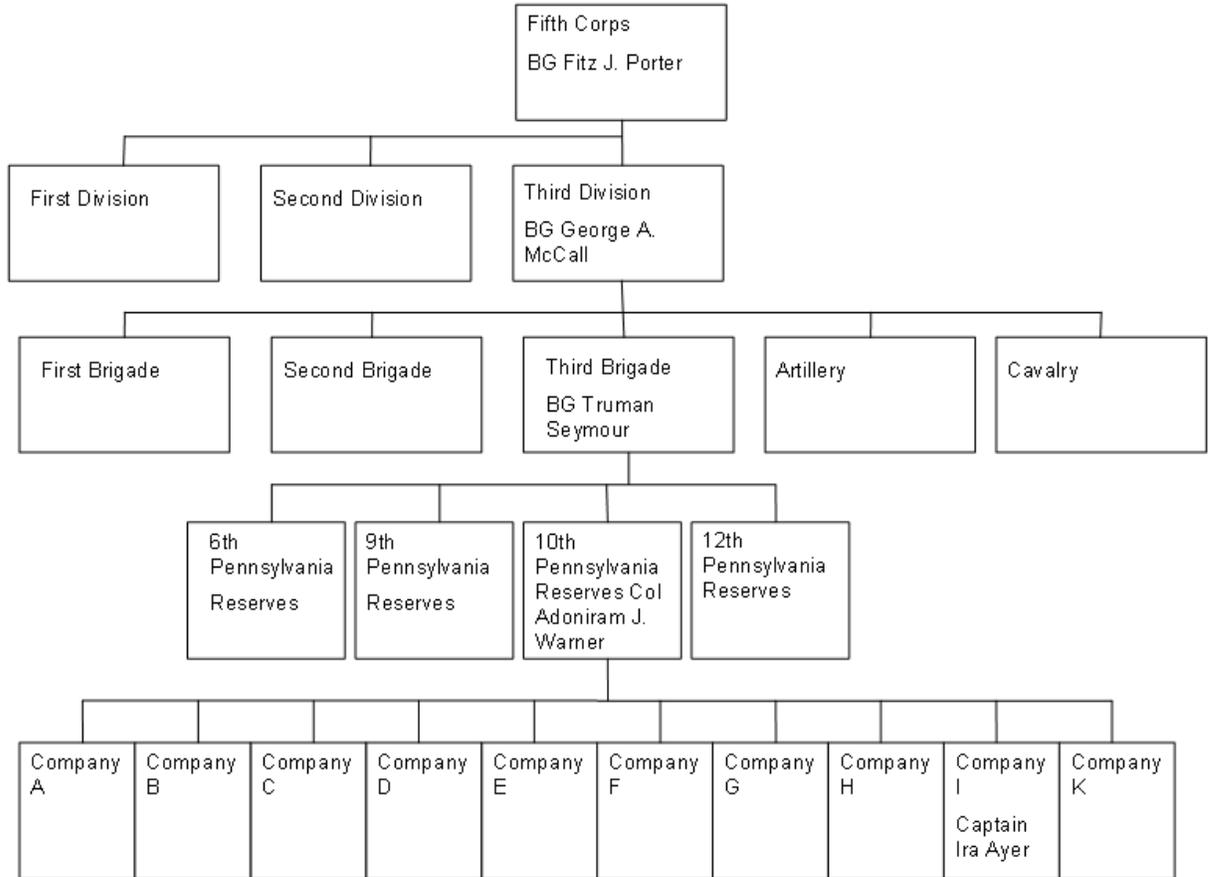
### The Seven Days Battles (25 June – 1 July 1862)

They had arrived at Fort Monroe by 14 June and were attached to Porter's Corps. By that time McClellan had amassed a force of over 120,000 troops on the Peninsula.<sup>vii</sup>

<sup>vii</sup> From Wikipedia

McClellan's army began to sail from Alexandria on March 17. It was an armada that dwarfed all previous American expeditions, transporting 121,500 men, 44 artillery batteries, 1,150 wagons, over 15,000 horses, and tons of equipment and supplies. An English observer remarked that it was the "stride of a giant."

## Ira Goes to War



**Figure 13 - Fifth Corps Peninsular Campaign 1862**

The actual campaign had started two months before. McClellan had pushed Johnson's troops up toward Richmond. By the time Ira's company had gotten there the Confederates had retreated into the fortifications of Richmond. On 1 June, Johnson had been wounded and was replaced by Robert E. Lee as head of the entire Confederate Army. Lee reorganized the troops and the result was what is known as the Seven Days Battles, 25 June – 1 July. Lee's goal in these battles was to create a counter-offensive to push McClellan back.

## Ira Goes to War



Figure 14 - The Peninsula Campaign (from PBS.org)

After Ira's regiment arrived they moved north with Porter's Corps toward Mechanicsville only a few miles northeast of Richmond. They must have felt the end of the war was near.

On the second day of the Seven Days Battles, 26 June, Porter found himself under attack in what was to be called the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek. In this battle, Porter's approximately 16,000 men squared off against a Confederate force of similar in size led by Maj. General D. H. Hill. The battle didn't start until 3pm when the Confederates attacked. Ira's company was on the front lines for the entire battle. Lee's plan had been for Maj. General "Stonewall" Jackson to join the attack and overwhelm the Union troops with about 60,000 confederates. But, Jackson was just arriving from a long march and didn't get to the battlefield until after the attack started. When Jackson arrived he couldn't find Hill so he did nothing, leaving Hill's 15,000 troops to do all the fighting.

This was a decisive victory for the Union troops because they had held off the enemy advancement. The Union troops suffered 361 casualties while the Confederates suffered almost 1,500.

Ira had later said:<sup>8</sup>

About ten o'clock the roar of artillery had ceased. In our advanced position we could hear distinctly the movements of the enemy, and the cries and shrieks of the

## Ira Goes to War

wounded and dying, as they lay where they had fallen or were being moved from the field.

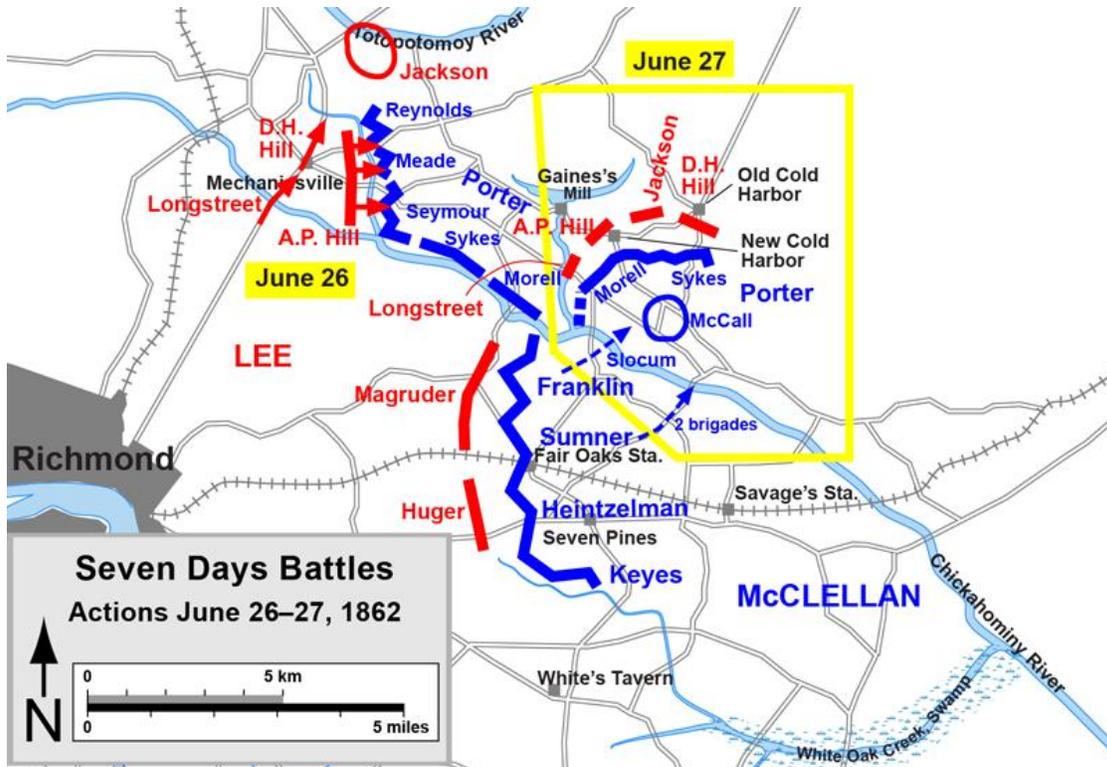


Figure 15 - Seven Days Battles map for 26-7 June – On 26 June Company I was where the name Seymour is (from Wikipedia)

By the next day in the Battle of Gaines' Mill Porter had been able to bring his strength up to about 34,000 but the Confederates came after him with 57,000 men. This battle was not only the first losing battle that the company was involved in, but it was the first battle that the company suffered losses in. They suffered more losses than any other in the regiment. They were heavily involved in this battle and to a lesser extent involved in the rest of the battles. They were fighting for six days in a row with little sleep in between. Smith's history of Allegheny College has a good account of Ira's company in the Battle of Gaines' Mill and through the rest of the Seven Days Battles.

At Gaines Mills was a small stream, with a deep channel, approached by a wooded slope on the left bank. Behind this were level fields. General McCall drew his troops up in three lines in the woods, replacing the first line with the second, while the first recuperated, the second with the third, then the third with a fresh line reformed from the survivors of the first and second lines ; while he had his artillery placed behind in the level fields and which he did not intend to use until his army had been driven back out of the woods by the enemy.

## Ira Goes to War

The Allegheny Company was first ordered to the left, where the firing from the enemy's guns was terrific, and from where it proved impossible to return. Many fell here. Then the order came to charge. Down the slope into the ravine, up the other side—where they were safer as the artillery was fired over their heads—to the brow of the hill, clearing the woods of the enemy and holding their advanced position despite the frequent and desperate attempts of the rebels to dislodge them, until nightfall when they with the whole brigade were withdrawn across the Chickahominy. Company I lost six killed, three missing (probably killed) and seventeen wounded in this engagement. Those killed were King, Wright, J. W. Wikoff, Church, Bole and Pier.

After crossing the Chickahominy during the night, the wounded were removed to the field hospital and the company found its division at Charles City Cross Roads. Of this withdrawal, Captain Ayer wrote thus, "I think I have never seen examples of greater endurance than exhibited upon the part of the wounded in this retreat across the Chickahominy. Saturday they were lying all day at the hospital with little or no attention. The weather was exceedingly warm. Sunday they marched all day through a sweltering sun, resting perhaps two hours in the middle of the day. The garments of many of them were stiff with blood. They had no nourishing food. Their wounds had simply been bound up with no further attention, and they were already much annoyed with worms. Still there was no murmur. All endured cheerfully. Toward evening the wounded men passed through a field in which there were a number of sheep, when Sergeant Hollister, notwithstanding that his arm was so shattered as afterwards to require amputation, took his revolver and in company with others, after a hard chase, succeeded in bringing one of them down. Having detailed one of my men to help them along, he made a good kettle of mutton broth, of which they all partook and were much invigorated."

But they had need of all their strength, for they reached Charles City Cross Roads just in time for the hard battle which occurred there, quickly followed by a tenaciously contested fight at Malvern Hill, in which the College Company was used as Reserves, on account of their exhaustion, and while not actually engaged, yet were present, and retained on the battle field. The account of the Peninsular campaign, as given in a letter written at Harrison's Landing, July 21, 1862, by George Norris, '61, quartermaster of the 10th Regiment, has many thrilling passages:

"I feel that I am unable to give you a detailed account of the Seven Days' battle before Richmond. After our arrival, hardly a day passed without our being under arms. Almost perfect quiet reigned through our Camp—the sound of the fife, the drum and the bugle was not as formerly heard. The sharp crack of the picket's rifle and sometimes skirmishing along our lines, with an occasional boom of a big gun from either side, its whiz-whizzing sound, exploding of the shell, etc., was all that broke the stillness—the solemn stillness that boded the coming of storm. We were not allowed to have large fires in daytime, and none at all at night, as this would have exposed us to the shot and shell of the enemy.

## Ira Goes to War

At noon, Thursday, June 26, we received orders to be ready to march at a moment's notice to the rear of Woodbury Bridge (over the Chickahominy). About 4 p. m., crack! crack! went the pickets' rifles, then volleys of musketry and within ten minutes, our four batteries were planted and hurling their deadly missiles at the foe. The battle thus begun at Mechanicsville raged till ten o'clock. Seven batteries of artillery reinforced us and the roar of the conflict surpassed the greatest storm you ever heard. The flash from the cannon was like the lightning's glare. The enemy charged our batteries and rifle pits again and again, but were promptly met every time with a perfect shower of lead, cannister and grape, which swept them down as the autumnal winds sweep the forests of their covering, literally piling them in heaps.

At Gaines Mills, the fight began at noon. Neither side gained any ground until about six o'clock in the evening when the Rebels, being heavily reinforced, and our men done out by long fighting, drove our troops from the woods on the left and charged upon our batteries. Just at this juncture, cheer after cheer came up from the direction of Woodbury Bridge, and in a few moments I learned that the famous Irish Brigade was hastening to our relief. With a shout for 'Ould Ireland and America forever', they charged, drove back the foe and retook the ground lost previously. In this battle our company (I) had the greatest loss of any one company in the Tenth.

At daylight, the next day, we received orders to about face and move towards the James river. We proceeded to Charles City Cross Roads, where we lay down in line of battle for the night. No fires were allowed, nor noises of any kind. The same deathlike stillness prevailed tonight as that of last night, and the same ominous signal lights were occasionally seen. On such occasions, a feeling, not of dread or fear, but of awe stole over me. The enemy came up about noon and the fight commenced, the Rebels getting an awful drubbing, after which our troops fell back to Savage Station, and again awaited the enemy. Here the contest was more equal than in the morning, but after some pretty sharp fighting, the enemy was again repulsed. After the fight of June 30th, our forces fell back to Malvern Hill which is near to Turkey Island bend in the James river.

Here our troops were soon drawn up in line of battle and notwithstanding the circumstances of our having but little sleep for five consecutive nights and being very weary from our great labors during as many days, yet we eagerly awaited the coming of the foe. In a short time General McClellan rode along our lines; cheer after cheer of tens of thousands rent the air, bands were playing, and all felt again strong to do and dare for the cause of his beloved country. McClellan in person formed our heavy lines. At three the fight started fiercely. Three times the foe tried to break our lines and drive us back, but each time was repulsed with great slaughter."

There were actually 8 who died at Gaines' Mill and 2 who died later from their wounds.<sup>9</sup>

## Ira Goes to War

Ira was one of the wounded. According to Bates, "he received a gunshot wound on his right side and a severe contusion of the right arm." But he fought on. He is quoted in *Martial Deeds* as saying, "Colonel Warner," he says, "mustered the regiment on the 30th, and I shall never forget the glow of soldierly pride with which he commended the company's bravery, and viewed its thinned but still compact ranks."

One of those who had died from his wounds from Ira's company at Gaines' Mill was Edwin Pier. Ira didn't realize it at the time, but Pier's subsequent death would lead to Ira getting married in 18 months. Pier was wounded on the 26<sup>th</sup> and transported to Washington on the 29<sup>th</sup> he died on 12 July in Philadelphia. From Helmreich's "Flag of the Allegheny College Civil War Company":

In reporting the death of Corporal Edwin Pier, who died as the result of the shattering of his right arm, Captain Ayer wrote eloquently of Pier as one of the most promising students of Allegheny College. Of fine mind and devout and refined feelings, he was a devoted Christian and an earnest patriot. He was an excellent Greek and Hebrew scholar, and spent much of his time while off duty in the reading of Greek Testament. Of modest deportment, he was as courageous as he was humble.

The other one who died from his wounds was Samuel T. White. White's father had tried to bring him home before he died, but Samuel didn't make it. He died in Philadelphia on 18 August from wounds he received on 30 June. His father wrote a letter on 28 August in which he said:

When I wrote you at Philadelphia I had some hopes that I should bring our Dear Samuel Home alive, but he took the [Diera] on Thursday, & lived only until Monday about half past nine o'clock August 18th. He died in great peace, the sting of death having been drawn by faith in the blood of the lamb of God, which taketh away the Sin of the world; he was rational until he died, and talked with almost his last breath, indeed he seemed just to go to sleep, he desired very much to live to see his mother Sister & bro. He said if he ever got able he would go to the army just to see Capt. Ayer, Phelps, and some of the rest of the boys, he talked a great deal about you & Phelps. Said he loved you as though You were his brothers & would love to be with you through the great National Struggle, & live to see her freed from the great rebellion but of this he is denied the privilege, he never complained or uttered a word of murmur while I was with him & I scarcely left his bedside during the nine days that I was privileged to be with him, ... Give our love to the M Phelps, tell him to write to us, & have Sml's picture copied the first chance, & send to him. \_\_\_

Having your pictures hanging in our house, & hearing so much about you from our dear son, indeed you seem like relatives more than strangers, & there could be no two men, visit our House, that would give us more pleasure, than yourself, & M, Mr Phelps, and if it is ever in my power I intend to see you.

## Ira Goes to War

Even though the Union forces outnumbered the Confederate forces, won most of the battles including the last one and suffered fewer casualties, McClellan decided to withdraw following the last of the Seven Days Battles (Battle of Malvern Hill). In that battle, Company I lost another 4 dead.<sup>10</sup> Overall they had 14 dead out of about 80 troops, a truly devastating loss.<sup>viii</sup>

That must have been demoralizing to the Union Troops and a pleasant surprise to the Confederate troops.

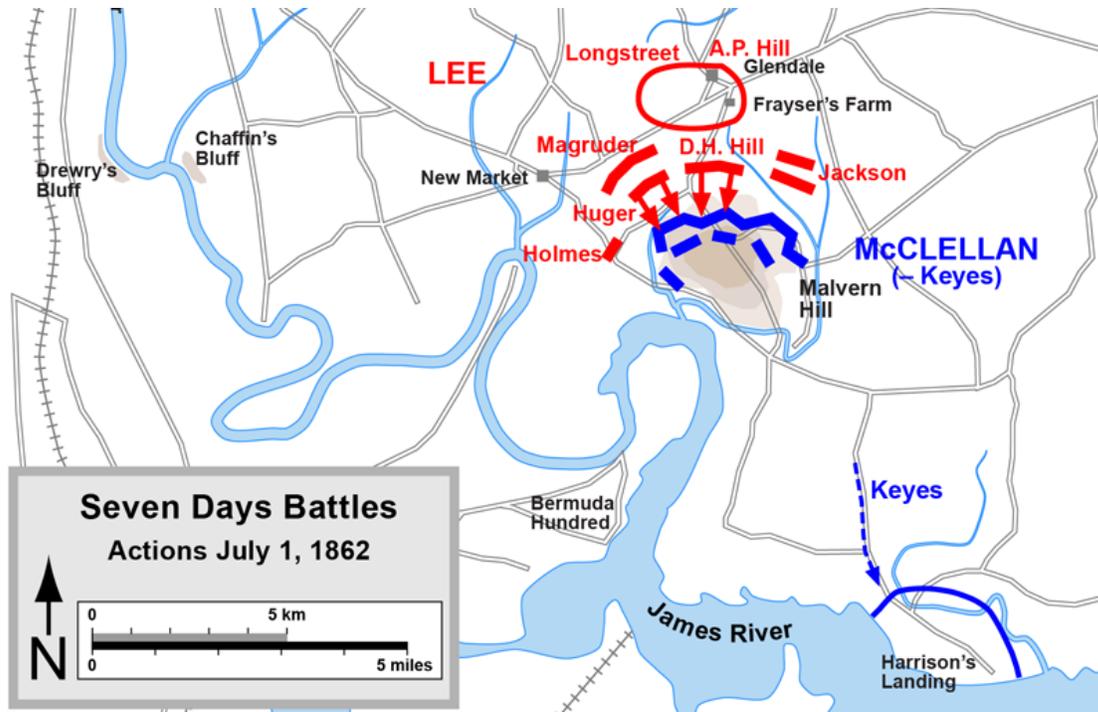


Figure 16 - Battle of Malvern Hill and subsequent retreat (from Wikipedia)

Malvern Hill is about 15 miles southeast of Richmond. From there the army went to Harrison's Landing, about another three miles further south to wait for boats to take them back to Fort Monroe. This process took a long time. On the night of 31 July the camp was under fire from Confederate cannons from across the James River. The 10<sup>th</sup> among others were detailed to clear the trees and brush across the river and then took turns picketing the far bank.

<sup>viii</sup> 8 members of Company I died at Gaines' Mill and 4 the next few days. That's about 15% of the whole company. In addition, 2 died later from their wounds and 2 more died while waiting at Harrison's Landing. Statistics from the Seven Days Battles statistics from Wikipedia, Muster Roll and Smith

	Union	Company I	Confederate	Union	Company I	Confederate
Troops	104,100	About 80	92,000	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage
Casualties	15,855	30	20,204	15.2%	38%	22.0%
Dead	1,734	12	3,494	1.7%	15%	3.8%
Wounded	8,066	15	15,758	7.7%	19%	17.1%
Missing/captured	6,055	1	952	5.8%	1%	1.0%

## Ira Goes to War

While at Harrison's Landing 2 more men from Company I died.<sup>11</sup> So, out of about 80 people, 16 died on the Peninsula Campaign. It must have been pretty demoralizing to come home with about 20% of your company dead and nothing to show for it.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves were among the last to leave Harrison's Landing. They didn't leave Harrison's Landing until sometime in August and didn't leave Fort Monroe until about 17 August arriving in Fredericksburg the next day.

A poem about the Battle of Gaines' Mill written by a friend of Ira's at the time is included in the Appendix.

### ***The Second Battle of Bull Run (29-30 August 1862)***

Upon arriving in Fredericksburg, Ira immediately applied for and received his first leave of absence. He took the leave in Washington. He had been in the service for just over a year and had been wounded a month and a half earlier. His father had had left his two younger sisters to enlist (Ira, Sr. was still in Buffalo at the time). Ira started wondering if it would be a good idea for his Sarah and Julia to go off to school. Sarah is almost 20 and Julia is 17. He discusses it in a letter with Vinnie on 22 August:

I wrote to sister Sarah a few days since asking an expression of her feelings as well as sister Julia's upon the subject of attending some literary Institution. I am very anxious to have your views upon this subject and indeed Dear Sister, I feel that your own feelings upon the matter are entitled to more consideration than my own. Your experience is greater than mine, you can perhaps enter more truly into the feelings of our sisters than I and such are your relationships at present that your wishes should have a controlling influence. Tell me frankly your views. I will gladly do what I can to forward what may be deemed best. Of course whatever it may be none of us can forget that true [economy] which is at once the companion of respectability and self respect and the forerunner of competence. As to my own course, I cannot of course decide upon it until the close of the war. Should I pass safely through, I would be glad to have enough laid by to carry me through any course of study at my institution which I might choose, should I at that time see my way clear to secure for myself a classical education.

Ira says that if he survives the war he will finish school. Although he does survive the war, he never returns to school.

After the Peninsula Campaign the Third Corps was reassigned to the Army of Virginia and Major General John Pope.

With their new commander, Lee, and a new confidence the Confederate Army headed north to push the Union out of the state. The result was the Second

## Ira Goes to War

Battle of Bull Run, bigger forces on the same ground a little over a year later. The Union forces under Pope were 62,000 strong and the Confederates under Lee were 50,000 strong.

The battle started on 28 August and for the first two days Ira's regiment was not on the front line. On the second day, Ira's company was part of several efforts to draw the enemy away from the front lines by convincing them that they were part of a larger force. That evening they were shelled and so they were moved further back and put on picket duty with Ira in charge of the line.

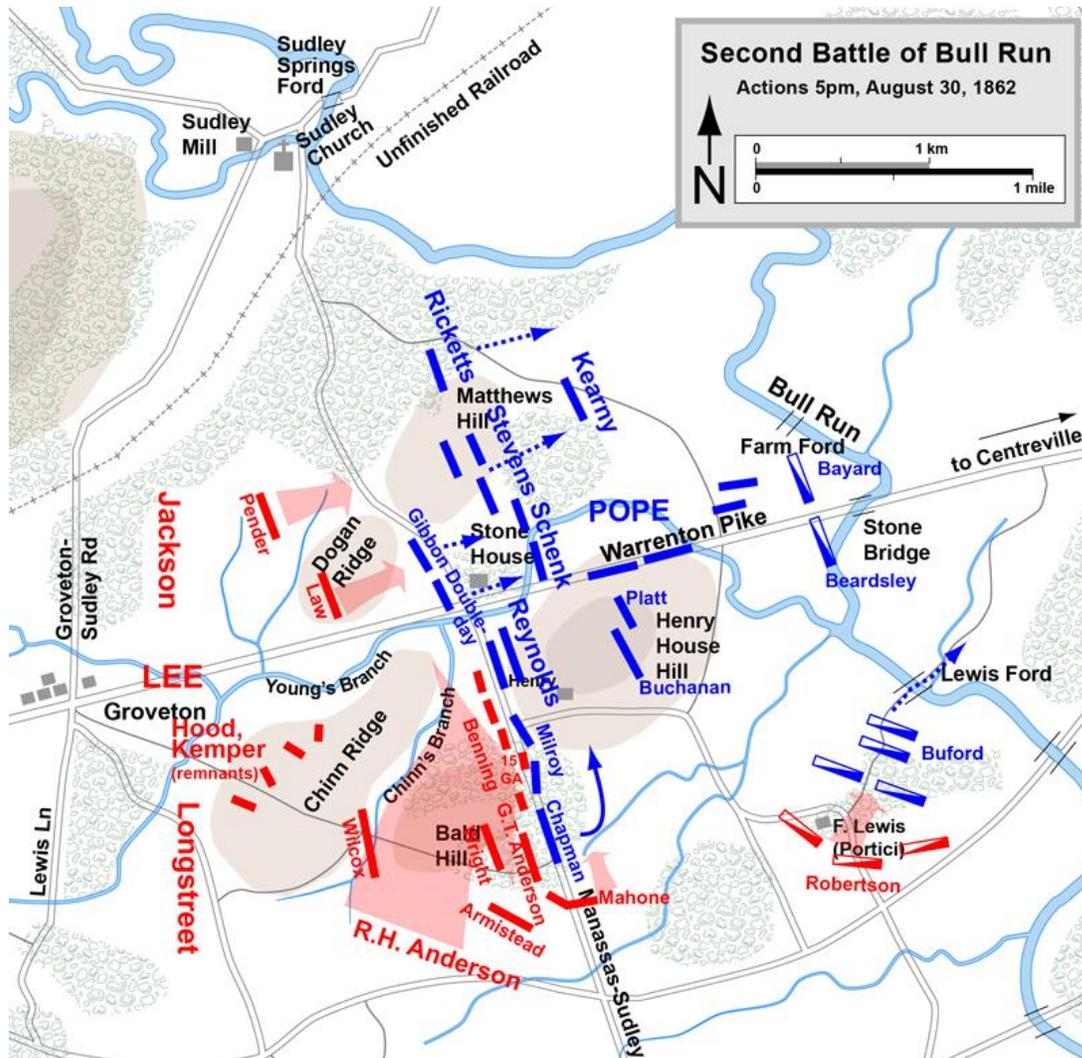


Figure 17 - Second Battle of Bull Run - 5pm on 30 August – Ira was in Reynolds' Division (from Wikipedia)

By late in the afternoon of the third day they were on the front lines and in the middle of a heavy firefight. Pope's forces pulled back to regroup and were able to hold the Confederates off. While the battle was a strong victory for Lee, he failed to achieve his objective of destroying Pope's army. The Union forces

## **Ira Goes to War**

suffered 10,000 casualties and the Confederates, 8,300. Lee got between Pope and Washington and was able to enter Maryland where the Battle of Antietam would take place. Ira's company would take part in that battle, but not Ira. During those few hours of heavy fighting at Bull Run he was wounded for the second time. His injury is described Martial Deeds:

At Bull Run, Captain Ayer received a severe wound. Passing over this field nearly a year afterwards the recollections of the battle were brought vividly to his mind and he thus wrote to a friend: "A little farther on we came to the scene of our last year's operations. There is the very field where we lay, Thursday night, August 28th, all day under a hot sun, covered a little from the enemy. This was near Groveton. Yonder is the wood where our regiment made a charge to take a rebel battery, but without success, and there is the field where they shelled us after dark, throwing their missiles very accurately, but, as it happened, without effect. That was Friday evening, the 29th; and there is the field where our regiment stood picket the same night. Passing on a little farther we come to the house near which we lay Saturday, before we were ordered into the engagement. But here to the right is the very spot where the regiment fought. There fell Captain Hinchman, of Company A, and it is said that he is buried in that little rail enclosure. Here, too, fell Tryon and Pearl; and Phelps, our Lieutenant, a bold and dashing officer, was here shot through the breast. No better men graced the ranks of the Union army. On this same ridge the rebel bullet struck my arm, and another went through my hat. The former made a sad hole in my canteen, causing all my cold coffee to run out. The boys in going over the field to-day found what they asserted to be the self-same canteen; but they were mistaken, for I carried it off with me." His wound was a severe one, fracturing the left forearm.

Fortunately, no one from Company I died Bull Run.

### ***Major Ayer***

We have few records of Ira following his injury. The muster roll for July and August lists him as "Absent – Wounded in battle Bull Run Aug. 30/62". The one for September and October says "Absent – Wounded in Hosp." and for November and December he is listed as "Present". In notes Ira wrote in July 1865 to his commanders he said he was on leave from 1 October to December 20, 1862. When he was well enough to leave the hospital he went home to Evans to finish his recover.

Ira's father says in "Reminiscences":

The first wound Ira received was in his arm, it proved very serious. It appears the ball entered his arm near the wrist and lodged in his elbow. The surgical apprentice supposed there was no ball there and dressed the wound in a way that led him to think in due time it would get along alright but instead of that, it grew worse all the time, until it became so exceeding painful that Ira's condition was considered alarming. The surgeon examined the arm again and found the ball was

## Ira Goes to War

in the arm lodged I suppose in the elbow. His first business was to get it out, if possible. This he did: the wound had already been of long standing, but the surgeon knew his business and dressed the arm as well as he could, and it got along finely.

On 27 October he had a note from his doctor:

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I have, this day, examined the arm of Capt. Ayer, of the 10<sup>th</sup> Pa. Reserves, and tho' doing well, it would be injurious if not dangerous to its future usefulness, to attempt to use it for at least twenty days yet.

John Cronyn, M.D.

Buffalo

Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>/62

On 16 December 1862 Ira was in Baltimore on his way back to his regiment. In a letter from there to Vinnie he says:

My arm seems to improve rapidly, and though I do not use it so much, I think it nearly as well as before I met with the relapse. I think I shall be able to enter the field in a week or two.

So, almost two months after the letter from his doctor and three and a half months after the injury, he had still not fully recovered.

Ira also says that the last thing he did before leaving was visit Sarah and Julia. In the next letter he says he started his trip from Lima. So, since from an earlier letter Ira had suggested that Sarah and Julia should go to school, I believe that they were enrolled in Genesee College where Ira had been for a year. Ira says, "I found sisters in fine spirits and feeling apparently like prosecuting their studies with vigor."

Ira finally arrived at regimental headquarters around the 20<sup>th</sup> of December to a big surprise. In a 22 December letter to Vinnie he says, "I found that by an election of the officers I had been promoted to Major some a week or two before and as the present major (Lt Col elect) who received me very kindly, wished me to act as Major until receiving my commission." He goes on to say:

I am now at Regiment Head Quarters. The accommodations are very comfortable and my labors at present are light, so taking all in all I am pleasantly situated. Indeed, dear Vinnie, I have [endavored] thus far to do my whole duty. I have never once shrunk from any hardship on danger, and I cannot but feel that I have fairly earned the position. Well! it seems to have been accorded to me, but it is a little humiliating to ones pride to know that I tied with a Capt who to be sure is a

## Ira Goes to War

good disciplinarian but who had up to that time studiously avoided every battle. The next vote I got one majority and was elected. The Capt was very anxious to get the position and of course could do much with his personal friends. However it is probably all right. What thinks you? They say that the Capt fought well in this last battle.

This is an amazingly democratic process. Not only was Ira elected Major, but he had been unanimously elected captain by the first few members of his company. Normally the military is as far from a democracy as you can find. The promotion did not become official until 1 May 1863. From then on, Ira would be attached to the regiment instead of the company.

Ira also talks of how devastating the Battle of Antietam through Fredericksburg (a few days before Ira returned) had been. He says the "Reserves" had 2,300 lost, killed or wounded. The regiment had lost 138 and his company came out of the battle with half the men it went in with. He said his company was down to 12 or 14 men on duty. That's out of about 100 original members:

I have now but twelve or fourteen men for duty. My 2nd Lieut is either killed or wounded and a prisoner. 2nd Sergt – with – besides a number of good men. The remnant expressed their kind feeling toward me by saying they were glad I did not get there as they were sure I would have been killed.

Fortunately no one in Ira's company had been killed since Bull Run.

I'm not sure where the regiment was stationed at this time. I believe it was fairly deep into Virginia. Where ever it was, he would be there for about three months before moving to better quarters.

In Ira's last letter to Vinnie of the year on the 28<sup>th</sup> he talks about why he is fighting;

I am well and enjoying myself much, far better than I expected, and certainly better than I could in any other situation under the circumstances. I went into this business to see the war clear through if my life and health were spared. Thus far they have been, and never for one moment that I know of have I felt the obligation removed from me to fight for the dear "old Flag" that we love so well. That Flag must yet float in Triumph; or fall only when the true blood of the North ceases to flow. Our Regt is indeed shattered, but the pride may be pardoned, with which I look upon the remnant which is left. – browned and scarred veterans of half a score of battles, – as they still rally to their weather stained and battle-torn Flag.

Come what will – life or death, we must have a government – the good old one – the Republic of our Fathers.

I believe, Vinnie, we shall yet have it. It embraces the popular idea of mankind, – the energizing element of universal civilization and human progress, – self

## Ira Goes to War

government and Liberty. Is it possible with our present light, that this onward movement of the race can be hindered and turned back by the passionate throes of a Slave Oligarchy in opposition to the tide of nature?

It may be momentarily stopped but the mountain torrent continues on its course until it reaches the placid river, so the triumph of human liberty can only rest in the perfection of human freedom.

But pardon the course which my letter has taken. These thoughts were on my mind, and so I have given them expression. Besides I would have my friends know that if I fight, it is for a purpose and if I fall, I esteem that my life is not given in vain.

This is the second and last time Ira mentions slavery in a letter that we have. The first time was back in 1861 when he said that his 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. was from Tennessee and by joining the Union Army he would lose around \$8,000 from his family. He also owned 6 to 8 slaves. Here Ira says that the country would move forward despite the "Slave Oligarchy". This is interesting because, just as Southerners were fighting to preserve slavery and not state's right, Northerners were fighting to preserve the union and not to end slavery. The articles of secession for these southern states didn't mention state's rights but mentions slavery over and over again. Ira often talks of the flag and preserving the union as reasons to fight but here he also mentions slavery. While many people were against slavery, most of those fighting would probably put preserving the union as the top reason.

In early January Ira found himself in command of the regiment because Col. Knox was on leave. In a 6 January letter to Vinnie he says:

I am now in command of the Regt., Maj. Knox being home on leave of Absence. Everything thus far goes very smoothly: the men and officers seem to feel very kindly, and to perform their various duties cheerfully and with fidelity. I make it a point to be around to see to everything, and this keeps me pretty busy during the forenoon. The Regt has become somewhat deficient in drill, and now, having new orders for two hours of company drill daily, I take hold myself and drill this or that company for a short time, thus securing accuracy and uniformity of drill.

All this is well as my other duties, I perform with much pleasure. I reflect with satisfaction that my position has been given me by the voice of a majority of those officers whom I have passed through a bloody and eventful campaign; and though I can make no great promises, I trust I may be able to so conduct as to retain the confidence, respect, and good will of those above and below me. I feel that I am in the path of duty, and I believe, my dear Sister, we all are. For this reason I am never unhappy of late. Though I cannot see into the future, I believe God will take care of that. The Present is all with which I have to do, and that is what I am endeavoring to live for.

## Ira Goes to War

On 16 January 1863 Ira tells Vinnie that he has orders to move out tomorrow. He believes that he will be part of a move to cross the Rappahannock, but that he would likely be in reserve. Burnside had decided to move on Richmond in the middle of January. The problem was getting across the Rappahannock. Ira was still in command of the Regiment since Knox was still on leave. The Burnside expedition was wildly unsuccessful. They couldn't get across the Rappahannock due to flooding. Burnside was so frustrated by the support he got from his senior commanders that he wanted to fire a bunch of them.

Ira was back in camp by 1 February when he wrote to Vinnie:

It is a cloudy windy night without; but all is happy, cheerful within. Our wall tent is partly flooded. We have a comfortable large bed for two, which I would not care to exchange for the best bed in Washington and our fire burns bright while I write upon a little table made of a cracker box knocked into pieces and nailed together, which I would not care to exchange for the marble covered table of Palaces

Nay! My sister. I would rather be a soldier and fight for my country than to inherit the fortune of a prince. It is good to give ones self to the support of Liberty and it cannot be otherwise. God will give us the victory.

Ira's 13 February letter tells us that Ira's new regimental headquarters is at Miner's Hill, Virginia, just outside Washington near Falls Church. Miner's Hill was the highest point in the area and had been a Confederate outpost until 1862 when the Union started using it as part of the defenses of Washington:

## Ira Goes to War

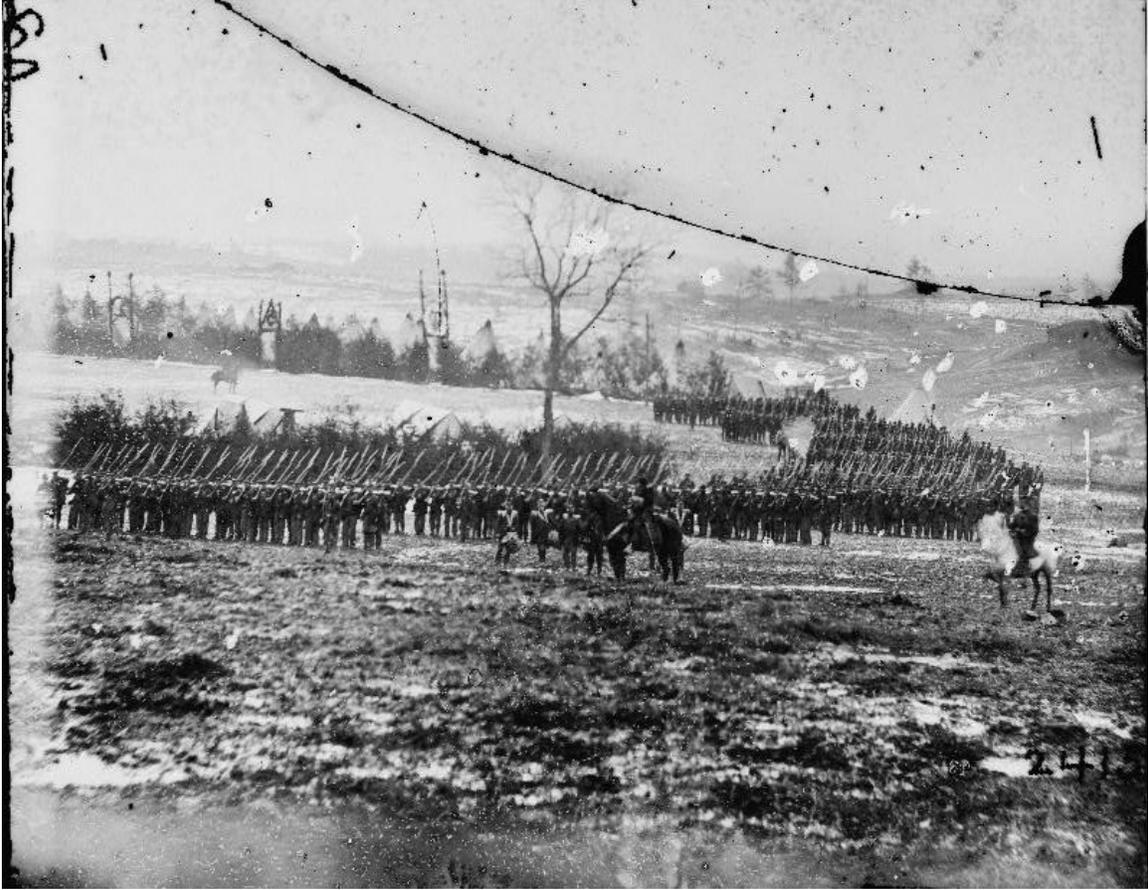


Figure 18 - Miner's Hill - Review of 17th New York Infantry (from Library of Congress)

I drop you a short note this morning to let you know that we are quartered in the snugest possible Barracks, about five miles from Washington, and that all are engaged in making themselves luxuriously comfortable.

Some contrast, you may think with what we have just left. You think right. I now occupy the tent which a Capt and his pretty wife lived in doubtless as harmoniously as two mice. He had fitted it up at an expense of twelve Dollars or more, a month or two since, hoping to be allowed to stay until Spring, at least, or, as they were nine months more, till their term of service expired.

The tent in question, is nicely seated up with pine, planed, has a good floor, a table upon which I now write, shelves, corded bed, stead, and in addition to all this, were left for my use, boxes, a good pail, and \_\_\_\_\_ oh! horror!!

All this he wanted five Dollars for, & I gave it willingly. So much extravagance is hard to take in at once; but we shall get used to it in time. On the Rappahannock we were only allowed three wall tents to the Regt: – here we can have one for each horse. In subsistence both for horsed and men the difference is about as great.

## **Ira Goes to War**

It is my conviction however, that the Old Reserve Corps will not drink in a sum total per diem of real happiness here, greater than heretofore; but they have earned rest and they must be reorganized; so it is probably for the best. The Division may remain here two months, six, or even ten.

Ira also had a chance to visit Camp Pierpont where his regiment had been stationed a year and a half ago before all the battles that have devastated them:

I must close this now and take a ride over to Camp Pierpont which is, I believe, about four miles away. How the old stomping ground looks where we did our Sunday soldiering, with a full Regt of men, in perfect uniform, and drill will perhaps be the subject of another letter. Suffice it to say that after four bloody and trying campaigns, the glory of the "Reserve Corps" lies not so much in their outward appearance, as in the fact that on many a hard fought field they have won for themselves the proud title of brave and veteran troops. All who meet us say "you have done your part, well are willing to try them [mout]". But I doubt whether I enjoy myself here. I think some of applying for a more active position. Circumstances will of course govern me in this respect. I get along finely, so far and I can judge, & hope to be relieved by the major in a day or two when his time of leave expires.

In the end of March Ira was very happy to have a two day visit from his father who had resigned a month before in Baton Rouge. Ira, Sr. stopped in Washington on his way home. On 31 March Ira attended a mass rally in the capitol building:

I attended the great mass meeting held in the Capitol last Tuesday evening. It was very interesting. I suppose there were five thousand people in the House of Reps and the Senate Chamber was also full. I heard Admiral Foote speak who is indeed a noble Christian man and a true patriot. Gov. Johnson addressed the meeting at length, endorsing heartily the policy of the Administration, and speaking strongly for the support of the Government. Men asked how long the war was going to last. I should last until the Union was re-established. If our Fathers fought seven years we ought to be willing to fight seventy. Nay! He was for prosecuting the war to all eternity before he was willing to see our glorious Government prostitute itself at the feet of vile Traitors – to which my soul responded – Amen!

I haven't been able to find anything on the rally but Admiral Foote died suddenly three months later and Gov. Johnson went on to become the 17<sup>th</sup> President of the United States two years later (and not a very good one at that).

We learn from Ira's 4 April letter to his sister Sarah that he is again thinking of going back to school. Ira says that everyone seems to agree with his choice of studies. We can only guess what that choice is. One of the people who agrees with Ira is Dr. McLaren of Ira's regiment. This is Dr. John F. McLaren. He was not a medical doctor, but was a clergyman and the regiment's Chaplin. This fits

## Ira Goes to War

well with Ira's beliefs. Ira had "found God" when he was 17 and attending Allegheny College. When he had returned to Allegheny College in 1860 he was enrolled in Bible Studies. Ira had often talked of going back to school in his letters but now it seems he wanted to go into the ministry. Of course we know he never went back to school. The family is often credited with a dedication to education. Ira had wanted his younger sisters to get degrees. But, Ira never got one. And, it never seemed to hold him back.

Like last year when Ira was in the Washington area he was sitting in on a court martial. The trial started around 18 April. The only time Ira mentions it is on 11 May when he is writing a letter to his sister Julia. He is now in Washington and he realized he has missed the 9am boat he needs to take to get to the court martial. He needs to take the 10am boat which will get him there late. When he picks up the letter again he says:

Afternoon – It is half past two and I have returned from court martial. The court didn't sit today – no culprit there, no Judge Advocate there, hence the court had nothing to do; so after a ride of fourteen miles in a Steam Boat, four in a horse car and a sitting of a couple of hours in the dusty court room with nothing to do, I find myself bringing this letter to a close.

While he does not discuss the details of this case, it probably made a big impression on him. Ira was always big in the temperance movement and this case probably reinforced that. John H. Abbott of Company A, Sixth Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers was very drunk one night when he loaded his gun and took up a position on the street. One of his best friends, Private Franklin Rehr happened to be walking by and Abbott ordered Rehr to halt or he would shoot. Rehr said that Abbott "wouldn't shoot his best friend". Abbott fired, mortally wounding Rehr.

Abbott was found guilty of some of the charges and sentenced to a dishonorable discharge, forfeit all pay he was due and to solitary confinement and hard labor for eight years.

## **Ira and Jennie Get Married**

### **Ira and Jennie Get Married**

Sometime between 5 April and 5 May Ira's regiment moved from Miner's Hill, Virginia to Capitol Hill Barracks in Washington. Like so many of the camps Ira was in, I can only find references to them on the web in letters written home. There doesn't seem to be any specific descriptions of Capital Hill Barracks.

Their duty was to escort prisoners from the docks to the prison camps:

We are now, as I suppose you have heard through other sources performing Provost duty in the city and comfortably quartered and are now having the pleasantest kind of duty, it being no other than escorting the Johnny Rebs of 'fighting Joe' from the landing to safe quarters. I hope they will keep coming, will promise to guard them, even to a city full.

Ira says that since his commanding officers ("Col & Lt. Col") are both present he does not have a lot to do so he has been spending time on his studies. One of the subjects he's been studying is Mathematics. I'm not sure what inspired him to do so.

In an 8 May letter to Sarah we learn that Ira is sharing his quarters with Dr. McLaren and that he does not think the rebels can hold out until winter.

### ***Jennie and Ira Meet***

I'm not sure exactly when Ira met Jennie, but it was most likely in the spring of 63 and probably during May of 63 Ira while stationed in Washington. On 11 May Ira told his sister Julia he was hoping to meet the daughter of his doctor friend in his Regiment so they were probably not courting then.

Jennie and Ira met because Ira called on Jane and William James. He wanted to thank Jane for taking such good care of Edwin B. Pier before he died and William him for writing such a nice letter to Edwin's father.

First we will do some background. Around 1811, Ira's grandfather moved his family in two covered wagons from Haverhill, Massachusetts to the wilds of Evans, New York, west of Buffalo. The Ayers were Presbyterians while in Massachusetts and not very religious at that. Shortly after moving to New York, they joined the Methodist Church and became fairly devout. Ira's father was more strongly religious than his grandfather and Ira more than his father. Ira was attending Bible School at Alleghany College when the war started. Being a devout Methodist, Ira shunned alcohol and all other vices. According to Samuel Bates<sup>12</sup>, Ira was "Strictly temperate-of tobacco and spirituous liquors abstemious-he was little affected by temptation, as the habits of youth are strengthened and confirmed by time."

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

In addition to being very religious, Ira was very prudish. Just before meeting Jennie in his 11 May 1863 to his sister Julia, Ira told her about how he is very slowly working to the point where his friend Dr. McLaren will consider possibly introducing him to his daughter. This passage really helps explain Ira.

The weather is getting very warm here. Yesterday the thermometer stood at 90° in the shade. The Doctor and I walk out in the parks around the Capital many an evening, and talk and chat upon this subject and that until sufficiently cool to go to bed. It is a great place for “sparking” as the Doctor remarked last evening when we found nearly all the iron seats occupied by a young man and (as it appeared), his sweet-heart. Speaking of “sparking” makes me think of my courtship. When it will begin and when end heaven knows. The Doctor has a sweet daughter, I believe, and the Doctor likes me. I think, but the Doctor is not the daughter. Perhaps kind Providence may find for me some angelic Rebekah who being asked “Will thou go with this man?” will reply – “I will go.” The Doctor has a sort of fatherly feeling toward me I believe as though I was his son. Once he very delicately suggested that he supposed I had a sweet-heart – as a young man that was worthy of one ought to have; but he did not draw me out, because I thought it would be better not to be. There is no question but that he thinks of all these things; for he is one of your thoughtful, practical, kind-hearted, benignantly-look-through-the-lower-edge-of-his-spectacles kind of man, that you don’t meet with very often in this world of sin. He tells me what a good wife he has, what a good mother he had. The Doctor and I often talk together as freely as father and son, being restrained only by considerations of delicacy. He often opening by a sort of hint to me some of his family affairs. I in turn doing the same, so far as I think proper, allowing again to this subject which I was speaking of in the other sheet, there is something very pleasing at present to me in our personal relations. I look down into his pure, honest Christian, fatherly bosom, and wonder whether – yes wonder for the course all is doubt, whether he regards me any differently because he has a sweet daughter whom he thinks more of than his right eye or right arm, and who – though her very name is unknown to me, I am well assured will be marriageable for some time to come. One thing is certain I don’t labor to conceal any side of my character from him; though I leave him to draw his own inferences in some things just as he does me, which gives considerable zest to our intercourse so far as I am concerned; and for this reason. I say mentally – “I read your motives thus and so. How far do I read them correctly? I wait particularly for time to develop.” On the other hand I say mentally – “You, dear Doctor, read me thus and so. What do you read? What do you think? Time must develop – if anything does.”

You see then our present relations! The fact that I am well nigh 28, have a warm heart, believe myself capable of making a good husband for a good wife, and am determined to defer the matter until I can have a reasonable assurance that such is the wife I am about to make my partner for life, must be my excuse for dwelling as long upon this subject.

Ira’s views on courting and temperance were hugely different from his father’s.

## **Ira and Jennie Get Married**

So now let's look at this from Jennie's mother Jane's point of view. In through her front door comes a tall, handsome, devout Methodist who is a war hero to boot. I doubt that the thought of spending a few weeks slowly drawing him out ever occurred to her. She was going to introduce her oldest daughter, Jennie, right away. There's only one small problem. You saw above that Ira talked of the Doctor's daughter being of marriageable age for some time to come. Well, at almost 24, Jennie was bordering on being an Old Maid. I'm sure that when Ira walked through that door, Jennie went from be almost 24 to not quite 19 (still within marriageable age). All records for Jennie prior to her meeting Ira listed her correct age. After they met, her birth year for most public records moved 5 years.

Since Ira was only in Washington for a few weeks after the letter about his doctor friend, Ira and Jennie wouldn't have had much time together. By early June Ira's regiment has left Washington. On 14 June, Ira wrote to his sister Vinnie asking her to keep his relationship with "a certain young lady in Washington" quiet until he is ready to tell everyone. I'm not sure why but he says he had mentioned it in a letter he wrote to his father. Vinnie had intercepted the letter and possibly the one after because Ira mentioned something that would have upset their farther. I wish I could find out what that was. Ira is glad that intercepting the letters may allow him to keep the relationship secret for now. He says, "When I tell you that my reasons for desiring secrecy are weighty with me, I am sure you will not wish me to speak further."

Ira also says, "I am now intending to come home about the 10<sup>th</sup> of July if I can secure a leave of absence." Little does he know that General Lee had very different plans for Ira's army.

***Ira and Jennie \*\*\*\****

## Ira and Jennie Get Married



**Figure 19 - Ira Ayer, Jr. in undress uniform – he is likely a Major or Lieut. Colonel here (the only difference in the uniform between Major and Lieut. Colonel is the color of the shoulder strap)**

From Ira's military records we learn the he was 5'10" with light hair, blue eyes and a light complexion. In a letter from Jennie to Ira on 24 February 1864 Jennie says that Ira is 180 lbs and on the 28<sup>th</sup> she said "My dear husband; I used to look in your beautiful blue eyes".

From Martial Deeds:

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

Only by wounds, however, was he kept from the field, possessing a good constitution and actuated by real patriotism. In person he is six feet in height, well formed, and of fair complexion. At college he manifested a strong liking for mathematics and natural science, and later in his course for lingual studies. Strictly temperate--of tobacco and spirituous liquors abstemious--he was little affected by temptation, as the habits of youth are strengthened and firmed by time.

Unlike Ira's father, Ira never went through a wild period. From a young age he was a strong believer in the Methodism. The church had long since split into north and south groups over the issue of slavery. The northern churches were strongly anti-slavery while the southern churches use both the Old and New Testaments to defend their belief in slavery. So, not only was Ira's country divided, but his church was too.

The church's connection with the Temperance movement stated with strong abhorrence of alcohol by one of its founders, John Wesley, in England in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many Methodists believed that if they abstained from alcohol others would too.<sup>13</sup> Ira very likely went his whole life abstaining from alcohol and tobacco. His fight against the evils of alcohol would play a large part of his work during Reconstruction and he belonged to Temperance organizations for most if not all of the rest of his life.

In a letter to brother-in-law George Ira talked about a ceremony that included whiskey drinking:

Yesterday afternoon was the sword presentation to the Genl Meade – which took place at the Hd Qus. of our Division. Among those present were Gov, Curtin, Hon John Covode and some prominent politicians from Philadelphia. I suppose the occasion was much like all similar ones. Speeches were made – much like all speeches made by politicians, and to finish there was a supper. Together with song – singing and whisky-drinking. I doubt much the papers will blaze it over the country as a grand and interesting ceremony but I confess that for my part I never returned from any place so disgusted and sick at the heart as from there. The Presentation of itself was good – General Meade spoke modestly & well, and Leut Farney who was present made some very excellent remarks.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married



**Figure 20 - Ira's new girl, Jennie James**

Jennie James, like the rest of her siblings was born in Wales. Jennie was born Mary Jane James in August of 1838 in Newport, Monmouthshire, Wales. Her father William had run a store selling mining equipment. In 1850 the family moved to New Brunswick, Canada and a few years later to Richmond, Virginia. At the outbreak of the war the family decided to side with the North so they put most of their belongings and all but Jennie's sister Annie moved to Washington,

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

DC for the duration. For more on the James family, see “The James Family – 1810-1900”<sup>ix</sup>

Jennie’s family were also Methodists. She very likely shared Ira’s believe in Temperance.

I do love Jennie, dear Sadie. I do not know whether she would seem beautiful to others or not – what think you? – I only know that she is very beautiful and very sweet to your brother Ira.

...

Jennie is not unsophisticated; she has moved in the best society in Richmond and still from choice partly; and partly from education she has retained a beautiful simplicity of manners. She has a warm sincere, heart. Jennie loves one with all the devotion of a first, true, pure, elevated love. It is indeed a pure-minded, refined, beautiful, sweet girl’s love, for one whom she considers well, nigh perfect. Still Jennie is very womanly. She has a mind of her own, which is not easily changed, and a heart as true as steel. ... Jennie is industrious. She believes in work. She has been brought up to it. ... She sent me out a beautiful cake made by her own hands. The servant is sometimes sick – she fills the servant’s place. Jennie is not very large, you know; but I would not have her different. What do you think of just five feet anyway? Jennie’s form is pretty. She is at home in the parlor, at the Piano, and she sings and plays the guitar very prettily. ... Jennie is, to me, very beautiful, very loveable, very, very sweet, and very, very, very near my heart. I think I have prolonged my love story sufficiently to satisfy – even one in love

Talk about music and guitar. According to wiki, guitars have been around for hundreds of years as has the name.



Figure 21 - Actual Civil War Era Guitar<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Battle of Gettysburg (1-3 July 1863)***

The easy deployment in Washington had not last long. On 1 June the regiment moved back across the river to Upton Hill in Virginia, near Miner’s Hill. And then

<sup>ix</sup> Scholtz, Bill, “The James Family 1810-1900”, <http://scholtz.org/bill/Genealogy/TheJamesFamily.pdf>

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

they had to get ready for Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania. Lee had just won a major battle against the Union's Army of the Potomac at Battle of Chancellorsville and decided to go on the offensive.

This was the first time Ira was in a major battle since the Second Bull Run 10 months earlier. But from the Allegheny College book we see:

Now recovered from their wounds, the bronzed and weather-beaten veterans would never have been recognized as the novices who made their entrance upon the tragic scene in 1861.

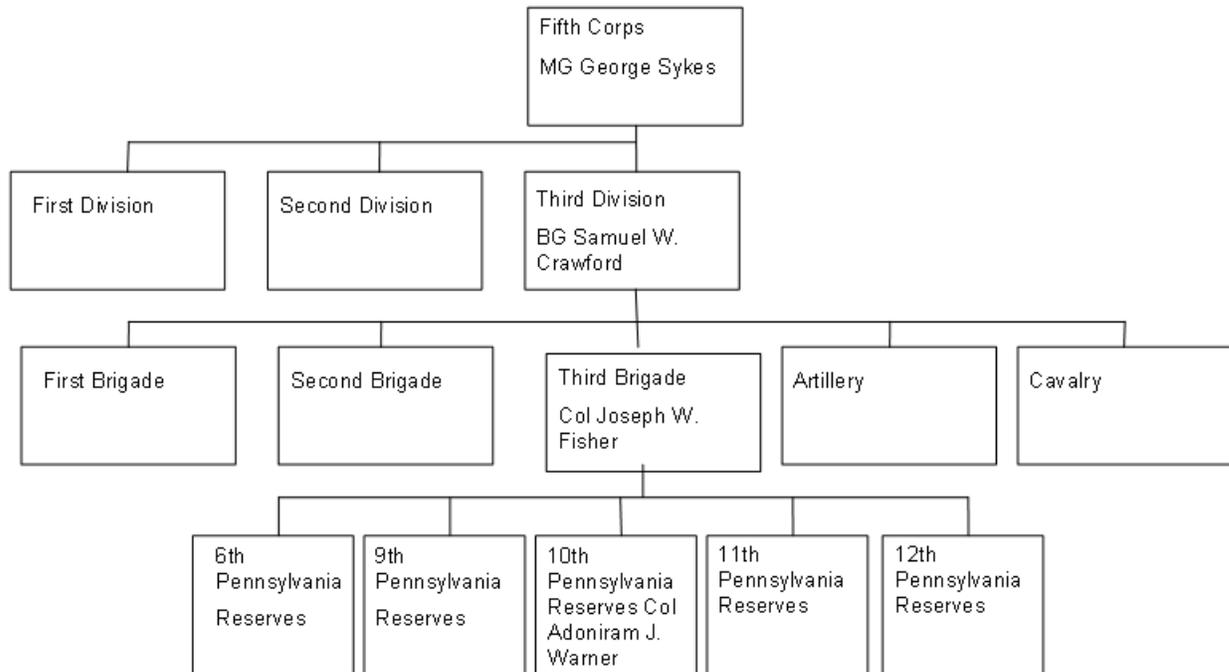


Figure 22 - Fifth Corps Gettysburg 1-3 July 1862

The Third Brigade left camp on 25 June and marched north. By the 28<sup>th</sup> they were in Fredrick, Maryland where they met up with the Army of the Potomac. That was about 47 miles. They were in Liberty, Maryland on the 29<sup>th</sup> and Union Mills on the 30<sup>th</sup>, 35 miles total. On 1 July, the first day of the battle they made it to York, Pennsylvania, about a 30 mile march. They were still more than 30 miles from Gettysburg. It wasn't until the afternoon of that day that they heard about the battle. They didn't stop there. They continued to march past York reaching Bonneauville after midnight, almost another 25 miles (55 miles marched in one day). After marching about 130 miles in 6 days they were within 5 miles of Gettysburg.

On 2 July, the second day of battle, they joined the fight. From George W. McCracken dedication of the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment's Monument at Gettysburg:<sup>15</sup>

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

July 2nd, '63 Gettysburg

The weary march was until after midnight, when near the village of Bonneauville a halt was made, and the tired soldiers laid down and slept by the roadside until day, which came at a very early hour. After a hasty breakfast the corps was again on the march, and soon came in sight of the skirmishers of the enemy, who held possession of that road to the town of Gettysburg. We let them keep it, and filed to the left down a small stream until we reach the Baltimore turnpike, which we followed toward Gettysburg.

-5pm-

After crossing Rock creek the Fifth Corps filed off the pike to the left, lay down and rested until about 5 o'clock in the evening, at which hour the sound of battle came loud from this part of the field. Quickly under arms the corps was soon in motion toward the sound, crossing the Taneytown road, we ascended the slope of Little Round Top, meeting many wounded from the battle which was fiercely raging beyond the hill.

The First and second Divisions had preceded us, and the Third Brigade of each had been left to hold Little Round Top and drive the enemy from the rocky valley between the two hills, while the other brigades had passed on to the wooded broken ground and the wheat-field beyond.

A wonderful scene met the gaze of the Pennsylvania Reserves when they reached the crest of Little Round Top. It was near the close of what General Longstreet has denominated "the best two hours' fighting that ever took place on this planet." It was the moment just before exhaustion of the tremendous and desperate effort by the divisions of Hood, McLaws and Anderson, comprising thirteen brigades of the very flower of the rebel army, under the personal direction of Generals Lee and Longstreet, to crush the left wing of the Union army, and gain possession of Little Round Top. It should be remarked that the brigades of the rebel army at this time were just about one-third heavier than those of ours. The two being nearly equal in numbers, theirs was composed of thirty-eight infantry regiments and ours of fifty-one. So that while our brigades averaged about one thousand and five hundred men, theirs exceeded two thousand. In repelling this mighty assault there had been engaged the six brigades of the Third Corps, four brigades of First Division, Second Corps, and five brigades of the Fifth Corps.

When the Pennsylvania Reserves looked down the western slope of Little Round Top, the skirmishers of the enemy were almost at its foot and his somewhat broken and disordered but exultant lines not far in their rear. The First Brigade dashed down the slope, deploying as it went, drove back the skirmishers and nearest brigade of the enemy, and the mighty effort put forth to wring from the Union army the key to its position was over, and with it had passed the highest wave of the rebellion. From those two hours fighting---5 to 7 o'clock, July 2, 1863, may be dated the commencement of its ebb-tide. When the First Brigade

## **Ira and Jennie Get Married**

charged down the slope of Little Round Top, the Third Brigade was sent to the left into the valley at the foot of the larger hill, the Ninth and Tenth regiments forming line of battle perhaps over one hundred yards in rear of the position marked by the stone wall which they subsequently built and which is marked by their monuments, and the Fifth and Twelfth regiments dislodged part of Law's Alabama Brigade and occupied the summit of Big Round Top.

July 3rd, '63 Gettysburg

At daylight next morning the Tenth Regiment advanced to the position now marked, and at once commenced and in surprisingly short time completed the construction of this wall; in pushing back the skirmishers of the enemy from this position, two men of the Tenth were killed and three wounded, The sharpshooters of the enemy, under cover of the rocks and trees, were very troublesome, but volunteers from the Tenth were ready to meet them, and they were very soon receiving as good as they sent. Major J. C. Rogers, commanding the Fifth Texas immediately in our front, says in his report, "just before day on the morning of the 3d orders reached me that breastworks must be thrown up and the position held. During the day constant skirmishing was kept up with the enemy which resulted in the loss to us of many of our best scouts."

Specifically, Ira's old company, Company I, spent most of their time holding the ground between Round Top and Little Round Top. From the Allegheny book:

For the first time since their muster in as a reserve corps for the defense of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, ... the Allegheny College boys were to defend their own State from the invasion of the enemy. The Reserves reached Gettysburg on July 2nd and went into battle on the evening of that day. Driving the enemy before them, they took the low ground between Round Top and Little Round Top, which position was held until the close of the fighting. The fragments of rock at hand were built into a heavy stone wall, that withstood a vigorous artillery fire and an attack by the infantry.

Unlike the previous major battles, Ira's old company came through the battle fairly well. No one died. There were a few minor injuries and one was none other than Ira. From Martial Deeds:

At Gettysburg, while reconnoitering, he was fired at by two sharpshooters from an unexpected quarter, but was not hit. Turning suddenly back, a third shot was fired, which just grazed his side, making a deep abrasion, and would have done certain execution had it not been fired at the instant of his turning away, carrying him out of aim after the missile had actually left the piece.

While not very bad, this was Ira's third of four wounds in battle.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

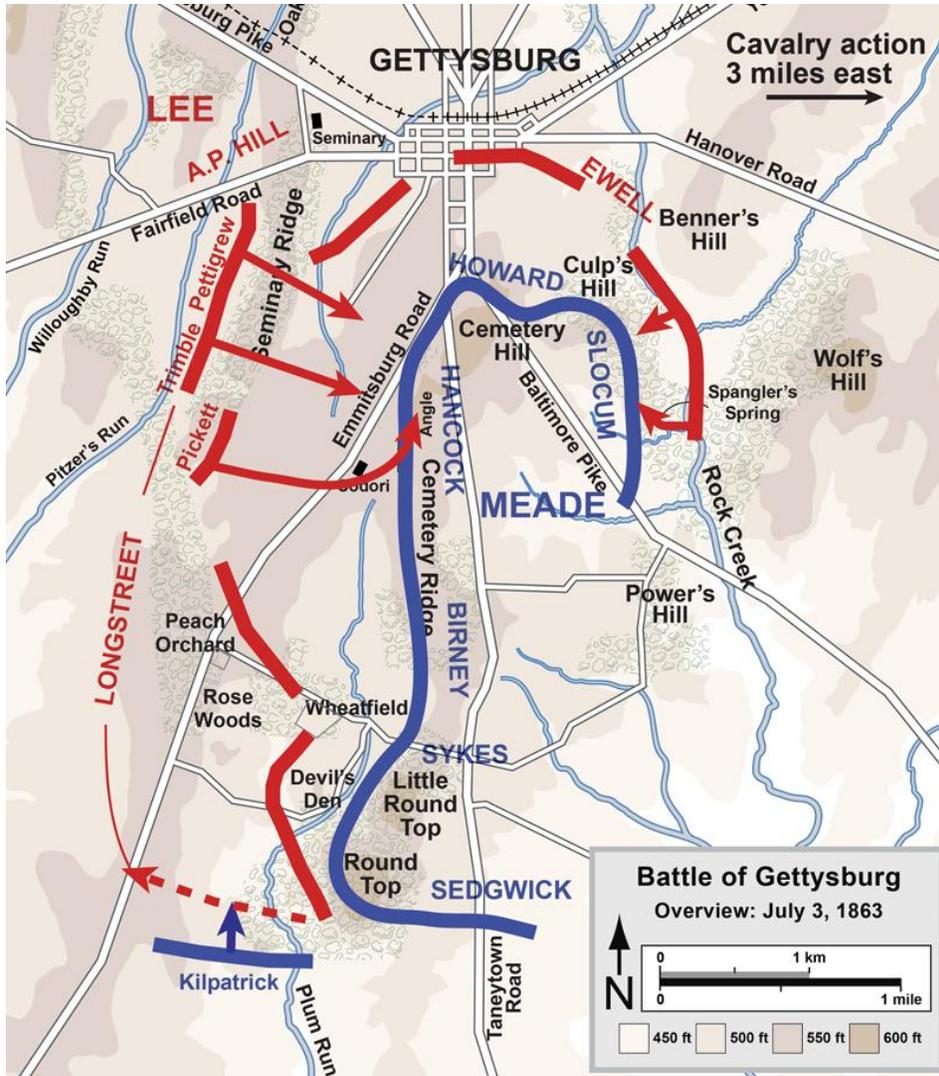


Figure 23 - Battle of Gettysburg - 3 July (from Wikipedia)

### ***In Pursuit of Lee (July – December 1863)***

The battle was a major victory for the Union's Army of the Potomac and the beginning of the end for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Lee was on the run and this time the Army of the Potomac followed them with Ira's regiment in the thick of it. Over the next six months the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves were involved in several skirmishes over a wide area of Maryland through much of northern Virginia.<sup>x</sup>

<sup>x</sup> Much of the information in this section comes from the address at the dedication of the monument to the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves at Gettysburg, 2 September 1890.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

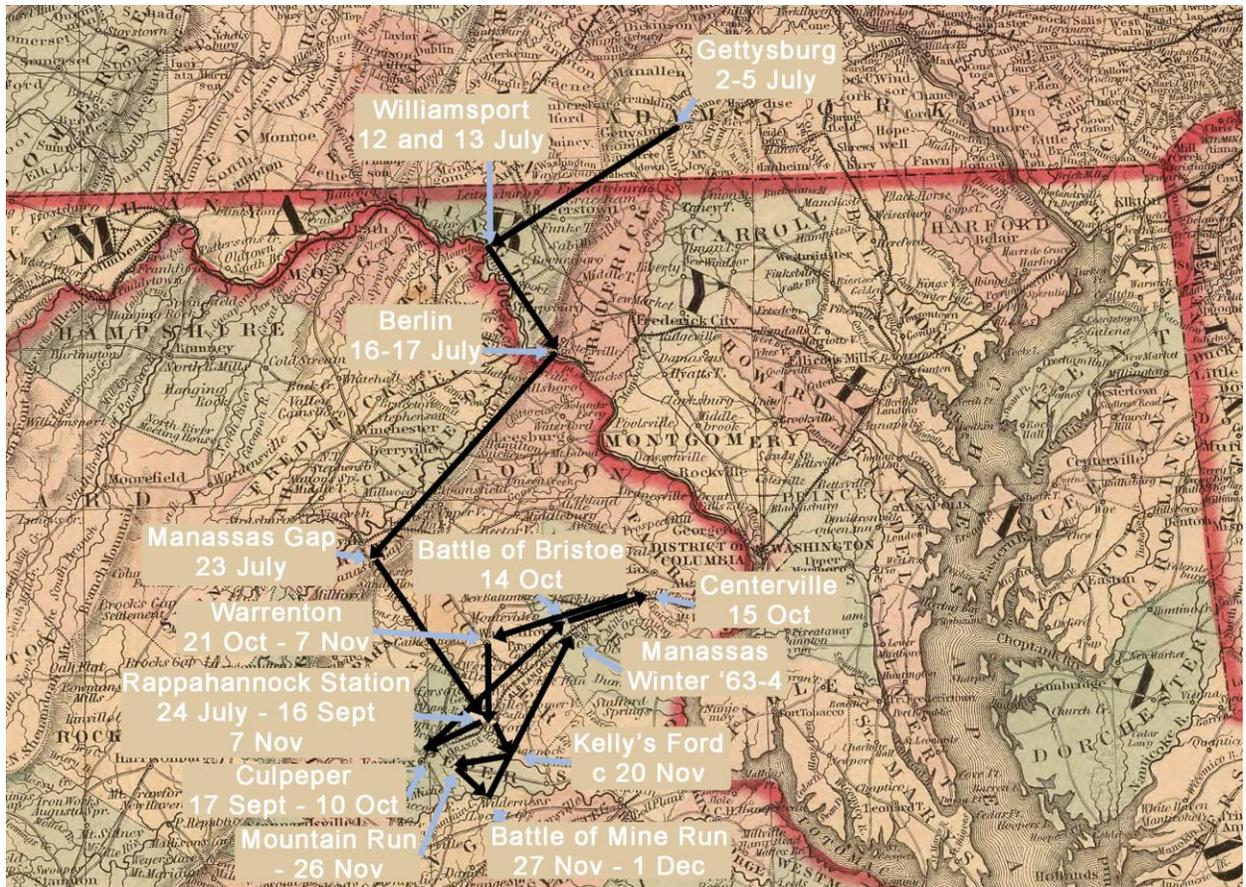


Figure 24 - In Pursuit of Lee - 5 July - winter of '63-4 (modified map from Library of Congress)

On 5 July the regiment left the Battlefield at Gettysburg in pursuit of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. They caught up with and skirmished with his army at St. James College and Williamsport, Maryland on 12 and 13 July. At Williamsport the Confederate troops crossed the Potomac into Virginia. The regiment marched over the hills to the town of Berlin (now Brunswick) where they crossed the Potomac on 17 July.

The Union Army caught up to the Confederate Army again at Manassas Gap (not to be confused with Manassas) on 23 July. The goal of the Union was to attack Lee's rear while at a choke point but Lee was able to cross Manassas Gap before the Union, so there was little fighting and the battle was inconclusive. Ira's got to the summit of the Blue Ridge Mountains too late to see any action.

They marched south eventually getting to Rappahannock Station where they rested until 16 September. While there, Ira wrote a letter to George on 29 August about, among other things, that the troops are riding high after the recent victories:

We are now encamped near Rappahannock Station, and very little is transpiring of interest. The general impression seems to be that we are destined to be idle in camp until filled up, which will probably require a month or two. We expect an

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

active campaign during the Fall – one which we hope will finish the rebellion. The cheering news from all parts of the South, and great success of this Army at Gettysburg have given to all the more renewed spirit and confidence. That Pennsylvania Campaign was a great event for us. I have never seen such regular and rapid and long – continued marching the men – all of them seemed possessed of the same spirit – viz. to fight – to the death. It was a hard-fought battle; but through the skill of our comrades, and the spirit of the men God gave us a great victory. I am looking forward Dear Brother & Sister to a time not far in the future as I hope when I may lay aside the sword and enjoy again the pursuits of Peace.

.....I am very well as usual. Being at present on Picket with a [cauper] of hundred men. I write this under a little shelter tent upon the end of my hand-[wunts]. I have recently applied for a Leave to visit you; but without success. I want to see you all very much, but I fear I shall not be able to before winter, if indeed I am then. Orders even concerning Leaves to Washington are very strict, and I suppose will continue to be for some time to come.

Ira also writes about a ceremony to present a sword to General Meade. He found it very upsetting. I think what bothered him was whiskey drinking and the politicians:

Yesterday afternoon was the sword presentation to the Genl Meade – which took place at the Hd Qus. of our Division. Among those present were Gov, Curtin, Hon John Covode and some prominent politicians from Philadelphia. I suppose the occasion was much like all similar ones. Speeches were made – much like all speeches made by politicians, and to finish there was a supper. Together with song – singing and whisky-drinking. I doubt much the papers will blaze it over the country as a grand and interesting ceremony but I confess that for my part I never returned from any place so disgusted and sick at the heart as from there. The Presentation of itself was good – General Meade spoke modestly & well, and Leut Farney who was present made some very excellent remarks.

From Rappahannock Station the regiment went to Culpeper where they rested camped until 10 October when Lee tried to outflank them from the west and north by coming around them past Warrenton.

On 14 October the Union troops met the Confederate troops at the Battle of Bristoe Station outnumbered by more than 2 to 1 (8,300 Union troops and 17,200 Confederate troops). From the Gettysburg Monument Address:

We got into action with Hill's Corps at Bristoe on the 14th. The enemy in his eagerness to attack the Fifth Corps which was in a rather exposed position, exposed himself to the Second Corps, and lost heavily; two brigades, Cooke's and Kirkland's of Heth's Division, being almost annihilated and a battery captured. The Tenth Regiment here performed the duty of rear guard of the Fifth Corps, holding the enemy in check while the corps withdrew toward Manassas. Its loss was one killed and two wounded. We retired to Manassas, then returned to

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

Bristoe after night, to assist the withdrawal of the Second Corps, then again passed Manassas, crossed Bull Run to Blackburn's Ford and next morning were at Centerville.

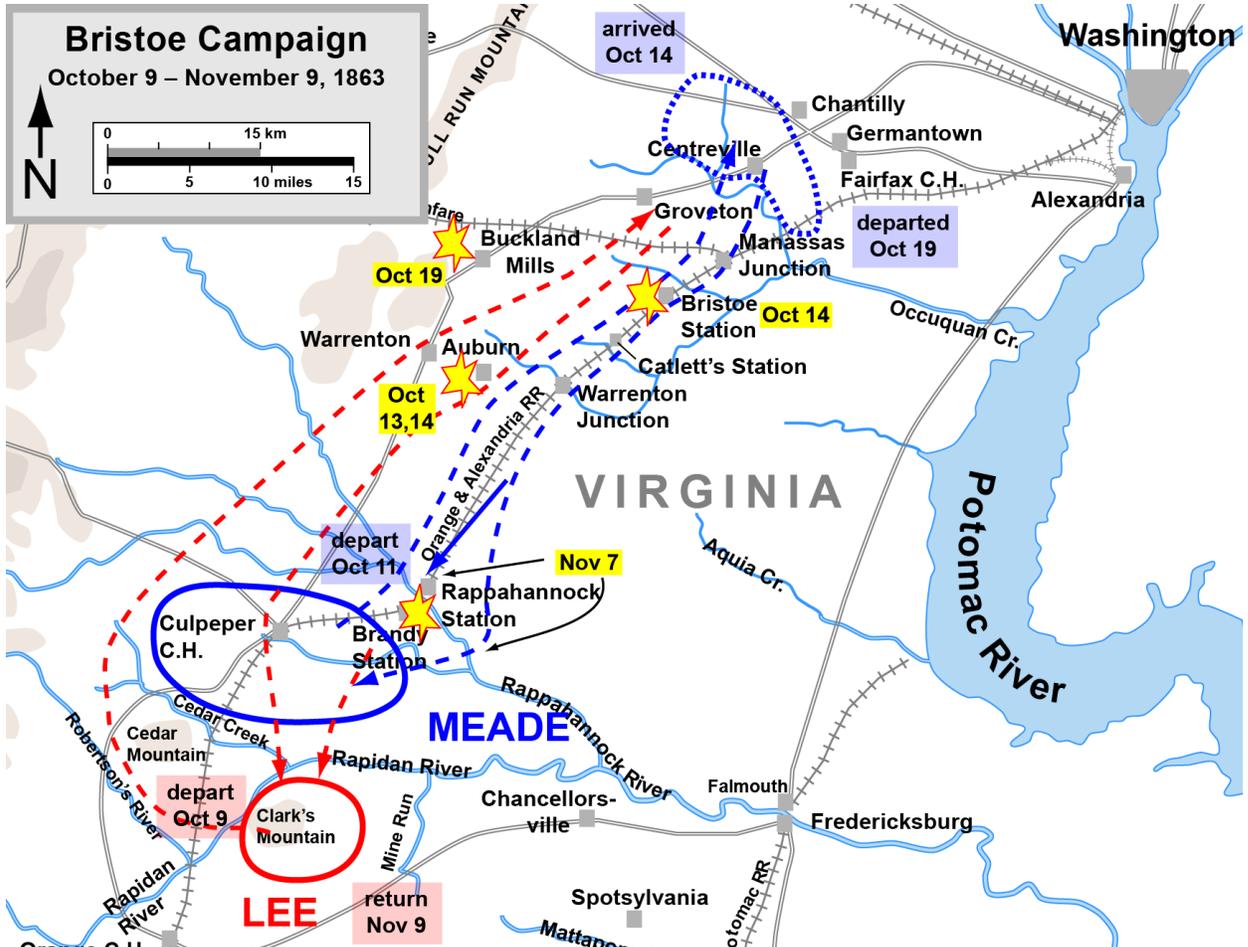


Figure 25 - Bristoe Campaign – Ira saw actoin at Bristoe Station and Rappahannock Station (from Wikipedia)

Even though heavily outnumbered, the Union decisively won the battle and had only 540 casualties to the Confederate's 1,380. The Union forces chased the Confederates and met again at Rappahannock Station on 7 November. Again from the Address:

In the advance which followed we marched by way of Bull Run battle-field and Greenwich to Warrenton Junction, where we halted from October 21 to November 7, when the Fifth and Sixth Corps advanced to Rappahannock Station, a brigade of the Sixth assaulting the enemy's entrenchments captured almost entire Hays' and Hoke's brigades of Early's Division, one thousand six hundred men with their arms, a battery and pontoon bridge.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

This was a small battle with about 2,000 on each side, however, the Confederate troops had 1,670 casualties of which 1,600 were captured. The pontoon bridge was important because it crossed the Rappahannock River. River crossings were a major issue so capturing one is a major victory.

After the Union forces crossed the Rappahannock on 26 November they found an evacuated Confederate camp at Mountain Run. The Confederates had left in such a hurry that they didn't even take their tents. Since the tents were just sitting there, the 10<sup>th</sup> spent the night in them before moving on.

For Ira's regiment, the next battle was Mine Run, 27 November through 2 December. Ira's regiment joined the battle on the 28<sup>th</sup>. From the Address:

...next day marched by old Plank road toward Orange Court House, and in the afternoon came up with Gregg's Cavalry Division engaged with the enemy at New Hope Church, and at once proceeded to take part, but, thanks to good luck or good dodging, none of the Tenth were seriously hurt.

Next day moved to the right to where the old Fredericksburg and Orange Court House turnpike crosses Mine Run. On the 29<sup>th</sup> remained in position, looked at rebs building works on their side of the run and worked some at same on ours. The morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> was extremely cold; moved very early about two miles to right, where Fifth and Sixth Corps massed and prepared to assault the enemy's works, but to the great satisfaction of everybody the order to attack was countermanded and we returned to the position of the previous day. December 1 continued to fortify, and so did the enemy. The Tenth was on, the skirmish line, was relieved after dark and started to the rear by the old turnpike, recrossed the Rapidan at Germanna Ford at daylight, and crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford and continuing on to Warrenton Junction, there built winter quarters and went to guarding the railroad.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

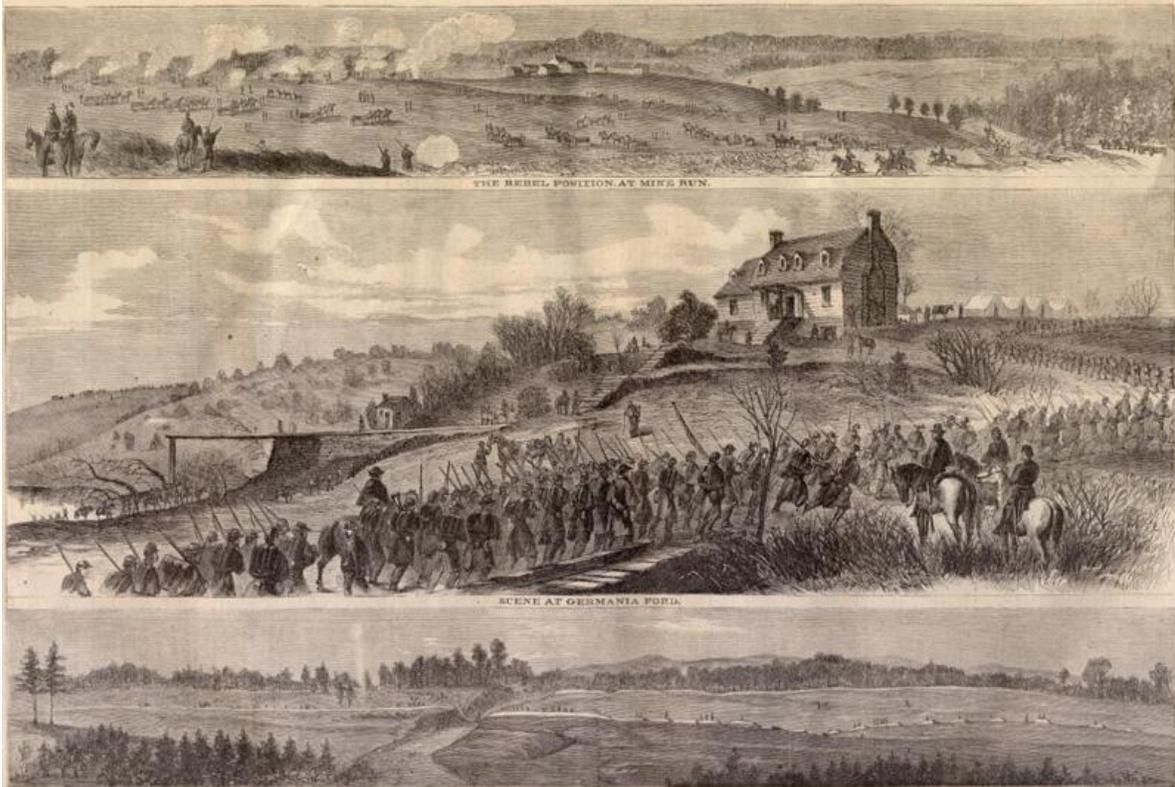


Figure 26 - Scenes from the Battle of Mine Run - Harpers Weekly 2 January 1863

The Battle of Mine Run, the last major battle in Virginia of 1863, was inconclusive. Following the battle the Union forces pulled back. Ira's regiment moved back to Warrenton Junction where they set up camp to guard the railroad. They moved around several times before settling at Manassas Junction where they would stay for the winter, again guarding the railroad.

### ***Lieutenant Colonel Ayer***

Back on 23 November Ira's commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel James B. Knox resigned. Less than a month later, 18 December, Ira was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and given command of the regiment. However, the promotion didn't become official until February.

Ira and Jennie Get Married

**OATH OF OFFICE**

One to accompany the accept-  
officer appointed or commis-  
the oath itself to be admin-  
tered into the service



ance of every commissioned  
sioned by the President, and  
istered to every officer mus-  
of the United States.

I, Ira Ayre Jr, having been appointed  
a Lieut Colonel in the **MILITARY**  
**SERVICE** of the United States, do solemnly swear that I have  
never voluntarily **BORNE ARMS** against the United States since I  
have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily given no **AID**,  
**COUNTENANCE**, **COUNSEL**, or **ENCOURAGEMENT** to persons engaged in **ARMED HOSTILITY**  
thereto; that I have neither sought, nor accepted, nor attempted  
to exercise the functions of **ANY OFFICE WHATSOEVER**, under any  
authority, or pretended authority, **IN HOSTILITY** to the United States;  
that I have not yielded a voluntary **SUPPORT** to any **PRETENDED**  
**GOVERNMENT**, **AUTHORITY**, **POWER**, or **CONSTITUTION** within the United States,  
**HOSTILE** or **INIMICAL** thereto. And I do further swear that, to  
the best of my knowledge and ability, I will **SUPPORT** and **DEFEND**  
the **CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES** against all enemies, **FOREIGN** and  
**DOMESTIC**; that I will bear true **FAITH** and **ALLEGIANCE** to the same;  
that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or  
purpose of evasion; and that I will **WELL** and **FAITHFULLY** discharge the  
**DUTIES** of the **OFFICE** on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

Ira Ayre Jr  
Lieut Col 10th Regt Ill Inf

Sworn to and subscribed before me, at Bunker W  
this 27 day of February, 1864.

Chas. H. ...  
...

[A. G. O. No. 55.]

Figure 27 - Ira's Oath of Office as Lieutenant Colonel - 27 February 1864

## Ira and Jennie Get Married



Figure 28 - Ira on the left with other regimental or brigade officers

### *The Wedding*

Back on 16 July, while waiting to cross the Potomac at Berlin, Ira's attentions turned back to love and he wrote a letter to Jennie's mother Jane where it's clear his intentions for Jennie are marriage. It may be that Ira thought it inappropriate to write to Jennie directly, though much of what he says seems directed at her. Remember, it's likely that Ira and Jennie met when Ira had only two weeks left in Washington and three weeks in northern Virginia. After that Ira was busy with the campaigns through the end of the year. In the first half of the letter the word "you" must refer to the James family or just Jane:

In Camp near Berlin, MD

July 16th 1863

My Dear Mrs James;

Often since I parted with you and your dear family, have I longed for an hour of leisure and suitable conveniences to write to you. It is only by giving expression to that burden of love which I feel

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

toward you all, that I can find relief. This, together with that uniform kindness, cordiality and sincerity which you have always manifested toward me, must be my only apology for addressing you with that freedom and candor with which I would speak to my own Dear Mother. I esteem it as the chief happiness of my life that I ever was an inmate of your happy home.

Separated from you and surrounded as I have been continually with the excitement and all the stern realities of war, still I have never for an hour forgotten you. Fond memory lingers around the sweet and happy associations of my acquaintance with you and your dearly loved ones. I cannot tell fully wherein its sweetness to me, but still almost increasingly do I find gushing up in my heart like the waters of some pure and living spring, a love which I never before entertained for any, except those of my own Dear Home. Still I think I am enabled somewhat to analyze the power of which draws me so mysteriously to you. It is the affection and love, and the sweet spirit of piety that pervades your home. I will not speak more. Words seem so formal my Dear Madam, this is unsatisfactory for me to attempt to express what I feel. You must allow me here to express to you my gratitude for so kindly and generously giving me her to love and protect who so dear to me, and who I know was one of your most precious []. When I first mentioned this subject to you, I loved Jennie as I had never loved another; but I did not know her fully. My love for her was increased from day to day, with our further acquaintance, until it seems to me that the happiness of my life depends upon her sweet companionship. I do not believe that any ever loved more truly and purely than do we. This sweet union of our hearts – this commingling of our affections – was not, I believe, sought by either of us, We rather, I think, thought not to love too well; but our hearts blended in the sweetest sympathies and we believe the result is of divine direction. With approval of our Heavenly Father and of those near and dear to us we feel that we cannot but be happy. My time is quite limited and I must close. Please write to me at your earliest convenience. We expect to move forward even into Virginia. I know that I have the prayers of those dear to me. I remember you all to love yours.

Yours in the Bonds of affection,

Ira Ayer Jr

A couple weeks later Ira got a 1 August letter from his good friend Dr. John McLaren. This is that person with whom Ira had been hoping to be introduced to his daughter just over two months earlier. McLaren had been in Washington on leave and at Ira's request had met the James family:

I reached here in safety on Monday afternoon. On Thursday evening I had the pleasure of calling on you friends in 13th Street; & now recon them my friends too. I also spent last evening there, & by enjoyment there made sweet today with Mr. James to the [Boperfating] Gardens – a visit which was highly gratifying to my floral taste. The family, embracing of

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

course Miss Jennie, are all well. And I need scarcely say that I am much obliged to you for making me acquainted with them.

From a later letter we find that Jennie sent him “a beautiful cake she made by her own hands” to be carried by the good doctor.

Between June and December it's not likely that Ira and Jennie saw each other much, if at all. Ira had no leave of absences during that period. I'm sure they wrote to each other often, but as far as we know none of the letters survive. However, it's clear that Ira's feelings for Jennie are strong. In a letter to Ira's sister Sarah on 9 September he says:

I will only say then (to take up the thread), that dear Jennie embodies all the virtues of the James family and none of the faults – the former of which I have heretofore narrated at some length; and the latter of which I am only waiting to discover in order duly to communicate. In placing myself upon this broad, simple, and elevated platform, I have only one request to make; and that is that you will make all due allowances for this frank and sincere declaration of a true lover. I do love Jennie, dear Sadie. I do not know whether she would seem beautiful to others or not – what think you? – I only know that she is very beautiful and very sweet to your brother Ira. If I had always been falling in love, and acted like a boy in love matters, you nor I would not think very strange of this attachment; but you know I have not; and moreover I have seen and known many good and what many would call beautiful girls; and you know also, dear sister, that if I had loved any of them as [effilt] that I must love the one whom I was to call my wife, I at least had the courage to tell them so. But I did not. Of course, you know, I could not help but like some of the girls very much, because girls are each beautiful and lovely creatures, but then, you know also, that there is a great difference between like and love – that which if I should attempt to explain (under existing circumstances) you would think me beside myself. Well! Your dear letter satisfies me. I am content. I want no more. My father, my sisters are pleased. It suffices me. In the language of the great – [soniare], I can say – “Sink or swim, [VC]” – with a slight change at the [close] – the sentiment of which is that I am Jennie's heart and hand and that God permitting she shall one day be mine. Dear Sadie; if necessary you must pardon what might seem a little humorsome, in any part of the above, for so grave, beautiful and elevated a theme. ... Well! I will not say much more about Jennie this time – a little however (with your permission), Jennie is not unsophisticated; she has moved in the best society in Richmond and still from choice partly; and partly from education she has retained a beautiful simplicity of manners. She has a warm sincere, heart. Jennie loves one with all the devotion of a first, true, pure, elevated love. It is indeed a pure-minded, refined, beautiful, sweet girl's love, for one whom she considers well, nigh perfect. Still Jennie is very womanly. She has a mind of her own, which is not easily changed, and a heart as true as steel. You, sister, can imagine how I value that love. Its price to me is above – infinitely above – wealth, as position, or personal beauty alone, or all combined. In short if dear Jennie should be taken from me, the light and joy of my heart would be gone. In the thought of

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

such an event my eyes are sometimes filled with tears. I love Jennie as tenderly. But I do not suppose Jennie is perfect. All I care to know that is that my dear sisters will look upon Jennie's faults only as upon a sister's. If Jennie does err it will not be intentionally; and I have seen few, none who seemed to have more spiritual light than she. Now I think I have told you all I want to – No! not quite, Jennie is industrious. She believes in work. She has been brought up to it. The Doctor was in the city and visited them several times. She sent me out a beautiful cake made by her own hands. The servant is sometimes sick – she fills the servant's place. Jennie is not very large, you know; but I would not have her different. What do you think of just five feet anyway? Jennie's form is pretty. She is at home in the parlor, at the Piano, and she sings and plays the guitar very prettily. I do not say that in any of these she excels – that would be saying much; and besides, I am not a judge. But I think if she failed to exhibit much taste in all of these – or any of them, – I should detect it. Do you not think so? Jennie is, to me, very beautiful, very loveable, very, very sweet, and very, very, very near my heart. I think I have prolonged my love story sufficiently to satisfy – even one in love. I am finished.

By the end of October the preparations for the wedding were well underway. Ira received a letter from his father-in-law to be, William James saying:

I have spoken (conformably with an intimation in your letter) to the war department. I am advised that when you want to come on a furlough say December, prepare and write your request to the Sec of War and ask Gen Meade to endorse his approval upon it and send it to me and I will present it in person attaching what importance I can to it and no time need be lost or uncertainty arise.

William was working in the Treasury Department and obviously had connections in the War Department.

By mid-December the Army of the Potomac started to settle down for the winter and Ira saw his chance to get married. On 13 December he made his request for a three day pass:

Sir – I respectfully apply for a pass to Alexandria for three days to transact important private business.

The three day pass came through but William was able to extend by 15 days.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

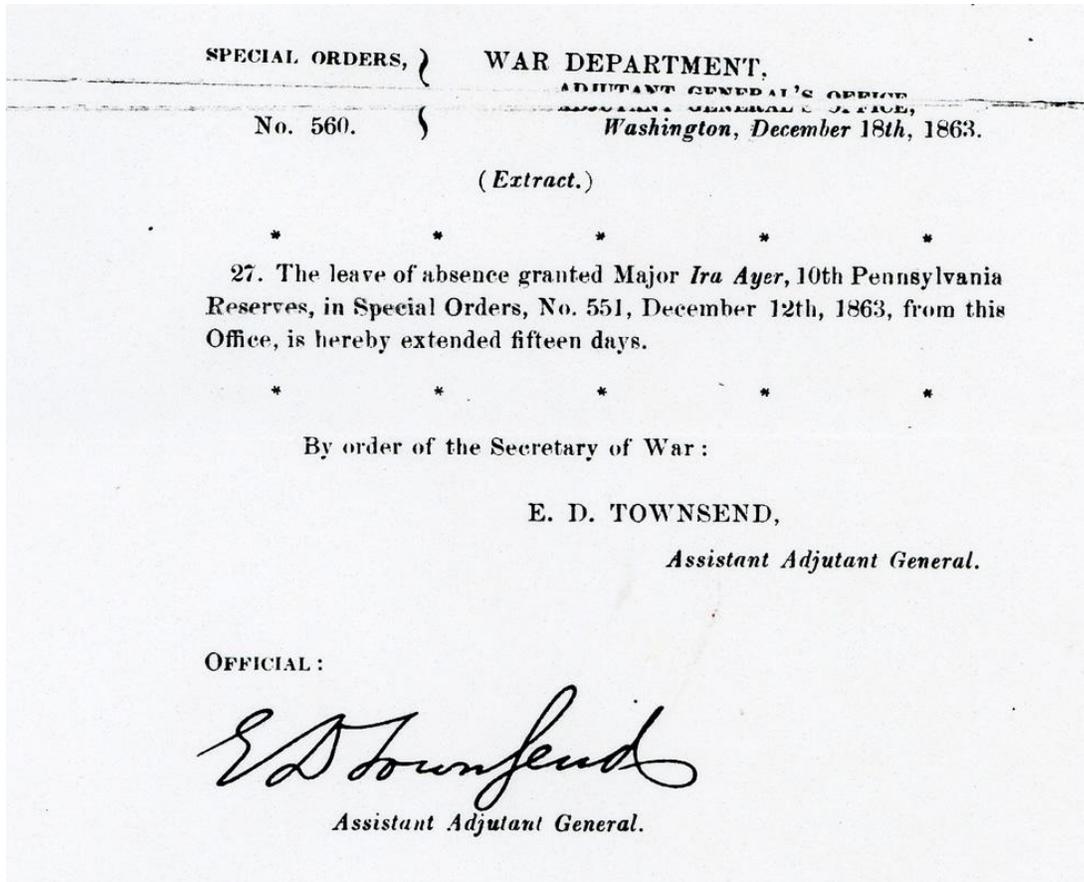


Figure 29 - Order extending Ira Ayer, Jr. leave by 15 days

The same day the leave was extended, Ira was promoted and put in charge of the regiment. Three days later he was married.

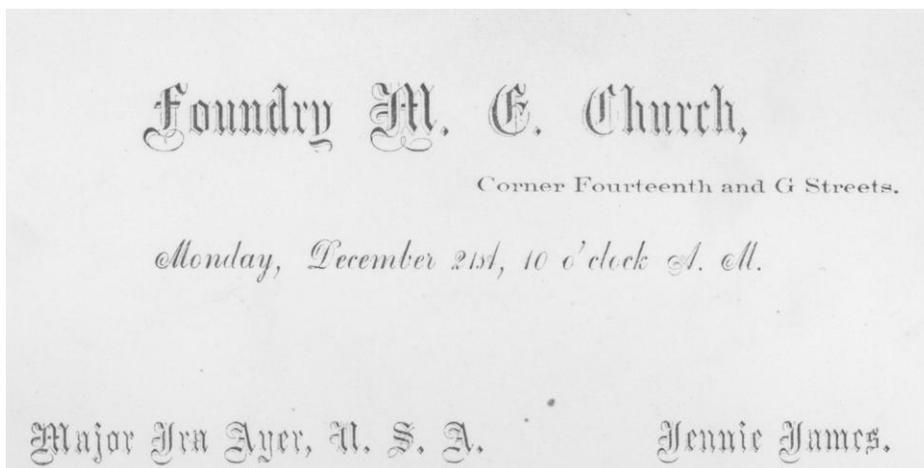


Figure 30 - Wedding Announcement for Jennie James and Ira Ayer, Jr.

Ira and Jennie were married on the morning of Monday, 21 December 1863. According to a local paper "The ceremony was performed with much solemnity

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

beneath the folds of our national flag, in the presence of a large attendance of distinguished friends, both military and citizenry.” Years later in December of 1891, Ira was staying near where Jennie had lived and where the church was. In a letter to Jennie dated 1 December Ira writes:

As you see I am at the Ebbitt House, my old, old stopping place. It is kept better than ever, and is an exceedingly quiet and dignified hostelry, albeit in the very midst of affairs here in Washington. It is at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and G Sts. A square away from “13<sup>th</sup> Street,” A square from there is “G” Street and between “G” and “H” Streets is “403,” where I first met my heart’s sweet love – “Miss Jennie James.” Was “Miss Jennie” sweet? Ask the Honeysuckles that were in bloom when first I loved her, whether they knew their own fragrance when she was near. Ask the roses that I used to love to bring her in those days of early June, 1863. They will say “she was sweeter than we.” A square to the North of the corner of G and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets stood the “Old Foundry Church”, where we were married. That was on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of December 1863. – nearly 28 years ago. I see the whole scene as though it were yesterday. There was first dear sweet Jennie in her suit of lovely gray, with a beautiful Pink Rose in her bonnet. There was old father Ryan. He was the next most important personage – of course he was. Then there was dear Father and Mother – they were very important. Then there was “large brother Sam” – what should we have done without him in the sequel? Well! that was all right. Then there was beautiful Clem, and there were lovely Emma and Baby, sweet sprites of girls, helping to make a more perfect picture. Then came “big Mrs. Pierpont”, whom I think you occasionally suspected I had a leaning toward because she was so “hefty!” You see you didn’t know me quite so well at that time, sweet Jennie. You only knew that you loved me, and that you were willing to take me as your “wedded husband” be it “for better or for worse.” Then there was the Poet Pierpont, and there was General Spinner, Treasurer of the United States, and the Lardners, and the Grahams and the Laubs and the Handys, and I know not how many more family and friends. Last and least of all came myself! I was dressed in my Major’s Uniform, with white Kid gloves, if I remember. Possibly I had gauntlets.

Among the more famous guests were John Pierpont and Francis Elias Spinner. John Pierpont (1785 - 1866) was a tutor, an attorney, a merchant, a minister, and finally worked in the Treasury department. He was famous for writing anti-slavery poetry and preaching against slavery and for temperance. These preaching got him thrown out of his ministry. General Spinner, treasurer of the U.S during the Civil War, was the first to allow women into government service. Spinner was also famous for introducing fractional or paper currency to replace coins during the Civil War. Because of the high demand for metals, coins were rapidly disappearing from circulation. The fractional currency was used to replace the coins until 1876 when coins returned.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married



**Figure 31 - Jennie possibly at her wedding**

For their honeymoon, they first went to Baltimore and then to upstate New York to see Ira's family. I don't think any of Ira's family had been able to make the wedding.

## Ira and Jennie Get Married

Jane started to feel ill the morning of the wedding. She got better and worse, and by the 27<sup>th</sup> she thought she was dying. William sent a letter to Ira and Jennie asking them to come home. I don't think they got the letter right away because I don't think they returned from New York until mid-January. Jane survived. Personally, it seems to be an attention thing. She started getting sick around the time of the wedding and got worse when they were on their honeymoon. From this and later incidents, I think Jane had a habit of being overbearing and needing to be the center of attention. That's just my opinion.

Ira got a letter from his good friend Dr. McLaren dated 27 December. He had been on leave from before Ira and didn't know that the wedding had taken place. On his way back to the front he had stopped by the James home and found them married and off on their honeymoon:

I called at 203 13th Street, hoping that, possibly, you might be there. Of course I was disappointed in that particular. I there learned that fact, expected and agreeable, of your promotion to the married state. I congratulate you and your lady, both, on the happy occasion, which I hope will be the commencement of long series of happy days and years to you, as a united pair. May God's favor be and abide with you, in my earnest prayer. I wish you may enjoy your period of leave.

McLaren was also writing to tell Ira the news from the regiment. Col. Knox who had submitted his resignation on 23 November leading to Ira's promotion left camp on Christmas morning. While Ira was away, Captain Over was in charge of the regiment. On the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> the regiment received word that they needed to pack up because they were moving out by 11am. By 11am the regiment was all packed up and moved from Warrenton Junction to Manassas Junction where they would stay the rest of the winter:

On Saturday morning, orders came to the Regt and all the Brigade to move at 11 o'clock a.m. It was done. We were on the way by 11 or so a little before, and camped about a mile short of Manassas, the 11th Regt having halted at Bristoe, Division Headquarters. This Sabbath morning, we came up here, and relieved the 1st Regt, Col Talley, who have gone a little beyond Bristoe. The 5th is near us, and the 9th and 12th, are at Bull Run. Companies A & I are a mile south of us. We have eight companies with here. The quarters are generally comfortable the far inferior to the new, substantial mansions that we left. I speak of the men's quarters. Headquarters are better. We have a house with a good roof and floor and thick plank walls. It had been heated with a stove, which the vacating tenant, Maj. Kaufman, took with him. A fireplace and part of the chimney have been built today, decreed a work of necessity as it was cold and threatening rain. The fire has been kindled and the chimney, although not as kept as the house, drains well. Capt Over has his quarters here. Tomorrow it is hoped the masonry on the chimney will be finished. It is dark and rainy outside; now, within warm and cheerful. I feel thankful for these comforts, while I sympathize with those who

## **Ira and Jennie Get Married**

are exposed. The 5th Regt, I understand, are out in the field without cabins and a scanty supply of wood.

... I suppose that were are fixed now for the winter. This is the fifth time now our men have fixed up quarters this Fall. What illustration of the mutability of army affairs & orders in this world! And what admonition to stand [loose] worldly things.

... The weather has been decidedly cold, but is mild now & for two days past. The ground was barely whitened once; now is covered with water & mud.

## The Love Letter Period

### The Love Letter Period

The love letter period between Jennie and Ira lasted from the time they returned from their honeymoon in New York on 15 January of 1864 until Ira was wounded in early May of the same year with the exception of a little over a month when they were together. In this period of only three months we have 26 letters from Jennie and we know that there were more. Ira wrote to Jennie almost as often, but none of the letters have survived.

#### *The First Phase*

The happy couple probably returned to Washington from Erie around the middle of January and Ira would have quickly gone off to his regiment at Manassas Junction. On 18 January Jennie wrote the first of her many love letters to her band new husband. This is also the earliest letter we have from her:

Washington D.C.  
Jan. 18th, 1864

My own, dear, dear husband:

Oh! my love, it is so comforting to me, so satisfying to my soul, to call you by this endearing name; what could be more beautiful. My Ira, then our union, it is truly Heavenly. A union, that nothing can destroy, no power, dissolve, for Heaven hath formed it; our love is Eternal. Oh! my dear; how powerful deep and continuous is my love for you, I cannot express it; our spirets are one, our love is so puer, and dearest when God shall bless us with sweet babes, as we trust He will, how beautiful it will be to have this love, and Affection in their natures, and to feel and experience, this love in all our actions, and especially comforting will it be, in times of our afflictions. My loved husband; after you left I was very, very sad. I could not be comforted. I went to my room and by the bedside where we had kneeled so sweetly together, I prayed that God would look in pity upon me, for I was lonely and sorrowful, I felt that no one could relieve my aching heart, but our kind and loving Savior. My dear Ira; when I think over the happy, happy days and nights that we have spent together, then, what joy fills my soul, at the thoughts of a lifetime of such bliss. My heart overflows with love, and tenderness for you my husband; to me now dearest, there is such a void without you, how can I be sustained without you near me, My life, my happiness, all depends upon you for sustenance. My beloved husband, I am all the time thinking of you and praying for you; how much I miss your beautiful warm kisses, yes warm from your pure, manly lips; and my Ira, from embrace, his dear arms around me, pressing me to his precious, bosom; My dear husband; can I be patient, and meekly bend, to this privation, do you think it possible love? No it will cost deal, a great many, hard strivings, to controle these feelings, now that I have tasted of the sweetness, of this new life, a sacredness, pervades our union. My Ira those of your absence, are uncongenial days to me, they have not much sunshine, for me, and I fear with not until, your Jennie feels herself again clasped in your strong arms but I think I intend to live near our

## The Love Letter Period

Heavenly Father and receive His blessing with a grateful heart dearest, how often,  
My dear, Ira; do I think of

Your true affectionate wife  
Jennie Ayer

We don't have any of the letters Ira wrote to Jennie during this time, but in a letter to Vinnie on 18 March, Ira wrote:

Vinnie; I love dear Jennie as truly as ever I did; and if possible more so. She is as good as it is possible woman, – I mean a true woman – one of God's saintly angels – to be. She is always the same gentle, loving, lovable, sweet mannered woman. There is something about dear Jennie which I cannot describe that reminds me of our sainted mother. She loves your brother with a true woman's love. And you know I believe there is not such love this side of heaven. I know that I can never love darling wife more than she deserves. I shall always love her and live to make her happy.

I'd say from their writings they were very much in love. There is a letter very much like this every 3 days or so from Jennie and about every 5 days from Ira for the next month and a half.

We also learn that Jennie and Ira didn't return from New York by themselves. Jennie starts referring to the impending new addition to the family as Little Ira. She wants a boy and Ira wants a girl. This baby will be little Jennie. Little Ira is still a few years away.

In many of the letters Jennie talks of "Evergreen Cottage" back in Evans. She wants to move there after the war to raise a family. I wonder if this was an existing cottage on the farm or a newly built one for Ira. Jennie often talks of living there and wants Ira to not continue in the army when the war is over. Sadly for Jennie at least they never moved there. Ira also ends up doing a few more years in the army after the war.

She also often talks of how much she does not like Washington's fashion conscious society. In a 3 March letter she says:

Dearest, I do not mingle in worldly fashionable society. I know you do not wish me to; I have chosen the path of usefulness and piety, but whatever class of society, we may by circumstances be thrown among rich, poor, high or low we will thrive to exert a right influence and do good. I am often pained to see the intellectual mass, [having] [rapidly] carried away by the current fashion and folly. All their precious time wasted in preparing gaudy, flimsy dress to appear at balls, receptions, theaters and such; neat, plain and a delicacy in dress and domestic enjoyment is more desirable and becoming, I think.

Jennie, who's baking Ira really appreciates, made boxes of food for Ira from time to time:

## The Love Letter Period

I am glad to have the information concerning the sending of a box though you are so well supplied. I think perhaps you would like to have some of your Jennie's cake for tea one evening.

On one evening, 3 February, Jennie was home alone because the rest of the family had been out to the Sanitary Fair<sup>xi</sup>. The one in Washington ran until 18 March when Lincoln made a speech at the closing ceremonies.



Figure 32 - The Great Sanitary Fair of Philadelphia – 1864 (from Library of Congress)

By 11 February Jennie starts talking about visiting Ira in camp at the suggestion of her brother Samuel. But her hopes were dashed on four days later:

Oh! how I would love to be with you now, running over the hills or sitting at the tent door, gazing at the bright twinkling stars or reading to your while resting or perhaps singing for you, or sitting on your knee, with my arms round your dear neck. Speaking of the great love in my heart for you, I am afraid this cannot be very soon dear husband, for the orders are now, that no passes will be given to ladies to go the Army; we intend trying very hard to get one, my hopes were raised to a very high degree that I should see my Ira soon.

In the meantime, Jennie just bought some sheet music that she would love to perform with Ira. The first is "Do They Think of Me At Home?" by Charles W.

---

<sup>xi</sup> Sanitary Fairs were fundraisers run by the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), an official branch of the Federal Government. The USSC was created during the Civil War to coordinate the efforts of women who wanted to aid in the war effort. The women in the USSC worked as nurses, made meals for the troops, administered hospital ships, set up homes for veteran and did many more functions. All in all the organization raised \$25M.

## The Love Letter Period

Glover (1797–1868) c1851<sup>xii</sup>. You can listen to a 1909 recording of this in the footnote link. The second was a Civil War song, "Who will care for mother now?" lyrics by C. C. Sawyer and music by C. F. Thompson, 1863<sup>xiii</sup>. This song is interesting because it's sung from the point of view of a dying soldier. Apparently Civil War songs dealt more with death than one would think. This was probably partly due to the fact that death was so common. The death rate was almost 25% on both sides (a little more than half that number from disease). Almost one in four men who went to war didn't come back. In contrast, the death rate in our wars today is typically less than 1%. Here is the first verse and chorus:

Why am I so weak and weary?  
See how faint my heated breath,  
All around to me seems darkness,  
Tell me, comrades, is this death?  
Ah! how well I know your answer,  
To my fate I meekly bow,  
If you'll only tell me truly,  
Who will care for mother now?

Chorus:  
Soon with angels I'll be marching  
With bright laurels on my brow;  
I have for my country fallen,  
Who will care for mother now?

Jennie calls both these songs pretty. But, these are sad songs of separation and death. I'm sure singing about these topics was a way of dealing with them.

Meanwhile back on the front, the only thing we hear from Ira this winter is a letter to Vinnie on 18 March. He says that not much was going on except:

We have been troubled some with Guerillas – have made some scouts for them, but with little success. They are a cowardly bunch and it seems almost impossible to meet out to them the punishment they so richly deserve.

Samuel Bates says<sup>16</sup>:

The Tenth Regiment was stationed at Warrenton Junction, and subsequently at Manassas Junction, where it was charged with guarding the road from Bristoe Station to the Bull Run Bridge, under the immediate command of Captain Pattee, of company B, a brave and skillful officer. During the entire winter the enemy's cavalry and bushwhackers greatly annoyed the guard. No soldier could go beyond rifle range of the camp without danger of being shot or captured, and as many

---

<sup>xii</sup> You can see the sheet music and hear a 1909 recording here:

<http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/CivilWar1864-5.htm#SheetMusic>

<sup>xiii</sup> You can see all the words, sheet music and sing a Karaoke version of this song here:

<http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/CivilWar1864-5.htm#SheetMusic>

## The Love Letter Period

casualties occurred, a constant and untiring vigilance was necessary for the safety of the camp and the road.

An interesting little item shows up in this letter regarding a friend of Vinnie's:

How is Amanda? Really I can forgive her rudeness but I do forget it. I was never treated so rudely by any female and her conduct was inexcusable. I was never fascinated with what are termed "strong minded women", but since then – Oh! horror! Let a double shotted 64 Rds be leveled on me; – the work would be short; – but this being killed by inches is what I abhor. – But too much of this – she is a defenseless? Female?

I love when little items in Ira's life coincide with history and his meeting with Amanda is a good example. From Wikipedia we learn that Amanda Theodosia Jones (1835 – 1914) was famous in three fields. First, she wrote poetry. Her first poem was published in 1854 and she published books of her poetry in '61 and '67. Second she was a spiritualist. She became a spiritualist in 1854 and believed that she was a medium. Third, she was an inventor. In 1872 she developed a process for vacuum canning for which she was awarded several patents. In 1880 she developed an oil burner based on advice from spirits she had been communicating with. She had not been successful in commercializing her inventions though. Since she was also a strong proponent of women's rights and woman's suffrage she started a company in 1890 called Woman's Canning and Preserving Company. It didn't last long, but during an address to employees she said:

This is a woman's industry. No man will vote our stock, transact our business, pronounce on women's wages, supervise our factories. Give men whatever work is suitable, but keep the governing power. This is a business training school for working women - you with all the rest. Here is a mission, let it be fulfilled.

Clearly she was an impressive, strong willed person. While I don't agree with her spirituality and she may have been a little unpleasant, I have to say that what she accomplished was not easy in such a hugely male dominated world. I'm sure most men, Ira included, felt threatened by her.

This relationship was not always so hostile. In Amanda's autobiography, "A Psychic Autobiography", 1910 she talks of a more cordial relationship from the fall of 1862:

Two or three blocks along, I met my friend Lavnia's brother, Major Ira Ayer – who, being wounded, was at home on furlough. He had known me eight years earlier when his friendly mother, thinking the county air would do me good, had sent for me, and I had been her guest. Detained in Buffalo for hospital care, he had sought me out, and I had made him tell me all he would about the seven days' fighting before Richmond. For recompense, I had dedicated to his regiment "The

## The Love Letter Period

Battle of Gaines' Hill," which had appeared with illustration in Frank Leslie's Weekly – then a mammoth publication, read by every soldier, one might say.

The Major stopped me eagerly: "I am ordered to the front this morning, and must leave at three o'clock. Come to Aunt Sarah Lamb's with me. You know she is always glad to see you."

Well, that was pleasant, certainly; but when he brought me from her parlor table a handsome book of special value, inscribed already with my name, I found that pleasanter. Yet pleasantest of all was the delightful certainty that some one "disembodied" (if you choose to use that word), had tried to make my undeserving soul a little happier. I did not ask *who* wrote, for that was not my way. I did not even surmise; but it occurs to me, just now, that Ira's mother, knowing him to be a little troubled because he had no time to visit me, and bring the book as he intended, for *his* sake may have sent me after it. It had been her custom, I learned, when I was honored with her hospitality, to "watch out" in the interests of others. Nothing was too small to think about or plan for, so it were helpful to her family.<sup>xiv</sup>

No matter who, however! Notice: *some one* had calculated time with fine precision. Just so many minutes to get ready, just so many for the ride to Main Street, just so many on the Major's part to meet me just in season!

A year before Ira complained about Amanda to Vinnie and a couple months after the above meeting, Ira had complemented a poem Amanda wrote about the Battle of Gaines Mill.

I think Amanda's poem very fine. The more I read it the more I like it. It is truthful in narrative and its poetical face has the grim aspect of War.

I was about to quote some of the parts that please me most but I like it all so much that it is hard to select. My thanks to Amanda. I shall not be satisfied without saying to her some day that I am delighted with her Poetry. I wish I could get a few numbers of the "Illustrated News" in which this poem came out. It would excite more interest to start with and be more apt to receive that appreciation which its merits deserve. Please tell me what number it is. – Never mind! I can send for it describing it & will do so immediately. I am sure if I do so the boys will be pleased over the poem.

The poem is copied in the Appendix of this document.

In the end of February, Ira's promotion to Lieutenant Colonel finally became official and on 27 February he signed his oath of office. The oath of office (included earlier) we got from the National archives. However, a few days after his promotion was official. A few days later Jennie wrote a letter saying that she got the important papers and will keep them safely and that they will be prized by

---

<sup>xiv</sup> Amanda is saying that Ira's deceased mother arranged for them to run into each other for Ira's benefit.

## The Love Letter Period

their children. If the papers are the certificates of his promotion, then they lasted in good condition for over 100 years until they were caught in a basement flood.<sup>xv</sup>

### *Jennie Goes to War*

Somewhere between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of March, Jennie went to live with Ira in camp in his tent barracks. While we don't have a description of the tent that Jennie and Ira had, from a letter Ira sent to his sister Vinnie (13 February 1863) he described a particularly good tent:

I now occupy the tent which a Capt and his pretty wife lived in doubtless as harmoniously as two mice. He had fitted it up at an expense of twelve Dollars or more, a month or two since, hoping to be allowed to stay until Spring, at least, or, as they were nine months more, till their term of service expired.

The tent in question, is nicely seated up with pine, planed, has a good floor, a table upon which I now write, shelves, corded bed, stead, and in addition to all this, were left for my use, boxes, a good pail, and \_\_\_\_\_ oh! horror!!

All this he wanted five Dollars for, & I gave it willingly. So much extravagance is hard to take in at once; but we shall get used to it in time. On the Rappahannock we were only allowed three wall tents to the Regt: – here we can have one for each horse. In subsistence both for horses and men the difference is about as great.

We have only one letter sent from either Jennie or Ira during that time. On 22 March 1864 Jennie sent a letter home to the family describing the kind of thing she and Ira were going through.

We know of naught, but courage, vigilance here dear ones; Thursday night, when all was quiet in Camp, we had retired. We heard the clanking of swords on the ground, then followed the low firm knocking at our door, Ira with the activity of the soldier was up in a moment, and said "whose there?" "Orders (was the reply) who can disclose to no one first, Col," dear husband opened the door and received the papers, after perusing them, he told the orderlies to stay all night, keep their horses in Saddle, as they may want them in haste. Then Ira went to give the orders to double the guard on the railroad and to exercise the greatest vigilance. Friday night at the dead hours came a loud rapping at our tent door and the Adjutant's voice rang in the stillness, here are orders Col to be ready to move at any moment, and to have the men under arms at daylight, and loved Ira with his Cool deliberate courage, was uniformed in a very few moments, Sword, and revolver, buckled on, he went out to attend to duty soon returning, and said Jennie my soldiers wife is not trembling with fear I see. Rest dearest. All will be well. I shall have to go at the head of my regiment, but you will be safe here. I shall leave a detachment under Captain Patty to guard you, but they were not called out

---

<sup>xv</sup> For these papers and others, see <http://scholtz.org/bill/Documents/AyerIraII/index.htm>

## The Love Letter Period

until Saturday, 4 o'clock the orders came that the Enemy was appearing in force to take position near the railroad. Ira kissed me many times in great haste and then mounted his horse and rode at the head of his regiment. I remained to defend our home. I cannot describe my feelings. You can best imagine them, but Oh! The camp looked so still and lonely. I feared not for myself but for husband, and I thought that I had never seen him look so handsome as when he in the true spirit of the patriotic soldier, in all his trappings, meeting stern duty, so courageously. We have great faith in your prayers. Dear Father Ira came home in safety, from his campaign on Saturday having seen nothing [slve] [farthing] they were out of the rebels. The men are still under arms.

While Jennie is away from home and near the front lines, Jane worries about both Jennie and Ira. At the same time, she is proud of them.

Yes be assured we ever think of you our brave Patriotic Volunteers Children, "brave and fearless (you say) in the country's noble cause." How much we would like to see you both in your Military home, surrounded by strong guard day and night, often in the Still Night. I awake and my mind glances swiftly to your tent, behold you reposing amid all manner of movements attendant upon War, the foe not far distant. Swiftly in richest confidence in the promises we know you having committed yourselves (we retiring to rest) to the care and keeping of almighty God, whom alone is able to keep you.

At one point Jane sent Jennie three 2 gallon kegs of oysters. They cost \$3 each. According to Grandma, pickled oysters were a family favorite. Her mother Alice used to love to put several of them on bread to make a sandwich. It is likely that it was a James family tradition since they came from near the coast. Jenny likely got the oysters to treat members or spouses of Ira's Regiment.

On 11 April Jane sends Jennie a letter indicating that things have changed. The family had tried to get passes to visit Jennie and Ira on the front lines but they were denied:

We received letters duly. We are always happy to receive any communication from you. They are especially interesting but respecting our visiting you, I fear will be impossible now. Clemens is greatly disappointed & so are we all. As we fully hoped he would be with you ere this. Your Father went to the War Department, found that orders were just issued which I presume you have read ere this & which are very rigid respecting passing to or from the Army. Your Father failed to see the Sec. of War on Saturday, but intends to today, but as I am anxious that you should hear from me I write you this Morn. You may rely upon Yr Father making every effort to obtain a pass for Ira as we all so much desire to see him & we are all longing for the day when you both will walk in. We will write you this Evening or tomorrow Morn respecting Father's success with the Sec. All Suller and Citizenry we read in last Evening's paper are requested to leave the Army immediately or will subject themselves to be taken by the proper authorities etc. We have thought there is a Movement contemplated. You best

## **The Love Letter Period**

know. Can the Colonel not get a pass? Where he is we are told that officers obtain passes there to come to Washington, that it is a general thing to obtain them at Manassas Junction to come up. I hope you are both well “brave courageous & Vigilant in Your Country’s Cause”.

Something is about to happen and Jane wants both Jennie and Ira home where it is safe. Within a couple days, Jennie is back in Washington and Ira’s regiment moved out for an area west of Fredericksburg, Virginia known as “The Wilderness”.

### ***The Second Phase***

Jane’s last letter to Jennie and Ira was on 11 April and on 19 April Jennie was back home writing to Ira. From her letter we know she had been at home at least since the 15<sup>th</sup>. Jennie had been only able to spend just over a month with Ira.

In March Lincoln had pulled Grant from the Western Theater and put him in charge of all Union forces. Grant’s goal was to destroy Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. To that end, Grant set up his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, still leaving Meade in charge. The activity getting ready for the Spring offensive was likely the reason Jennie’s family couldn’t visit and why Jennie had to go back home.

In her 19 April letter Jennie talks about how she misses their “Camp Cottage” and how she takes comfort in knowing Ira’s routine. She says, “but loved husband, no matter what I am doing, my thoughts are ever with you; now I have a knowledge of what your duties are, I take much delight in following you, as it were in them, knowing almost every hour what you have to do”. Jennie says she doesn’t know how she can survive the three months separation until Ira’s 3 year term of service:

Ma tells me I have grown strong and healthy under your watchful, tender care. I hope dear Ira I shall keep so, but I am afraid it cannot be, for I shall experience intense anxiety for you, while you are exposed to danger; and I do not know how I can endure three months of separation from you, but I will try to bear with patient resignation and endure this great trial with Christian fortitude and faith.

Jennie’s pregnancy is going well. On 23 April she says:

All is well, and still progressing. I refer dear Ira, to this beautiful treasure; you have Committed to my care. I enjoy good health, have not been sick, at all, my appetite, is the same as when with you.

Things are heating up in camp and in Jennie’s 28 April letter she says:

My loved husband, I hope you are still, in our little home. I was glad to know, that you were getting the camp well defended, and sorry to hear of the

## The Love Letter Period

disturbance, in the sixth, Regt, I hope that it will not be thought necessary to move you.

In Jennie's letter from 28 April we learn that on the 26<sup>th</sup> Ira writes that he may move out soon and on the 27<sup>th</sup> he writes that he now feels they will stay put. And his letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> didn't seem to change that impression. Jennie is upset that Ira may move further away from Washington. But, on the 29<sup>th</sup> Ira's regiment finally moved out of Manassas Junction for the first time since December. They moved Culpeper, 35 miles southwest of Manassas Junction and about 70 miles southwest of Washington. There they met up with the Army of the Potomac.

When Ira's regiment moved out he apparently only had time to write a quick note to Jennie. When she hears he has left camp she gets very worried and on 1 May writes what I think is her most beautiful passage:

My own beloved husband;

April left us in a glorious way, last evening the clouds rolled dark and heavily over us, and seemed to power upon us with a doleful visage. The wind blew and it rained quite hard. I do not know when I felt the atmosphere so oppressive; My dear, dear husband; darker still did the clouds appear to me for when the last hour of day was retreating, your little penciled letter came. My Ira dear, it spread a sadness around my heart that I have not the power to remove. After reading your dear letter, I placed it on my bosom, then I keep as many as I can find room for, to read during the day, dearest; then, I bowed down before our Heavenly Father, and plead with Him, concerning you, my loved husband. I asked Him to throw His arms of protection around you. I do pray constantly and without ceasing for you my darling Ira. I feel that God's power alone can save you if you go into the awful battle before us now, you will take of yourself, dear, dear Ira? I could not stay in this world without you were here too.

During their courtship, Ira had fought at Gettysburg and several smaller battles. But this is the first time Ira was going into harms way since they had been married and Jennie was pregnant. In that letter Jennie goes on to talk of her pregnancy. The worst part of it seems to be pains that she is having. They have been going on since April. She has not told anyone outside the family she is pregnant. Partly because it is not something polite people talked about back then. However, her pregnancy is becoming very obvious and it cracks me up how a friend brings it up:

This is a beautiful Sabbath day. I have just returned from church. All our friends inquired so very kindly for you, my darling husband. I still have those pains, but not so severe, dearest since I came home from camp. I have been making little Sister's Summer Cloths. I must be very industrious and employ every moment to get them done, for my darling husband, I shall soon have to make preparations to receive our dear little Ira. I can see, as well as feel, that this beautiful work is making great progress. Mollie and Sarah Gonzolass spent the evening with us on

## The Love Letter Period

Friday. They send kind regards to you. Just as they were leaving, Sarah whispered to me, “do not be offended if I tell you that the Col and you are very energetic, you present quite a suspicious appearance, Jennie.” My dear Ira, you know what she referred to, well my darling, it is really so. I cannot with all my ingenuity conceal it any longer, dear husband, neither do I intend to. I feel it an honor to bear so precious a burden. My darling Ira, words cannot express this sweet and Heavenly love of ours; my love for you is very, very great my precious, darling husband.

Apparently Jennie used to visit Culpeper while living in Richmond, about 80 miles away. On 5 May she wrote:

My dear Ira, you was seated on a side hill, overlooking the country, where your Jennie had passed many happy hours, when you wrote your last dear sweet letter. I thought those ere happy days, but my Ira, not any portion of my life can the joy and happiness be compared to those of my married days. Since I felt this sacred love, within me, my husband, for you and been loved by one so noble, pure and true in return. My happiness has known no bounds. I used to think dearest, that Culpeper was a fine country, but I suppose it is showing the effects of War upon it now, as most every part of Virginia does.

Little does she know that while she is writing these words Ira is actually involved with the first day of the Battle of the Wilderness. She goes on to talk of the wonderful weather:

My dear Ira, you was seated on a side hill, overlooking the country, where your Jennie had passed many happy hours, when you wrote your last dear sweet letter. I thought those ere happy days, but my Ira, not any portion of my life can the joy and happiness be compared to those of my married days. Since I felt this sacred love, within me, my husband, for you and been loved by one so noble, pure and true in return. My happiness has known no bounds. I used to think dearest, that Culpeper was a fine country, but I suppose it is showing the effects of War upon it now, as most every part of Virginia does.

Jennie is still anxious about Ira:

We hear nothing at all from the Army, no news of the War movements whatever. Washington is gradually falling into a quiet state again, nearly all of the Senators have left for their distant homes and many of the inhabitants are preparing for a few months of rural life.

The second to last letter of the love letter period was sent on 8 May, after the Battle of the Wilderness. The last letter Jennie had received from Ira was sent on 4 May, the day before the battle. Jennie knows there has been a major battle, but knows little else. She is consumed with fear for Ira's safety but tries to keep a good face:

## The Love Letter Period

I will not murmur if can possibly help it, but this suspense, almost makes my heart rebellious dearest Ira, for it is so hard to hear; dear husband, I must hear from you soon. Our dear Parents have gone to see what time the brave men, who are wounded will arrive here.

Jennie's parents were not only checking when the wounded would arrive in case Ira was one of them, but, also because they volunteered to help the sick and wounded in the hospital near their home.

The last letter of the love letter period was written on 11 May 1864. Jennie hasn't hear from Ira since the 4<sup>th</sup> and is desperate for news:

My dear, dear husband;

Oh! What restless days and nights I have experienced since the commencement of these fearful battles; where are you, now my Ira, I have not heard anything from you since your precious letter of the 4<sup>th</sup>, God, grant that all may be well with you, my dearest one; I know that nothing could keep me, in this world if you were called from it. I should soon follow you for dearer than my own life, are you to me my husband: so often do the question arise in my mind, "is it the will of God, that the sacrifice, must be made, then, I say His, will be done, and your death wound is mine, for I cannot exist when you are torn from me, my loved husband!

My own Ira, I have been in such agony of mind, ever since the fighting for even if your life is spared, my dearest, in this fearful conflict your sufferings are great, I never cease to pray, for the protection of our Heavenly Father, for you my darling husband. I have written a great many letters to you, my love, but I fear you have not received them, I know that the mails have been very irregular of late and the report here is that no communication, has been open to the Army since the conflict began.

My loved husband, never was love so powerful as this love in my heart for you, can it be, that all is well with my darling Ira, we made enquiries concerning your Regt. of the wounded, that came in on Monday night there were some from the 7<sup>th</sup> Regt. but they seemed to know nothing of the 10<sup>th</sup> Regt.

My Ira, I am in great pain of mind, and every nerve, seems to be brought to that point of sympathy, with the mental sufferings so that I cannot attend to my duties, one word from you, "Safe", would revive my being, and give strength to my soul, and body. I know that you must have had, to bear intense suffering, God, help my loved Ira.

Dearest, the news is indeed exceedingly encouraging, the Lord be praised for the success to our Arms, Pa, Ma, and All our dear brothers and sisters are thinking of you, and praying, they are exceedingly anxious about you, too my love, they do all they can to give relief to my aching heart, Many consoling words are offered, but only one can revive this weight of sorrow.

## The Love Letter Period

My precious, noble husband, my arms are restless, they want to entwine themselves around you, my warmest kisses are waiting and trembling with eagerness to impress them, upon your manly lips. Oh! my Ira, I love you so ardently, God bless and keep you, darling, husband. All send love, and kisses, to you. Many, many loving kisses, I send to my dear Ira.

Your true and loving Wife

Jennie Ayer

A day after writing this letter Ira arrived at a hospital across the river in Alexandria and was the next day transferred to Washington.

### ***The Battle of the Wilderness (5-7 May 1864)***

On 4 May, Grant was amassing his Army of the Potomac in the area known as the Wilderness of Spotsylvania near the Wilderness Tavern. This was about 20 miles southeast of Culpeper where Ira's regiment had spent the last few days. Several battles had already been fought here but Grant intended to move further south before engaging the enemy. Lee had been observing Grant from a nearby hill and decided he needed to strike before Grant was ready.

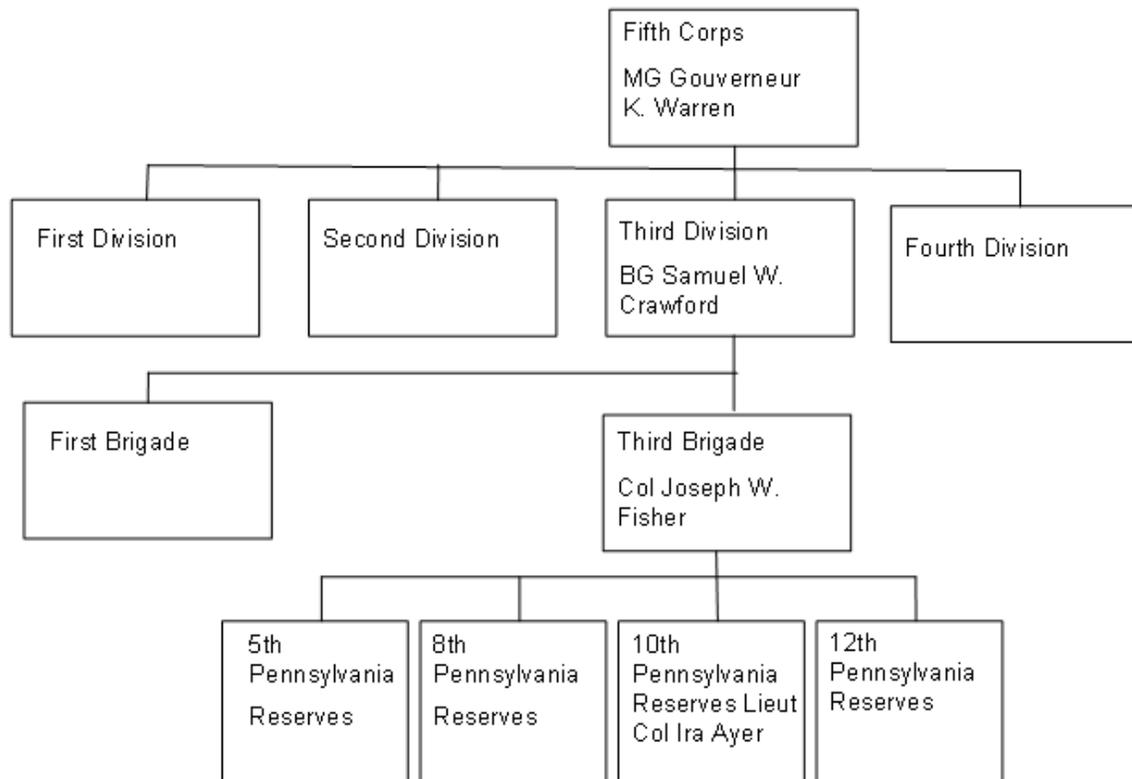


Figure 33 – Fifth Corps Wilderness 5-7 May 1864

## The Love Letter Period

Lee had about half the force and significantly inferior artillery but he figured that the tangled second growth trees of the area would help cancel Grant's advantage. Early on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, Warren's V Corps met what they believed to be a small group of Confederate soldiers. The battle had begun.

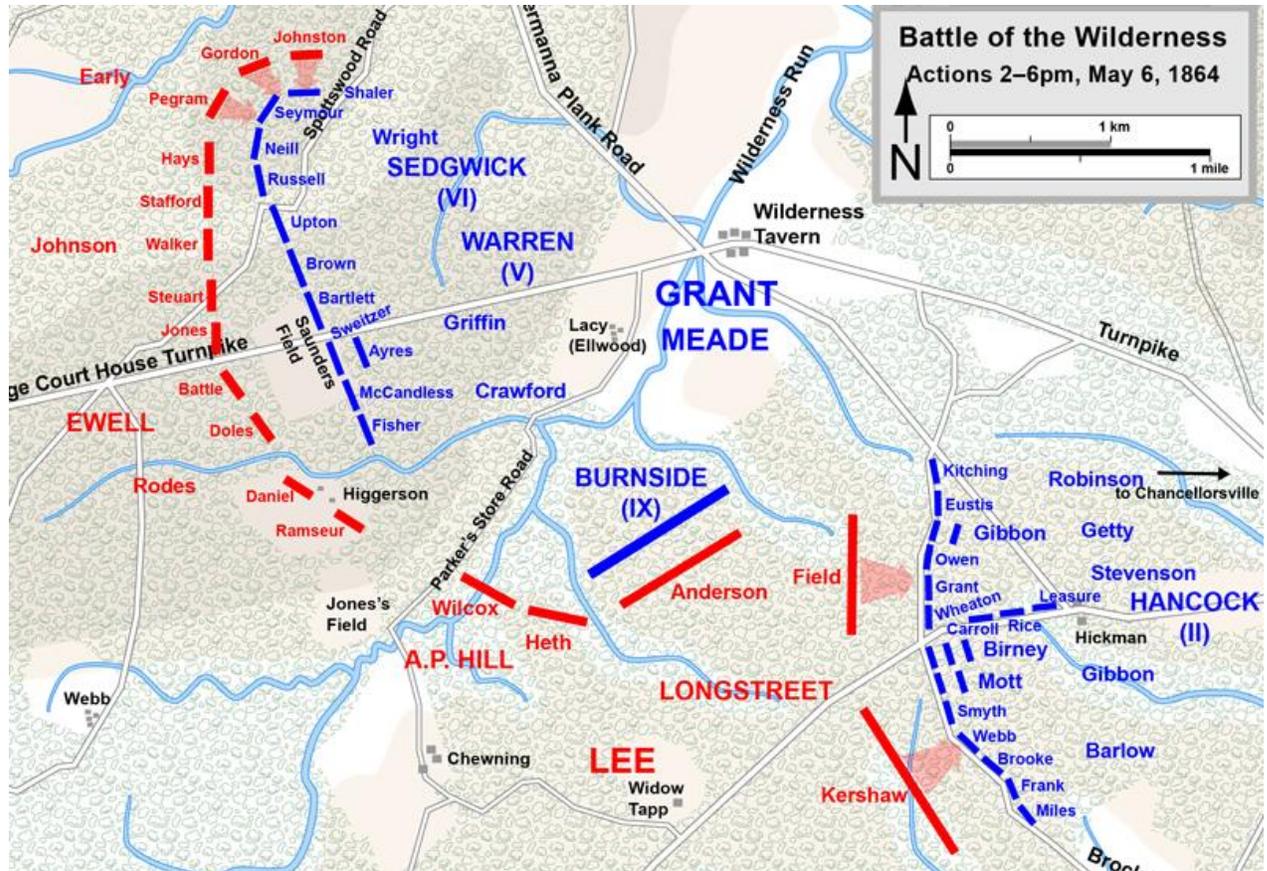


Figure 34 - Battle of the Wilderness afternoon of May 6 - Ira was in the woods in Fisher's Brigade at the bottom of Warren's line (from Wikipedia)

The regiment was fighting in very thick second growth forests. The original trees had been cut down and since the new trees did not create a thick canopy there was a lot of undergrowth making movement hard. Between the two sides there over 160,000 men, many of whom were in the thick woods.

From the dedication of the Gettysburg Monument we learn:

Very early in the morning of the 4th of May, the Fifth Corps (now including the First) set out for its last trip across the Rapidan, crossing it about noon at Germanna Ford, it pushed on to old Wilderness Tavern. Next morning Third Division started on by a cross-road toward Parker's Store, but soon came up with the enemy, and after some skirmishing fell back nearly to the old tavern. On morning of 6th, pushed to the front on both sides of the turnpike, capturing a heavy line of skirmishers, until we found ourselves facing a line of earthworks and in a very exposed position. Here we held on, however, until evening, losing five killed and several severely wounded, among the latter, very unfortunately,

## The Love Letter Period

being Colonel Ayer, and from this time Adjutant G. W. McCracken was virtually commander of the regiment.



**Figure 35 - Battle of the Wilderness 5 May where General Wadsworth was mortally wounded and where Ira will be wounded the next day (drawing by Alfred R Waud)**

From Martial Deeds:

When it entered the Wilderness campaign it went with the free step and the resolute mien of the best trained and organized soldiers. It had not penetrated far before the old foe was met. In a letter dated May 6th, the second day of the battle, he says: "Our division had been rapidly ordered forward, preparatory as was supposed to a charge upon the enemy's works. I was leading my regiment into line when hit by a bullet from one of the enemy's sharpshooters, which passed through the large bone of my leg, causing a very painful though I hope not dangerous wound. I was compelled to leave the field at once, which I did after exhorting my men to do their duty.

As Regimental Commander, Ira was normally on horseback. I don't know if he was at the Wilderness due to the nature of the battlefield.

Ira was wounded on the second day of the battle and taken to a field hospital near Fredericksburg. On 12 May, the day after Jennie sent her letter, Ira was admitted to Hospital 5661 in Washington<sup>17</sup>. The next day he was moved to

## The Love Letter Period

Seminary Hospital. Many places had been taken over to become hospitals. Seminary Hospital<sup>18</sup> was in Miss Lydia English's Female Seminary had been in operation from 30 May 1861 to 14 June 1865. Seminary Hospital was an officer's hospital. It was across town and several miles from the James house on the 13<sup>th</sup> St in NE. Ira was eventually moved to Lincoln U. S. General Hospital<sup>xvi</sup>. This is only a few blocks from the James home. The hospital is now Lincoln Park.

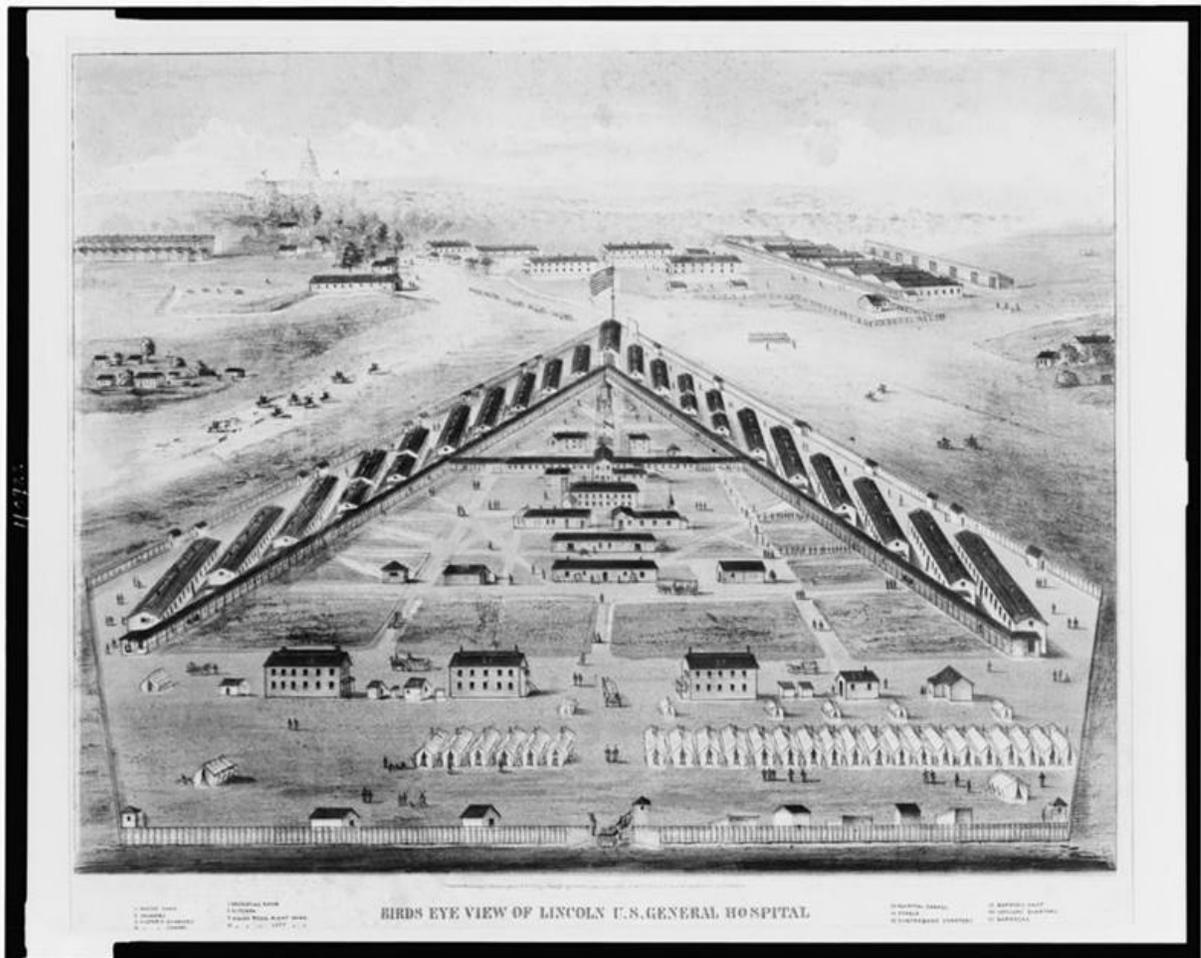


Figure 36 - Birdseye view of Lincoln General Hospital (from Library of Congress)

<sup>xvi</sup> We know this because Ira's muster out record says, "In Gen. Hosp. Washington D.C."

## The End of the War

### The End of the War

After the Wilderness the Civil War had another 11 months to go, but for Ira his injury marked the end. On 11 June 1864 Ira was mustered out in Pittsburg after he and his company finished their 3 years of service. Contrary to some documents, Ira was not present. He was still in the hospital in Washington. He wasn't discharged from the hospital for another month.

In an 1865 note to his commanders he summarized his record as the following:

**Table 1 - Ira's War Record with my notes**

<u>Battle in which engaged</u>				<u>Notes</u>
1	Dranesville	Dec. 21 <sup>st</sup> 1861		
2	Mechanicsville	June 26 <sup>th</sup> 1862		
3	Gaines Mill	June 27 <sup>th</sup> 1862	(Wounded) slight	According to Bates, "he received a gunshot wound on his right side and a severe contusion of the right arm." But he fought on.
4	Charles City Cross Roads	June 30 <sup>th</sup> 1862		
5	Malvern Hills	July 1 <sup>st</sup> 1862		
6	Bull Run 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Aug. 29 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup> , 31 <sup>st</sup> /62	(Wounded) severe	The mini-ball passed through his canteen and entered his left arm just above his wrist ending up near the elbow. A piece of tin and canvas from the canteen were not removed from his arm for nearly 30 years.
7	Gettysburg	July 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> 4 <sup>th</sup> 1863	(Wounded) slight	From Bates, "a third shot was fired, which just grazed his side, making a deep abrasion, and would have done certain execution had it not been fired at the instant of his turning away, carrying him out of aim after the missile had actually left the piece."
8	Wilderness	May 6 <sup>th</sup> 1864	(Wounded) severe	A bullet passed through the bone of his right leg causing what he called "a very painful though I hope not dangerous wound". The wound bothered him for years often requiring crutches.

## The End of the War

### ***Young Jennie is born in NY***

A couple weeks after Ira was released from the hospital, Ira and Jennie got on a train and headed for Evans to continue Ira's convalescence. According to a letter from Jane, William almost died in an accident while loading the luggage on the train. I'm not sure I understand her explanation, but I think he was almost crushed by the train:

How can I describe our parting with you? Indeed it was very, very painful to each one of us. Indeed especially so by dear, dear Father's narrow escape from being crushed to death ... The circumstances are in handing up the articles to dear Jenny some way dear Father was struck up against a post. The articles became entangled which threw him against a post completely [again] he was struck on the arm, took a small piece out of his arm [elboes] but [righted] him a little & passing his faculties near losing his Equilibrium of mind for a moment kept him from falling between the carriage and been crushed to death. He returned in the carriage that conveyed you. He looked composed and sweet, but we felt all your departure but alas when dr Father related the circumstances after I could not go into your room without bursting in to a flood of tears, all was so silent.

We know virtually nothing of their time in Evans, but for Jennie it was likely one of the happiest times of her life. She desperately wanted to get out of Washington and talked over and over again about living in the Evergreen Cottage. But for Ira, it may not have been so nice. Ira had been off to college and seen much of the country through the army. He had risen to the position where he was in charge of several hundred men. I think for him the idea of settling on a farm was not so great.

One of the things we know about their time in Evans is that about three weeks after they got there on 28 August 1864, their daughter Jennie Ayer was born. Jennie wanted a boy (little Ira) and Ira wanted a girl. Jennie was the first of six children, each living between 58 and 96 years with each one living longer than the previous ones.

The other thing we know from their time in New York is that Jennie was sick. In a 20 January 1865 letter to George and Vinnie, Ira thanks them for their kind attention during Jennie's illness. We don't actually know for sure which Jennie that was, mom or baby, but I think it was mom. Ira says "dear Jennie's illness". If it were little Jennie he would probably have said little Jennie or babe Jennie.

### ***Ira Re-enlists***

Also from the 20 January letter we know that on 8 November, Ira, Jennie, and little Jennie got on a train and headed back to Washington. The trip was not good. Ira talks about how both Jennies were sick and goes on to talk about baby Jennie:

## The End of the War

The journey was pretty severe for dear Jennie and baby; but a little rest and nursing quite restored them to their accustomed vigor. Since then both have been very well with the exception of severe colds which made baby quite sick for a day or two; but through the goodness of Providence she soon recovered. Little baby is very fat and strong, and as she “subsists” entirely upon what her Mama affords her, dear Jennie looks a little worn just for the present; but she will soon be old enough to take other food I suppose...I sometimes think that our little Jennie is going to be another Georgey for she will throw herself around in a very independent manner, whenever she happens to be on her papa’s lap and in the mood. There is a deal of nonchalance in her manner at these times, for with her vigorous voice, and her vigorous pulling of hair, and her vigorous rolling and tumbling about, and other vigorous exercises, you will not be surprised perhaps when I tell you that I find it necessary to exert some considerable self control in order to maintain my wanted composure of mind.

Jennie was probably not happy about that or the fact that with the war still on, Ira started trying to re-enlist. The two things Jennie wanted most were to live in the Evergreen Cottage in Evans and for Ira to not continue in the army and now it looked like neither was coming true.

Ira wanted to re-enlist with his old rank, but that was not easy since the war was winding down and they didn’t need so many officers. In the same 20 January letter Ira says:

Since reaching here I have been for the greater part of the time awaiting an appointment in the V.R.C. The examining Board reported favorably for my appointment to my former rank; but as there was no vacancy I shall be obligated to take a lower grade until one occurs. I am looking for an appointment as Captain in a few days, with a possibility of promotion soon.

Ira didn’t realize that his commission had actually come through the day before. But, he did not muster in right away. I’m not sure why. It may have been because he was trying for a higher rank. On 20 February his rank was raised to Brevet Major meaning he still had the responsibility and pay grade of Captain but had the honorary title of Major. On 13 March he is brevetted Colonel for his “gallant conduct at the Battle of the Wilderness” but he still does not muster in: From Martial Deeds we have:

For more than a year after the Reserve corps had completed its period of service and been mustered out he was disabled. He was brevetted Colonel for this action, and was warmly complimented by Generals Crawford and Fisher. Only by wounds, however, was he kept from the field, possessing a good constitution and actuated by real patriotism.

Crawford and Fisher were his last commanding officers leading his Division and Brigade respectively. Bates said Ira was recovering from his wound for more

## The End of the War

than a year but it was significantly before that that he started his re-enlistment. He must have had most of his functionality back.

His situation was probably a little more frustrating because he was periodically receiving letters from his former company members who had re-enlisted, telling of their exploits. On 20 February he got a letter from William Slater. Slater had come in as Corporal and had been promoted to Sergeant and was presently in charge of what had been Companies I and K in his Regiment:

I hope you will pardon me for I have been quite busy since I have returned. I never shall forget the Capt that I first enlisted under and proved himself so nobly to be of that metal needed to help crush this great evil so I cannot forget you and so after years your name will be spoken of with respect in God spares my life to see the Rebellion end and I return to my good home & friends.

On 9 April Lee surrendered at Appomattox and with that, Ira's hopes to get back to the front lines end. On 2 May 1865, Ira musters in as captain of Company B of the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Veterans Reserve Corps (V. R. C.) with the honorary title of Brevet Colonel.

The V. R. C. had been originally formed in 1863 as the Invalid Corps. There were many soldiers who had been injured and were not capable of fighting on the front but could still help with the war effort. Initial members were either wounded who were transferred directly into the Corps or wounded who had been discharged but wanted to re-enlist. Eventually there were not enough wounded soldiers to fill the Corps so they started accepting any discharged soldier and in 1864 changed the name to the V. R. C.

We don't know if Ira would have been considered an invalid or not but as we saw above, Bates said that for more than a year after June 1865 he was recovering from his wounds.

In 2 June letter to George, Ira says he has just received his commissions, which is a little strange because the official records say they had been granted earlier:

I recd my commissions of Major and Lt. Col by Brevet of US Vols a few days ago, which so far as duty and emoluments are concerned will probably amount to nothing at all. The rank as conferred is simply honorary, not ever entitling one to any claim for promotion in case of vacancy, that I can learn; but after all, as a recognition of service which I have endeavored to faithfully under it is gratefully received.

The weather is getting quite warm; hot is a better term and I would gladly exchange for a few months the graveled Camp and Barracks with white washed wall for the green hills of Cattaraugus or Pennsylvania. But having adopted my present course from a sincere desire to know and do duty, I shall diligently follow it until a plainer path is indicated.

## The End of the War



Figure 37 - Camp Fry

The 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment was stationed at Camp Fry just south of Washington Circle on either side of 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW in an area known as Foggy Bottom. Their job was to protect government buildings. With the end of the war, the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment was no longer needed. Between 1 July and 16 November 1865 the regiment was mustered out. Ira, however, stayed in. We don't know what group Ira was attached to, but by early 1866 he was part of the Freedmen's Bureau (more on that later).

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

### *Post-War Richmond*

After the war, the James family slowly moved back to Richmond. Several letters were written from Linden Row, Richmond. Linden Row is a famous historical area of Richmond, although it was not historical at the time. Officially it is the 100 block of East Franklin Street between North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. A letter from Jane says "Linden Row M 2<sup>nd</sup>" but it may be "N 2<sup>nd</sup>". There were several large homes. I don't know where they lived, if they owned their own home, were staying with friends, or even for sure that they lived in Linden Row. Tradition says that they owned a home and that their friends Robert E. Lee and family told them to move their furniture to a warehouse during the war and that their home was untouched but the house was burned down.

If they had owned a home on Linden Row, it is hard to see how they were in need of money during the war while living in Washington.

### **A City in Ruins**

The war had officially ended on 9 April 1865 with Lee's surrender at Appomattox. We have a copy of a pass for Jane James to travel to Richmond, issued on 14 April and good until the 20<sup>th</sup>. It was issued only five days after the war. I don't know if she used the pass because the first trip I have a record of wasn't until early July.

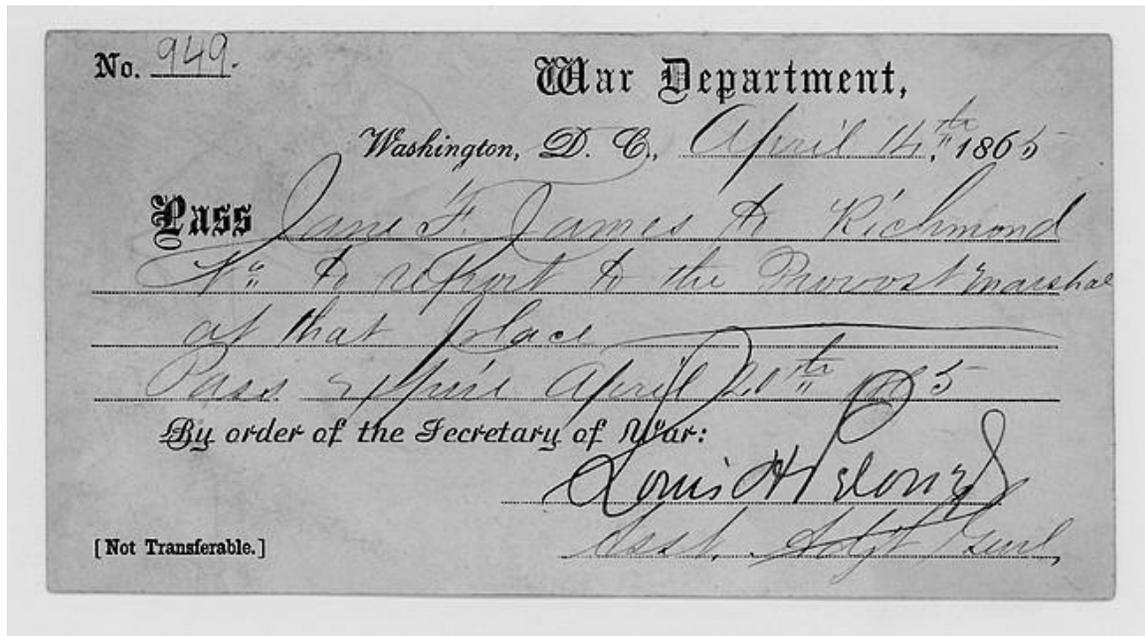


Figure 38 - Pass for Jane F. James to travel to Richmond only 5 days after the end of the war. The number on the pass is only 949 indicating that they were issued only rarely.

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

In a letter from Jane to her son Clements dated Richmond, Va., July 8, 1865 she writes:

We sailed all the way to Richmond in the same steamer as we left Washington. We arrived in Richmond Wednesday Evening @ six or seven O'clock after a very interesting & beautiful passage. Every object was full of interest. I can not go into detail respecting sunken vessels, torpedoes, obstructions of various kinds. My object or writing you pertaining today is to let you know that we are well except Father. He is not well. He had too much work & withal he misses his home.

She continues:

Richmond is in Ruins, almost it look so desolate burnt, burnt away the magnificent [pauitdys], Tobacco & Flour where his burnt [coven] to the ground. You never saw such dreadful havoc & if the Union Army had not come into the city when they did, the city would have been completely burnt down.



Figure 39 - Burned districts of Richmond near the James River April 1865 (From shorpy.com)

Jennie's first trip to Richmond wasn't until early September. She went with her one year old daughter Jennie and her brother Clemens. In a letter to Ira she wrote:

Would dear Ira feel interested if I relate something of our journey? I know my noble husband would, but how to begin I know not, without being reminded of the most unpleasant part! Bidding my dear sweet husband adieu: We left Washington, it was truly beautiful upon the water, Oh! how I longed for your lovely society then. The journey was a pleasant one. Brother Clements is a splendid escort, he was always on hand without any hurry, never causing me seriousness. We had a beautiful moonlight night, so that I could enjoy the scenery very much; baby was exceedingly good, did not sleep much, was interested in

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

every new object that she saw. There were very few ladies traveling with us, but a great many gentlemen. All seemed attracted to you lovely baby, one allowed her to lay her little head on his knee, in the stage coach, another carried her to the cars, a nice elderly man was looking after us all the time, seeing that we were comfortably seated, happy, and so on. I must say dearest that I really enjoyed traveling over this country, where so many hard contests had been for the right, and proved victorious to the just cause. The foliage looked rich, the air seemed pure; at the creek, it has a desolate appearance, the burnt wharf, and the few little huts for the guards are all that I could see there. We crossed the river at Fredericksburg, by stage on a pontoon bridge, this was the first time I had ever seen that kind of bridge. I saw great destruction of property at Fredericksburg, and I thought of the thousands of brave ones that had fallen in that fearful conflict, it was a place of double interest to me, when I remember that my brave wounded loved one lay in Hospital there.

Most of the railroads in northern Virginia were out of commission so for part of the trip they were traveling by stagecoach. They had to cross a major river, the Rappahannock. There were no intact bridges across the Rappahannock after the war. There was a temporary pontoon bridge in Fredericksburg that they crossed on a stagecoach.

Jennie was shocked with what she saw in Richmond:

Richmond is a changed place, but I recognized it without any trouble, the people are anything, but pleasant to my mind. Many friends come to see us. I do not enjoy them. They talk traitorously and boldly. So bitter do they feel towards the Yankees, Oh! Ira I never could live happily here, society is broken, religion is dead, the Church of God can hardly be said to have a place here, dear father, does not encourage our coming to live here, just now and I can see that we could not save anything, this is a most expensive place to live, Pa thinks of sending the family to W; for on in Pa's position to reside here, now it would take a pretty large fortune to support it.

She writes on 15 September:

Richmond (I would that it were otherwise) is a desolate place now. I have met many of my "old school mates" they are all respectful; and kind but speak in the [billerest] manner of the yankees; and the government, and you know dear it hurts me. I am writing close by the bed where baby is sleeping so sweetly. She is not feeling well for the past day or two and will not go to any one but me. Oh how I do long to be in your fond embrace my husband. I have no taste for society of other gentlemen. I had an invitation ride out do you think I went, No indeed I thought I should be lowering my self to go with on who said that he considered the yanks a very low class of human nature. I said Sir I married one. He said he had a better opinion of me at one time.

## **Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction**

I thank you so much my darling husband for the nice sum of pocket money you sent me. I will be careful of it. Last night when we were all asleep some one got into the house, took out of Pa's pocket some money; all he happened to have. Pa's pants were found in the parlor this morning, the money gone. It seems fearful to us that anyone should go through the house and not any of us see the thief.

Ira visited Richmond while on leave in the end of September through the beginning of October of 1865. In a letter to his brother-in-law he talks about the situation in Richmond and the South. While referring to Annie's husband Mr. Pollard who was from the South, Ira says:

He formerly owned a considerable property; but it has been involved in the general ruin of the South; and the Southern people have nobody to blame for it but themselves. I found at Richmond great prostration, depression, and sullenness. There is a settled enmity which it will take time to uproot. Even in their devotions there is a coldness and formality which freezes and which more plainly than anything else, proves to me that rebellion and Secession was and is of the Devil, and that until that is out of them they cannot enjoy true religion.

### ***Reconstruction***

I have often heard on the news that in one southern state or another a black candidate had just been elected to an office for the first time since reconstruction, but I didn't fully understand that. That is, until I started this project. Reconstruction started with Lincoln toward the end of the war as southern states began to come under the control of the North. The elections of 1866 saw a huge victory for the Republicans and when they took office in 1867 Reconstruction hit its peak. Civilian governments in the south were removed and replaced by military governments. This was in an effort to re-run elections with the newly freed blacks getting a chance for the first time to vote.

Reconstruction was a huge part of the lives of James and Ayer families. William was appointed to a job by President Johnson, much to the chagrin of the native southerners. Ira, who was still in the army, held several posts in connection with Reconstruction.

In the election for the Constitutional Convention in Virginia in 1867, there were a comparable number of blacks and whites registered, but the blacks had elected enough pro black candidates to force the convention and change the laws in Virginia to allow blacks to get their representation. In the election for a delegate from Hanover County, William ran against two pro white candidates. William got 7 votes from white people (probably himself, his three sons, Ira and two others) and 1,460 from black people. The two candidates running against him got a total of 1063 votes from whites and 3 votes from blacks. So, even if only one of them had run, William would still have won easily because there were more black

## **Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction**

votes in Hanover than white votes. Blacks in the south for the next couple years enjoyed more power than they would ever see again.

During that period the James and Ayer families endured much hatred from the much of the white population. One story from Grandma was that the family was told to not vote in an election because it would enrage the local people. Ira said that voting was his birthright and voted anyway. Nothing happened to him.

After an economic crash in 1873, whites started to regain power through sometimes honest and sometimes violent means. By 1877, Reconstruction had been replaced in the south by Jim Crow laws. Blacks would not truly regain the vote until the Voting Right Act of 1965, nearly 100 years later. By that time they had dispersed around the country preventing them from having as much power in any one place as they had enjoyed during Reconstruction.

### ***The House Across from the Railroad***

I think there are a couple reasons the James family moved from Richmond to Ashland. First they may have wanted to leave town. From the descriptions above of the city and the people in it, the country may have seemed a much more pleasant place. The country may have been less impacted by the war and the people less angry with Yankees. Also, William's work took him often to the towns north of Ashland, but his base of operation was Richmond. Ashland may have been a nice compromise.

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction



**Figure 40 - James family home in Ashland, VA – This picture was either taken around 1880 or more likely in the 1920s when William and Jane’s grandkids came to Ashland for a visit.**

The only description of the house is from Daisy (Jane’s granddaughter through Jennie) to Daisy’s niece “Girlie” (Carolyn Ayer Morse Clark). The letter was probably written in the late 1940s or early 1950s (Daisy died in 1957). Daisy said (the word “it” refers to a dining room table):

The first memory I have of it was when it was in Grandma James large dining room in Ashland. She called it “the banquet table.” She had two dining rooms; one for daily use, the other for large parties she had. We tiny children were allowed to go in and see it, all beautifully set for some festive occasion. I can see it in my mind’s eye now, how wondrous it was beautifully set with lovely large candlesticks, prisms dangling from them catching the light and casting rainbow lights into the room, beautiful crystal ware and china that would be difficult to find anywhere. These choice things I didn’t comprehend then, but we were thrilled with the glistening, fairy-like vision. I recall too that Grandma gave a birthday party for herself and all the children were invited. What an occasion! We sat rather petrified.

The only other story I know about the house is that there was a large fire where several house on the street including this one were severely damaged.

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

### ***Ira In the Military Round Two***

Since Ira had re-enlisted, there is little mention of Ira's duties except that he was busy and living and/or working in barracks at Camp Fry in Washington. Ira was Captain of Company B in the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Veterans Reserve Corps (V. R. C.). During the war, before he had joined, the job of his regiment had been to protect Government buildings. It's likely that shortly after Ira joined the job of the regiment was switching from protecting government buildings to dismantling Camp Fry. Camp Fry was dismantled by the end of 1865. Also, by the end of November Ira's regiment was disbanded but he continued in the service. I don't know what organization he was attached to.

While still in Washington in November of 1865, Ira wrote to George:

It is now believed that Vet Res corps will be retained until the session of Congress; and that it will then be made part of the permanent Army. I am doubtful as to my own course, but shall have decided, I hope, before long. That is to say, I hope that Providence will decide for me; for I certainly feel that I desire His direction.

Ira was at the time living at the James home in Washington at 403 13<sup>th</sup> Street. He was wrong about the V. R. C. They disbanded in 1866, but again, Ira remained in the service. There is still no word as to what Ira's duties were, but we know from another letter that Ira was thinking of resigning after only a year.

In December Ira went to Ashland. Part of what he was doing there was helping out William, his father-in-law. We don't know if there was any official duty associated with it. We also don't know what William's official duties were, only that he it was likely associated with the Treasury Department. It was Ira's second trip to Richmond since the war. These visits must have seemed so bizarre compared to his previous time in the area. While no one was shooting at him, the locals were not exactly friendly. Shortly after Ira went down, Jennie and baby followed. We don't know how long they were there, but they were back in Washington by early February 1866.

### ***Ira Transfers to Georgia \*\*\*\*\****

At some point in late winter/early spring of 1866 Ira was transferred to Georgia. Ira probably arrived in Georgia with Jennie in early February<sup>xvii</sup>.

Ira's move to Georgia put him right in the middle of Reconstruction as part of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, also know as the

---

<sup>xvii</sup> Jane wrote a letter to Jennie on 11 February saying that she was glad to have received a letter hearing of their safe arrival. On 21 February she wrote another letter where she says William had visited Washington. If Ira and Jennie had been in Washington they would have known that. This and the fact that there were no letters around that time from Jennie to Ira are the only evidence we have that Jennie was with him.

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

“Freedmen’s Bureau”. It was an organization in the army that attempted to defend the rights of the newly “freedmen”.<sup>xviii</sup>

Even though they had just arrived in Georgia, Jane, Jennie’s mom was asking Ira to get himself transferred to Ashland. Apparently it’s something they had talked about because Jane said that to do so, all Ira had to do was talk to a Col. Brown. Ira did not transfer at that time..

One reason Jane wanted them down there was of course to keep the family together. For the most part they had been together since they were back in Wales. But, one exception was their second daughter Annie who had stayed in the south during the war. She had married a southerner, Edward Pollard, and had had a son, Eddie. The family had heard virtually nothing from her the entire war. The James family often finds themselves at the crossroads of history and Annie’s marriage to Pollard was no exception. Edward Pollard was a journalist who had been one of the leading proponents of secession. He was one of the principal editors and owners of the *Richmond Examiner*. The marriage was a disaster and a fascinating story. That is fascinating to us. To the James family at the time it was hugely stressful and upsetting. Jane wanted Ira to move down there because she believed that Ira could help resolve the issues. To find out more about the Pollard incident, check the chapter “Mr. Pollard” in the write-up “The James Family, 1810-1900”<sup>xix</sup>

While the break-up of the marriage was going on, Little Eddie was staying with Pollard’s sister in Macon, Georgia. For this reason, Jane was probably happy they were down there. One of the first records we have of Ira is his 5 March 1866 request to go to Macon to collect Eddie to send him to Ashland. His request was approved the same day:

The mother of the child within referred to, becomes the legal guardian by the decision of its Father Mr. Pollard, and must therefore be given up to the Brevet Lt. Col. Ayer who has the necessary authority to represent the mother. The office of the Bureau at Macon will give Lt. Col Ayer any assistance he may need to obtain the possession of the child of Mrs. Pollard.

Ira’s first station was in Augusta, where the Bureau’s state headquarters were. Other than the request for Eddie, the only records we have from Ira while in Augusta were three letters he sent between 5 and 7 March.

The first letter is to Mr. L. Matthews, the Washington county agent. Because Ira calls him Mr. he is not likely in the service and may be a local man. Ira reprimands him for not taking the complaints of a local freedwoman seriously. There is a full copy of the letter in the Appendix and an abbreviated copy here:

---

<sup>xviii</sup> There are literally hundreds of document in the national Archives from the Freedmen’s Bureau either from, to, or about Ira. Much of the information in this section comes from these documents. For a summary of many of them see <http://scholtz.org/bill/ProjectAyer/FreedmensIndex.htm>

<sup>xix</sup> “The James Family, 1810-1900”, <http://scholtz.org/bill/Genealogy/TheJamesFamily.pdf>

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

It has been reported at this office that a Mrs. Jeddin Adams of your county has failed to comply with the terms of a contract made between her and certain employees (free-people); that the said Adams drew a pistol upon one [Ellafair] [Smens], using the following language - "I'll put six balls through your heart." that a Mr. George Mills acting in the interest of said Adams struck the said freewoman two blows and threatened to "knock out her brains." and further, that the said Mills pursued one Henry [Smens], employee, having a rope with which he threatened to the said employee, with the intention of whipping him.

It is unnecessary for me to inform you that the treatment as reported in inhuman and inexcusable and cannot in any instance be tolerated.

It is further reported that when complaint was entered to you in the above case you [obrectes] the complainants to return to service and in case of a similar occurrence to report again to you.

... The relation of the former slave is now changed. He is a free man, and those who seek to render his condition otherwise must be made to feel the power of the Government to protect them in their freedom. As Agent of the Government you are expected to see that strict justice is maintained between the former owner and the former slave

The second letter is similar but shorter and tells another agent, Mr. Jones, to effectively rescue a freed couple and their family from Crawfordsville and bring them and their belongings to Augusta. Ira warns Mr. Jones that the protection of the family is his responsibility:

I have the honor respectfully to instruct you to render them your personal aid (officially) to the accomplishment of this result. You will interpose your official authority to protect them in all their rights as freemen; and especially to shelter them from occurrence of the inhuman treatment to which they have recently been subjected.

By the end of March Ira has transferred to Albany, Georgia to become the A. S. A. Comm (Acting Sub-Assistant Commissioner) for the Albany sub-district. It is now Ira's job to see that the Bureau's business in his sub-district is properly carried out. Also, around this time, Jennie moves back to Ashland and they are separated again.

The letters from Ira during this period are very hard to read because they are low quality "press copies"<sup>xx</sup>. Ira is now responsible for carrying out the same kinds of

---

<sup>xx</sup> In the bureau records letters are in four different forms. The best of course is a copy of the letter itself. The second is a register copy. A register copy is when the sender of a letter writes a full copy of the letter in a register before sending to keep a record. Third is a register summary. This is the same as a register copy except only a summery of the letter is written and these are usually done when letters are received. The fourth and hardest to read are press copies. Press copies were used before the days of scanners, copy machines and even carbon paper. After a letter was written a copy could be made by taking a very thin

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

tasks that he had earlier reprimanded others for doing poorly. Albany is in Dougherty County which, before the war, had been one of the richest plantations counties in the country<sup>19</sup>.

But, Ira did not have a perfect relationship with black population. A 1992 article by Lee W. Formwalt<sup>20</sup> talks of some conflicts he had with the "freedmen":

Some of the actions of Freedmen's Bureau officers convinced Dougherty County African-Americans that they had to look to themselves for protection and support. The two local agents for Dougherty County (Francis A. Billingslea and William Isaac Vason) came from slaveholding families and often sided with planters in labor disputes. Freedmen charged Lt. H. C. Strong, the acting subassistant commissioner for the Albany subdistrict, with "a lack of interest in their affairs." His predecessor, Lt. Col. Ira Ayer, had alienated ERA members by twice calling in their president Lawrence Speed and chastising him for "diffusing erroneous ideas among the freedmen." Yankee soldiers employed by the bureau could be worse in their treatment of freed persons. In June 1866, two freedwomen got in a fight on one of the Yancey plantations, so when Yancey went to town he brought back a Yankee soldier with him. The soldier "tied up, in an uncomfortable & painful way" the instigator of the fray "for 2 hours-till she begged well & promised to be a better woman & hand, & also fined her \$15."

Such behavior led Dougherty ERA leaders to be wary of the Freedmen's Bureau and to make it clear to members that the association did not get its authority from the bureau and was "not to be accountable "to it. In fact, ERA leaders argued that its African-American members should not be accountable to "any white men, but solely to their own President, or colored men of their own selection." If members had questions about their contracts, they should bring them to the ERA leaders whom they could trust rather than the Freedmen's Bureau agents whose reliability was questionable. A growing race and class consciousness was being shaped at the ERA meetings as freedmen learned from their own experiences and the experiences of their leaders that the white man and the employer could not be trusted. When freedmen's rights were challenged, they were to stand up for what was right; and when they were threatened by angry whites, their drilling would prepare them to defend themselves

ERA is the Equal Rights Association. I have not been able to find any documents related to the above so we don't know the context. Ira may have been fully justified in his criticism of Lawrence Speed. As for the Yancey event, had Ira known about it he would have been furious on two counts. First, he fought tirelessly for the rights of the freed men and women. Second, the action of the Union Soldier would be something Ira would not stand for. I haven't found any independent information on any of these issues.

---

damp piece of paper and pressing it on the letter. A little bit of ink would bleed off the letter and onto the press copy. The problem is that they were often smudged and hard to read.

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

You can contrast this with a letter Ira wrote in early 1866, in a letter he wrote that a freed slave, "is a free man, and those who seek to render his condition otherwise must be made to feel the power of the government to protect them in their freedom".<sup>xxi</sup> We don't know where or why Ira wrote the letter but it was likely written from Georgia. It's nice to see a quote like that from Ira.

It's hard to say what kind of job Ira did for the Freedmen's Bureau because we have so few records. If the above is the only complaint then that doesn't sound too bad. I talked to the author of the article and he said there are a ton more records relating to Ira and others but they are all in Georgia and not remotely accessible. I hope that one day I can find them online so that I can get a better idea of Ira's time in Georgia.

In the meantime, on 20 October 1866, baby number two, Julia was born. Jennie would still have to wait for her baby Ira.

At some point Ira's promotion came through. He was brevetted colonel, Veteran Reserve Corps for "gallant conduct at the Battle of the Wilderness". The award was retroactive to 13 March 1866. As mentioned before, this is more a ceremonial title and did not change his assignment or pay. He was still a captain.

Just like during the war Jennie again asks Ira to leave the army. She is with her family in Ashland and wants him to work with her father. In many ways, Ashland is similar to Evans, New York where Jennie had wanted to move during the war. It's a quiet farming community like Evans but has the added benefit of being a college town. The only issue is that there are obvious conflicts with the James family and local residents following the bloody and painful war.

Ira seems to take Jennie's wishes to heart. In the only letter we have from Ira during his time in Macon, he tells Vinnie he is thinking of leaving the army to go to work with William:

I am thinking of leaving the Army soon perhaps about the first of July. It is possible even sooner. I shall thus probably, remain with my father-in-law until Providence may indicate my further duty.

### ***Ira Transfers to Ashland \*\*\*\*\****

One of Ira's jobs in Ashland was to help set up a public school system for the freed slaves. Virginia, like all other southern states didn't have a public school system for whites or blacks. A 1982 Masters Thesis by Scott Britton Hansen talks about Ira's efforts with the school system in Hanover County:

---

<sup>xxi</sup> Cimbals, Paul A., "Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870", University of Georgia Press, 1997; Excerpt of a letter from Ira Ayer to L Matthews, Mar. 5, 1866

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

North of Richmond, in Hanover County, Bureau Agent Ira Ayers reported that the schools started by blacks in his jurisdiction had received a paucity of support from the agency. In a September 1866 report, Ayers said the present condition of blacks made it impossible for them to “bear the entire expense of schooling their children”; thus, for education to take hold in the county required “encouragement from abroad.” A few months later, the Baptist Home Mission Society assumed control of one school, which Ayers said was well attended and “in a most prosperous condition.” By the end of 1867, parents started two additional schools, each taught by black teachers. Ayers again asked Manly to appropriate monies to help aid the schools, which he agreed to do at a rate of ten dollars per month.

While Ayers expressed measured optimism with the progress thus far, his enthusiasm waned after learning the Baptists planned to close the “Shiloh Church” school at the end of the school year. After meeting with Manly in the fall of 1867 to discuss reopening the school, Ayers concluded: “The house is at present entirely unsuitable to receive a female teacher.” Not only was the school house in disrepair, but also finding a “comfortable boarding place” to house a female teacher seemed unlikely. Thus, Ayers reluctantly agreed to have the Bureau take steps to “secure the services of some good colored man” because at present it was inexpedient to recruit a northern white teacher. “I deeply regret that we are not able to avail ourselves of the services of a thoroughly competent teacher, . . . but think our good northern women after making the sacrifices they do, . . . are entitled to a good house to teach in, a comfortable boarding place, and, if possible, to be associated together for mutual sympathy and support.” The conundrum Ayers faced was similar in other rural areas across Virginia, indeed, the entire South: how to recruit northern teachers to live and work in isolated, remote areas in which housing was scarce and the local white population hostile. Consequently, in Hanover County at least, blacks took the initiative to start their own schools.

By 1868, the county boasted six day schools, all organized by black residents. There is “an increasing interest in the cause of education,” Ayers proudly announced. This sentiment, he pointed out, was not shared among the white masses who manifested “little interest” in schooling. Even so, given the number of schools blacks established, it appears white residents offered grudging acceptance to the inevitability of educating freed slaves. Indeed, in places such as “Bethany Seats,” “Union Seats,” Fleming Mills,” “Hanover Junction,” and “Shiloh Church,” blacks, through “energy and perseverance,” took control of their own destiny. In another area of the county freedpeople, with the enthusiastic support of the American Tract Society, began to construct a school building, but the enterprise was in jeopardy because promised financial aid had failed to materialize. H. E. Simmons, an agent with the American Tract Society, urged Manly to appropriate fifty dollars so “a good commodious log school house and chapel can be completed.” Simmons told Manly he had already found an “eminent Christian” lady, who for the last two years had been teaching young black children to read, to serve as the teacher. Despite the fact the young woman

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

was a native Virginia, Simmons vouched for her qualifications asserting: “I wish there were ten thousand with her spirit.”

A few local white property owners granted permission for blacks to construct buildings on their land provided the structure was “occupied for school and church purposes.” When Bureau agent Lieutenant Hambrick doubted the good intentions of Hanover County resident Charles Morris in deeding a parcel of land to blacks for the purpose of building a school, Ayers assured the commissioner that Morris was “a gentleman of much influence” who had “been a true and kind friend to the colored people since their freedom.” The willingness of some white property owners to offer land on which to build black schools is noteworthy, but it is questionable their actions were the result of sincere benevolence. They may have reluctantly agreed to educate the freedpeople, but the fact that whites set conditions, such as demanding that only schools could be erected on their land, demonstrates an attempt to maintain control over the actions and movements of former slaves.

While Manly was eager to expand black education in Hanover County, the aid he offered was conditional on the teacher’s ability to maintain minimum attendance thresholds. William P. Brown, a black teacher at the “Old Church” school, was a tireless, unabashed advocate of education for “his people.” Known for peppering Manly with requests for books, slates, building supplies, and financial aid, Brown had struggled to convince parents why it was important for them to send their children to school on a regular basis. After several meetings with students and parents, Brown proudly wrote Manly, “I am glad to inform you . . . that there is no doubt sir . . . as to my being able to make a report of 30 pupils and over agreeable to the established policy of the Bureau.” Bluntly informing parents what the consequences were if their children failed to attend school seemed to do the trick, Brown told Manly: “The fact is that I have told the people they must give attendance of 30 scholars per day during the month or the School will not be supported in any shape or form and not wishing to shut their children out of school being sensible of it at the same time, they have finally determined to send the children to school.”

...

Although government and benevolent associations blamed racism, unequal employment opportunities, and low wages for the rampant poverty in the black community, another factor they cited was overindulgence in alcoholic beverages. Just north of Richmond, Bureau agent Ira Ayers traveled through Hanover County admonishing blacks for wasting “time and earnings for intoxicating drink” when “education and support of their families” should have been their first priority. “The parents earn money and spend it at the groggeries paying their teacher in promises,” Ayers lamented. Their behavior Ayers blamed, in part, on the influence of some white pastors who condoned “these evil practices.” In the Petersburg area Bureau commissioner Lieutenant Kimball regarded intemperance as the “most fearful character that exists among the freedmen.” The prevalence of

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

this attitude he blamed squarely on the behavior of local whites who goaded blacks into consuming alcohol: “It will be a matter of almost utter impossibility” to perfect radical reform “so long as full nine-tenths of the white race are addicted to habits of intemperance, and encourage it in the freedmen by precept and example.”

Sometime between July of 1866 and April of 1867 Ira was finally transferred to Ashland where Jennie and her family were.<sup>xxii</sup> It was probably around the end of July or August because the last letter from Jennie we have during that period is from June.

On 20 April 1867 Congress published a list of assignments and Ira was listed as:

Brevet Colonel Ira Ayer, jr., captain Veteran Reserve Corps. president of the board of Hanover county

On June 23 another note to Congress said he was “military commissioner, Hanover and King William counties; station Ashland, Hanover county, Virginia”.

So, in 1867 Ira was the military commander in charge of first Hanover County, where Ashland is and about 20 miles outside of Richmond, and later both Hanover and adjacent King William Counties.

Not only was Ira part of the occupying force, but he was the local leader. Nothing is more unwelcome than an unelected leader from a group you just lost a war to. But, this is what Reconstruction was all about. Until a new set of government officials could be selected by vote, the US Army is in charge.

This probably added to the anger of the local white people toward his father-in-law William. William was the local Tax Collector. There was an attempt to have him removed from office and prosecuted. It got worse when William ran for office to represent Hanover County at the Constitutional Convention. For more on that see the Chapter “William’s Work and Appointment” in “The James Family”<sup>xxiii</sup>

### From Brock Collection at the Lib of VA \*\*\*\*

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/brockresults.asp>

Ira Ayer	Letter to Dr. J. Alonzo Smith	notices of registration to be posted	Hanover County, Ashland, VA	16 June 1867	5092	74	292
----------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------	------	----	-----

<sup>xxii</sup> The last record of Ira in Georgia is from 21 July 1866 and the first record of Ira in Ashland is from 20 April 1867.

<sup>xxiii</sup> “The James Family, 1810-1900”, <http://scholtz.org/bill/Genealogy/TheJamesFamily.pdf>

## Richmond, Ashland and Reconstruction

Here is where records start to get confusing. The records say that Ira was honorably discharged on 1 January 1868 but records show he was still involved with the Freedmen's Bureau until the end of 1868.

I have no idea what he did for the first half of 1868, but for the second half he was reporting "Murders and Outrages" committed against freedmen, cases of injustice against freed slaves<sup>xxiv</sup>. This is part of the Freedmen's Bureau. There were seven cases he reported on during the last half of 1868. In one case a black man, Powell, worked for a white man, Rice. Rice got mad at Powell, went and got a shot gun and shot Powell. Powell was hit in the eye among other places and was almost blinded. Another black man was also hit. Rice immediately turned himself in saying that he shot one black man on purpose and one by accident. Ira reported:

At the trial the counsel for the defence appealed to the prejudices of the Jury-Rice was "an ex-confederate soldier," a "Virginia Gentleman," a "white man," that Powell was a "nigger" &c. The jury found Rice guilty of unlawful shooting and sentenced him to one cent fine and 12 hours confinement in the County jail.

The rest of the reports can be found in the appendix below.

Just like Georgia, there are probably tons of documents relating to Ira's service, especially while he was military commander. I just hope that one day I can find them.

---

<sup>xxiv</sup> Fromwalt, Lee W., "The Origins of African-American Politics in Southwest Georgia: A Case Study of Black Political Organization During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867", "Journal of Negro History", Volume 77, No. 4, Autumn 1992.

## **Ira Ayer, Special Agent for the Treasury**

When Ira left the military in early 1869 he was 32 years old and had known two very different careers, farming and the military. In the military during the war he had risen to a position where he commanded several hundred troops and after the war he had effectively been the military commander of Hanover County, Virginia with a population of over 15,000 people. I think that for Ira, the concept of going back to farming was not too exiting.

On April 12, 1869, President Grant sent a pile of nominations to Senate. One of the nominations was:

I nominate Ira Ayer to be deputy postmaster at Petersburg, in the county of Dinwiddie and State of Virginia, in place of R. G. Greene, removed.

Petersburg is about 25 miles south of Richmond and about 40 miles south of Ashland. The nomination didn't last long. Grant withdrew the nomination two days later.

This may be because he got another job offer. In 1869 Ira began the carrier that would be a part of the rest of his life. He joined the Treasury Department. I'm not sure how he ended up with the Treasury but it was probably through his father-in-law, William. William had been connected with the Treasury Department since his visit with President Lincoln early in the Civil War. Ira was stationed in Richmond, not too far from Ashland. In 1870, Ira was promoted to Special Agent, a position he would hold until his death.

From 1870, Ira was stationed in Norfolk. That's where he was stationed when his daughter Alice was born and she believed that she was born in Norfolk. That means that for at least part of the time his family was living with him. But I know that the family spent most of their time in Ashland. So, again Ira and Jennie were living mostly apart.

In 1877 there was a big scandal in the Philadelphia Customs House. To investigate the abuses, the Secretary of the Treasury selected three people, a Republican businessman from Philadelphia, a Democratic businessman from Philadelphia and a representative of the Treasury Department, Ira Ayer. According to the Philadelphia Enquirer of June 15, 1887 Ira had to leave Philadelphia for a couple days to attend a commencement for his children. I'm not sure who it was for, because his oldest, Jennie was only 12.

Ira was not able to finish with the commission because there was a scandal back in his office in Norfolk. A deputy collector of the customs department was accused of embezzling thousands of dollars that he said he lost gambling.

## **Ira Ayer, Special Agent for the Treasury**

Treasury Department scandals were fairly common; Ira was called to investigate several during his carrier. But this was the only one in Ira's carrier that in any way reflected poorly on him. I've seen about 100 newspaper articles that mention Ira and the only one that negatively reflected on him came out a couple months after the Norfolk scandal broke out. In an October 4, 1877 article in the Chester Daily Times (Chester, PA), a report from Washington contained many news items. One was sort of an editorial, I assume about the investigation of how the collector was able to embezzle so much money.

It will be remembered that Mr. Ira Ayer was one of the special agents of the Treasury under whose lynx eyed supervision the Custom House at Norfolk was robbed and defrauded of nearly \$30,000, these crooked transactions extending through a series of years, He is said to have uniformly reported everything in apple-pie order. It is now given out that his instructions were so limited that he could not have known anything about the rascalities being perpetrated in his very presence. To those who do not regard this statement as very thin, indeed, the conclusion that it would have been money in Uncle Sam's pocket to have abolished the secret service division, so far, at least, as it related to the Custom House in question, is inevitable, for of what possible benefit can it be to pay officials big salaries to report everything all right, when it is all wrong, and rapidly going to the dogs. It was supposed by many simple minded people that Ayer was stationed at Norfolk to prevent, among other duties, just such theft as were perpetrated.

I wish I had something from Ira that talked about the scandal and how he felt about it. But we know he survived the scandal and that he was very highly regarded for the rest of his carrier.

After years in Norfolk Ira seems to have been transferred to Baltimore. The 1880 census lists him both in Ashland as the head of the household and in Baltimore as a boarder.

## **Ira Ayer, Special Agent for the Treasury**

1872 Norfolk City Directory - YMCA

\The 1881 The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway directory lists Ira Ayer, Jr. as one of about 24 “Principal Farmers” of Ashland (Google Books)

Ira and the [Tin Plate Industry, 1892](#). Also see the “Campaign Text Book for the Democratic Party, 1892 in books directory.

## Moving North

NY Tribune 11 May 1893:

Of the twenty-seven special Treasury agents In the service there are only three who have not been criticized by the merchants or have not had charges or some kind preferred against them. They are CVoncl L. M. MoiiTgoni. ry, Ira Ayer! and George Whitehead.. .

### ***Ashland and 1870 census***

The 1870 census has been very frustrating. I have found the family in the 1841 Wales census, the 1851 New Brunswick, Canada census, the 1860 Richmond census and the 1880 US census. But, for 1870, I have found only Hannah who had married and moved to Kansas City and Ira who was living by himself in Norfolk at the time. William and Jane were still alive, Jennie, Samuel, and possibly Emma had not moved out yet. Clement and John were still alive. Samuel, Clement, and probably Jennie were living in separate houses. Yet, none of them show up. I've searched a million different ways with any spelling variation with no luck. In 1860 and 1880 the census for the county was split into towns, however in the 1870 census the county was only split into the Upper and Lower Revenue Districts. I searched for many of the people who lived near the Jameses in 1880 in the 1870 census. I could find very few of them. I've even searched every page of the Hanover County census. Either a section is missing or they were intentionally left out. They may have wanted to avoid any official identification or the census takers may have left them out for spite.

## Moving North

### ***Ira and Jennie move to New Jersey and New York (1881) \*\*\*\****

It's not clear how much time Ira and Jennie spent together during the 1870s. Ira was stationed in Norfolk and the family was in Ashland. We know that Ira was living by himself Norfolk in the 1870 census, but Alice believed that she was born in Norfolk but there is no way to check that. Virginia did not keep many records from that time. However, Alice and her sisters talked a lot about growing up in Ashland and hardly mentioned Norfolk. Since most of the time the kids were growing up, Ira was stationed in Norfolk we have to assume the family lived separately most of the time.

After spending a year or so in Baltimore, Ira was transferred to New York. This time the family up and moved with him. They all moved to Morristown, New Jersey. First they lived at the corner of Perry and Maple and later at 39 Western Avenue. At first I couldn't understand how, in 1881, you could live in Morristown and work in New York. Even today Morristown is not a big place for commuting to New York. But it was commutable. In a letter from Jane to Hannah while Jane was visiting Jennie and Ira, Jane says, "Dear brother Ira goes daily to N Y duties, leaving @ 7:15 a.m." I found the January 1881 railroad timetable and it says that if you catch the 7:30, you arrive in Manhattan at 8:50, only an hour and 20 minutes later. That's taking a train and a ferry.

So, why did the family move this time? Jane suggests that it was for Jennie health. Shortly after Jennie moved to Morristown, her mother wrote to her, "If Morristown proves beneficial to your health then the main object is attained." While Jennie had often talked about issues with her health she never said what the issue was. I think Jennie suffered from depression. The only evidence I have of this is that they moved from Virginia to New Jersey for health reasons. Usually people move the other way. Her mother was a very dominating person and Jennie lived with or next door to her all her life. I think she wanted to get away from her mother. But if that's the case, even moving didn't help. In 1891 while Ira was visiting Washington he visited where they were married. Then he said:

How many winters and summers have since past! How many changes have since taken place! Those that have passed away, have I doubt not, gone to their heavenly rest. As for our own group of birdlings – one male and five females – it is thanks to the kind father above – unbroken. We are supplied with food and raiment, and all are usefully employed. We aught, therefore, to be happy. If we are not, it is our fault. This probably due principally to two reasons, first, that we have not faith to trust in divine Providence, and to take him at His word; and second that we are ungrateful. We do not appreciate the blessings that we actually enjoy as we should. We must make hast to correct these faults if we have them. We must learn to trust almighty God continuously, and we must be ever and always thankful to Him for His unencumbered mercies. For my own part, I have my sweet Jennie with me just as of yore, so how can I help being happy! I have all my sweet bairns with me, so I am doubly happy.

## Moving North

Ira says “we” should be happy and I think he means “you” should be happy. He says that they have every reason to be happy and the only thing that could make them unhappy is not having enough faith in god. But there is no lack of faith shown in Jennie’s letters. I believe that she suffered from depression that brought on other physical ailments.

Jennie was not the only one who had physical issues. When Jane was visiting Ira and Jennie she also said about Ira:

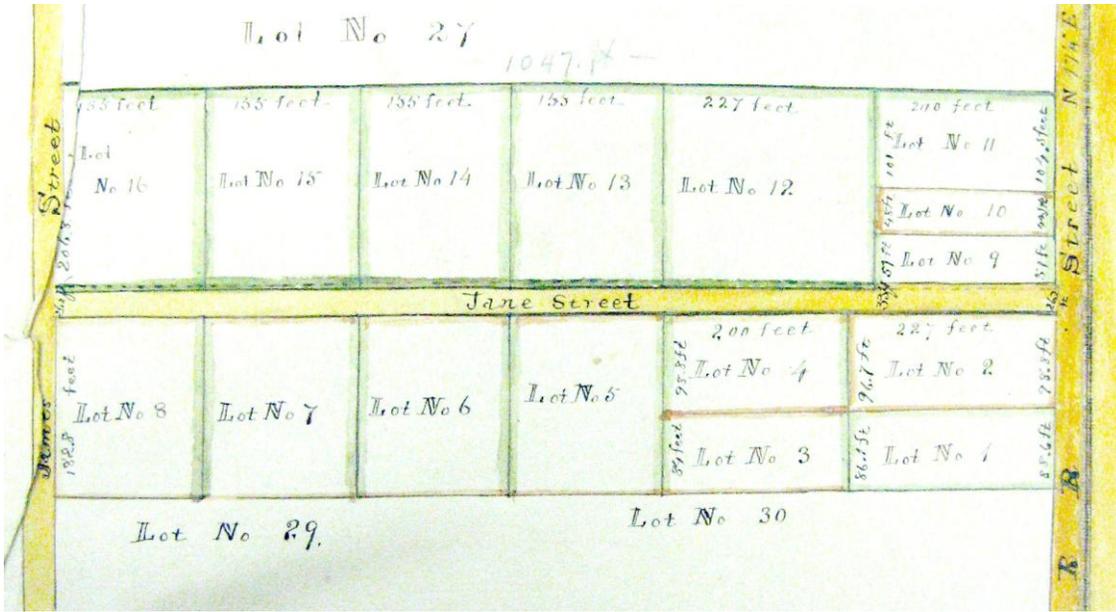
But he suffers with the wounded leg. He has had it examined by one of the most skillful surgeons of the day at N Y. He recommends an operation which will I expect be a severe operation laying him up completely for several weeks. He thinks from it, hence the delay also observing closely the progress of the wounded hand. Ira feels Dr Pierson is careful in watching the wound. Now it is supposed that two weeks hence will decide the operation business. Pray for us here.

During the Civil War, Ira had been shot in the arm, just above the wrist at Bull Run in '62 and shot in the leg at The Wilderness in '64. The leg wound was causing him more trouble now. The arm hadn't completely healed.

### ***“Keeping the Wolf From the Door”***

In the letter from William James to President Lincoln, he had said, “I am not well enough provided for to keep the wolf from the door.” Well, William was able to keep the “wolf from the door” and so was Jane. But after Jane’s death the wolf came to the door. Jane died significantly in debt. Fortunately she had some assets. The creditors wanted to recover their money. In an effort to make the settlement orderly, Ira and Jennie filed a lawsuit against the rest of the family. This was not done to hurt the family, only to settle the estate in an orderly fashion. The whole family were entirely behind this effort. The Hanover County Courthouse has a copy of the lawsuit. When I was there they were restricting access because the records were about to be digitized and the digitizer did not want there to be any extra damage beforehand. I was only able to photograph 10 pages. On June 23, 1883, just after Jane died the property was surveyed. It was about 10 acres and had been split up into 16 lots.

## Moving North



**Figure 41 - James property**

Today Railroad Street is called Center Street. The train still runs. While I was there, there were a couple Amtraks and some freight trains. Jane Street no longer exists and James Street is still called James Street.

*A plot of the subdivision of Lot No. 28 of the town of Ashland, of which division Lot No 1 belongs to Col Ira Ayer, Jr. Lots Nos., 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 belong to the Estate of Mrs. Jane F. James, and 26.8 feet are taken from the north side for Jane Street. Lot No 9 belongs to the Estate of Clemence James, of which 6.8 feet are taken off the south side for Jane Street. Lots Nos., 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 belong to Samuel R. James*

*Surveyed June 23, 1883*

**Figure 42 - James Property sub-division ownership**

I don't know what happened to all the lots, but lot 2, the one with the big house on, and lot 4 were "sold it at auction to settle debts based on lawsuit" on November 7, 1884. The two lots were resold many times until 2001 when Randolph-Macon College bought it for \$357,000<sup>xxv</sup>. Today the former James

<sup>xxv</sup> Here is the transaction history for lots 2 and 4 (now 206 North Center St.):

Date	Book	Page		From	To		
31-Jul-01	1753	380	\$357,000	Schmitt	RMC		
1-Aug-90	827	293	\$10	Shaw	Schmitt		
3-Jun-83	529	655	\$10	Blanton	Shaw	206 N Center St	Has Survey

## Moving North

home is used as an office building for professors. Most of the college is across the railroad track, but today the college owns most of what was the James property and none of the rest of it is developed except for one other building.

[Here](#) is the Google street view.

Here are some more pictures of the house:



**Figure 43 - The house around 1880s or 1920s and 2007**



**Figure 44 - Train going by**

2-Jul-56	173	79	\$10	Raney	Blanton		
16-Feb-26	82	401	\$10 + 40/month	Harrison	Raney	Lots 2 and 4 in subdivision of lot 28	
15-Sep-09	52	184	\$2,400	Robinson	Harrison	Lots 2 and 4 in subdivision of lot 28	
7 Nov 1884	18	48		James, June	Robinson	Lots 2 and 4 in subdivision of lot 28	Family sold it at auction to settle debts based on lawsuit

## Moving North



Figure 45 - Inside



Figure 46 – Inside

Once the digitization was completed there were a couple hundred documents. I've copied them [here](#).

### ***Jennie and Ira in New Jersey***

Ira and Jennie moved to New Jersey early in 1881 leaving Annie in Ashland to help take care of their mother who was around 70 years old. But, that situation didn't last long. About a year later Annie got married and soon after that moved to Maryland. Jane's health was deteriorating and by April of 1883 she was dead. It took about a year for Jennie and Ira to settle her estate.

Things were not entirely tough during this time. During the summer of 1884 Jennie and Samuel and their families spent about a week at the luxury Oriental Hotel<sup>xxvi</sup> in Coney Island, New York.

---

<sup>xxvi</sup> The Oriental Hotel was built in 1883 and torn down in 1916. It had 480 rooms. For more information, see [this website](#).

## Moving North



Figure 47 - Letter head of a letter written by Samuel while at the hotel

So, now it's the end of 1884 and Ira and Jennie can finally live the life they wanted and focus on their families. Things would continue to get better for Ira, but just for a short time.

Scandals in the Treasury Department were common and on January 9, 1885 one hit Ira's office in New York. The head of the department, Captain Brackett, and another person were relieved of duty. Ira was placed in charge. It turns out that Brackett and the other agent were accused of taking bribes. Brackett had been a Special Agent for 15 years and had an excellent record. The two were tried and acquitted in April. Apparently what had happened is that an importer had been undervaluing his shipments for years to save on duties. Brackett found out about it and put the other agent on the case. Apparently the importer tried to get back by framing Brackett. Even though Brackett was acquitted, his career as a special agent was over.

Ira's tenure in charge of the New York office was short lived. Ira, a Republican, had served under four presidents, all Republicans. Then, on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1885 Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, was sworn in. In December of 1885 Ira was transferred to the office in San Francisco. Ira's hometown newspaper, *The Jerseyman*<sup>21</sup> believed this was more than a simple transfer:

## Moving North

By order of the Secretary of the Treasury, Col. Ira Ayre of this Town, who has been a number of years a Special Agent on duty at the New York Custom House, has been transferred to San Francisco. As no hint of dissatisfaction with his discharge of his duties has been given from any quarter, and as he is a one-legged veteran whom it was doubtless thought it might not be good policy to discharge outright, there is a strong suspicion that this change was ordered in the hope of forcing his resignation. A published statement says:

“Much surprise was manifested at the New York Custom House on Monday with regard to a change in the assignments of the special agents made by order of the Secretary of the Treasury. The order was sent directly to the Special Agent Ayre, who has been ordered to San Francisco. Special Agent J. B. Peck, who is a recent appointment of the new Administration, is to supersede Mr. Ayre in charge of the New York division. Colonel Ayre is a Republican who has held the office of Special Agent for many years. He is an old Soldier, with an unsullied record, and no special reason is assigned for making the change. He lives in Morristown, N. J., and has a wife and six children. One inference drawn from this change was that the Department presumed it to be a good way to get rid of a Republican office-holder, and that Colonel Ayre would probably resign rather than accept the detail and be separated from his family. It was rumored several days ago that the Secretary of the Treasury was anxious to have a Democrat in charge of the New York bureau, one who would probably be more pliable to the appeals of place hunters than Colonel Ayre.”

If they thought Ira would resign they were sadly mistaken. Ira took the transfer and the family would be split up again. But first he needed to do something. As Jane had mentioned four years earlier, Ira had been thinking about getting an operation on his leg, and in January of 1886, Ira finally had the operation.

According to the New York Times, January 5, 1886:

### *COL. AYER'S OLD WOUND*

Col. Ayer, who was transferred by Secretary Manning, a few weeks ago, from the post of Chief of Special Treasury Service in this city to the chief in the same service at San Francisco, is in the hands of doctors at the Brooklyn Homeopathic Hospital. During the war Col. Ayer was wounded in his right leg by a bullet, and lately the wound has been giving him so much trouble that he resolved to undergo a surgical operation for necrosis<sup>xxvii</sup>. Drs. Lewis and Varona, of the hospital corps, removed a longitudinal section of the tibia, and Col. Ayer was yesterday able to see friends who called upon him, and he expects to be so far recovered at the end of this month as to be able to start then for his new post on the Pacific alone.

I don't know how well he recovered from the operation. After recovering from his operation Ira left the family again and moved to San Francisco. In early March Ira took over the San Francisco.

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> [Necrosis](#) is the premature death of cell tissue that can be caused by, among other things, trauma. The tissue does not send proper signals to the blood stream and is, therefore, not properly removed. Ira needed to have dead bone tissue surgically removed.

## Moving North

Ira's tenure in San Francisco was fairly quiet until February 1888. Edwin and Ephraim Gardiner were arrested in New York State for importing 1,500 lbs of opium. The opium was intended for San Francisco. Edwin had sent some coded messages to the San Francisco Treasury office. According to the New York Sun<sup>22</sup>:

A significant fact was when Erwin asked Treasury Agent Winslow regarding a message he sent to Col. Ira Ayer, special agent at San Francisco: "If he answers that I have been working in the interest of Government will you believe it?" he asked. Mr. Winslow responded affirmative, but the answer was that Ayer know nothing of Gardiner. The officials think it was a bluff to get Gardiner out on bail and let him escape.

Gardiner claimed he was an undercover agent working directly for Ira. Ira said no and Gardiner didn't bother to push it. So, Ira was luckier than his predecessor in New York who lost his job and was taken to court when he was falsely accused of bribing.

Just as this was happening Ira found out he was being transferred back to New York. He would get to see his family for the first time in over two years. There is no word as to how or why Ira was being transferred back but he would not be in his old position as chief. Grover Cleveland was still president. Even so, he was probably happy to be going home.

There was one more hurdle for Ira before getting home. That hurdle would not soon be forgotten. In the 1930s Andy and Fred, grandchildren of Alice and great grandchildren of Jennie and Ira would ask her on every snow storm if it was as much snow as there was in the blizzard of '88. There never was. On March 12, 1888 it started to snow in Morristown and didn't stop for two days<sup>23</sup>. The Blizzard of 1888, also known as the "Great White Hurricane" dumped about 40" of snow New Jersey<sup>24</sup>. This is an amazing amount of snow, especially for a girl who grew up in Virginia. Alice probably remembered the blizzard, not just because of all the snow, but because it delayed the return of her father. She hadn't seen her father for two years. Ten days after the blizzard The Jerseyman said:

--- Col. Ira Ayer, Custom House officer, returned to his home in Morristown having been absent for nearly three years – most of the time in San Francisco.



Figure 48 - Blizzard of 1888 in New Britain, CT (Wikipedia) – couldn't find a picture of New Jersey.

### ***Jennie and Ira move to Brooklyn***

A few days after Ira returned he posted the following in The Jerseyman:

## Moving North

### AUCTION

VAN DYKE & WISE, Auctioneers

The subscriber, who will remove to Baltimore, will sell at Public Venue at

**38 WESTERN AVENUE,**

MORRISTOWN, ON Tuesday, April 3d.

The following Household Furniture :--- Wm. Knabe square grand piano, 7 ½ octaves handsomely carved legs : parlor suit, green rep ; walnut book case, walnut marble center table, mahogany child's crib, 100 yrs. Old ; franklin stove, walnut lamp stand, blk. Walnut suit, 7 pieces ; walnut wardrobe, very fine ; bed springs, mantel mirror, pictures, books, curtains, shades and fixtures, bagatelle board, hall, stair and bed room carpets, diningroom Brussels rug, kitchen safe, 2 kitchen tables, glower vases, castor, chairs, step ladder, kitchen utensils not enumerated. Sale to commence at one o'clock sharp, Terms cash. COL. IRA AYER.

I don't know why the notice said they were moving to Baltimore. They were in fact moving to Brooklyn, 398 Clermont Avenue.

A small note in the New York Times of January 16, 1889 says that Ira has been placed in charge of the New York office again replacing the retiring head. According to the article the appointment is only temporary. It's a month and a half from when Grover Cleveland will be replaced by Benjamin Harrison, a Republican like Ira. As far as I can tell, Ira retains this position for the rest of his life; through Harrison's administration, Cleveland's second administration and those of two more Republicans.

The next big event in Ira's life is an operation on his arm. This must have been a real big deal because I've found accounts of it in three different newspapers; from New York, Maine and San Francisco. Here is the one from the June 24, 1891 edition of the Maine Wig and Courier:

#### A Rare Surgical Operation.

A New York despatch says: Col. Ira Ayer, who served during the war in the Tenth Regiment, Pennsylvania Reserves, and for many years was a special agent of the Treasury Department at this port, has just undergone a painful surgical operation at the Seney Hospital, Brooklyn. At the second battle of Bull Run the colonel, who was a captain of Company I, received a gunshot wound in the left forearm. The ball entered the radius about five inches above the wrist and glanced upward, lodging near the elbow. It was removed at the time at the point of contact.

At the operation, and in subsequent explorations of the arm, the presence of any other foreign substance was not detected. For nearly thirty years the wound has been a source of constant irritation and danger. Dr. George R. Fowler, of Brooklyn, who performed the operation, detected the presence of the metal by the use of the telephone probe. He removed a piece of the tin about the size of a ten cent piece, which together with pieces of cloth, was found completely imbedded in the bone. It seems that the ball passed through the Colonel's canteen, carrying with it the tin and cloth in question. The operation was successful and promises relief.

For the next few years, Ira's name was plastered all over the newspapers and he was even mentioned by President Harrison in his 1892 State of the Union

## Moving North

message. Ira had become the Treasury's expert on the Tin Plate industry and especially on the drawbacks (taxes returned when the Tin-Plate is exported). Just as an example, when Ira was assigned to the Tin-Plate industry a one half column article in the New York Times has the headline, "Col. Ayer's Tin-Plate Figures: His System for Securing Reports of the 'Industry'". You can find the article in the Appendix below.

### ***Alice and George 1897***

Alice Ayer, daughter of Jennie and Ira married her next door neighbor on Cambridge Place, George Williams, on 20 October 1897. George was living at 35 Cambridge Place with his family and Alice was living at 37 Cambridge Place with her family. This was probably one of the last times the four surviving James children, Samuel, Jennie, Emma, and Hannah were to get together. The wedding was officiated by Hannah's husband, Joseph France. All Alice's siblings were there along with her cousins Mattie Jourgensen and Grace and Clemens James. From a local newspaper (Brooklyn Daily Eagle):

#### **WILLIAMS-AYER**

The marriage of Miss Alice Wadsworth Ayer, daughter of Colonel and Mrs. Ira Ayer and George A. Williams, son of Ramon O. Williams, former United States consul to Havana, was celebrated yesterday afternoon at the home of the bride's parents, 37 Cambridge place. The Rev. Dr. Joseph France, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Johnstown, N.Y., and uncle of the bride, performed the ceremony. The decorations were in pink and green and the bridal couple stood beneath a canopy formed of pink roses and foliage.

Miss Clementine Ayer, sister of the bride, acted as maid of honor and Robert A. Williams, brother of the groom, was the best man. The ushers were Ernest Baldwin and Lord Mead, both of Orange, N.J. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a gown of white satin and point lace, with tulle veil caught with orange blossoms and carried bride roses.

Mrs. Ayer, mother of the bride, wore heliotrope poplin and point lace and Mrs. Williams, the groom's mother, wore black satin.

A reception followed the ceremony. After their wedding tour Mr. and Mrs. Williams will live at 37 Cambridge place. Among those present were:

Colonel and Mrs. Samuel R. James of Schenectady, the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Joseph France, Mrs. Emma Jourgensen, Mr. and Mrs. Henry S. Beard, Mr. and Mrs. Ramon O. Williams, Mrs. John D. Lord of Baltimore; Miss Julia F Ayer, Miss Jennie Ayer, Miss Edith L. Ayer, Dr. and Mrs. Ira Ayer, Miss Mattie Jourgensen, Mr. and Mrs. William Disbrow, Miss Grace James, Clemence James.

## Moving North

## Appendix

### Appendix

#### *Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania*

By Samuel P. Bates, 1876<sup>25</sup>

Below is the section on Ira Ayer, Jr:

Ira Ayer, Jr., Colonel of the Tenth Reserve regiment, was born in Erie county, New York, on the 14th of July, 1836. He was son of Ira and Julia M. (Wadsworth) Ayer. At the opening of the Rebellion he was a student of Allegheny College. Without waiting for authority he called together his fellow-students, and having had some training in the Sixty-seventh militia, of which his father was Colonel, commenced drilling them. Though earnest in his appeals his company failed of acceptance, until the Reserve corps was authorized, when it was mustered as Company I of the Tenth. He was first in action at Dranesville. He seems to have had a poetic appreciation of valor; for when General Ord, who commanded in the battle, came galloping forward, leading Easton's battery into action, he thus records his impressions: "Just then Ord came dashing up. 'Make way for my artillery,' he shouted, and without slackening his speed dashed by, while his 'war-dogs' followed close behind. The General was an old artillerist, and knew well how to value this arm of the service. The scene was, I think, the most animated that I witnessed during the war. He was mounted on a beautiful bay, and as he rode up, his eyes flashing fire and every lineament of his countenance betokening courage, his presence inspired all with confidence."

In the battle of Beaver Dam Creek he was sent forward with his company to occupy the skirmish line, and remained in this advanced position during the entire engagement, the regiment acquitting itself in the most gallant manner. "About ten o'clock," he says, "the roar of artillery had ceased. In our advanced position we could hear distinctly the movements of the enemy, and the cries and shrieks of the wounded and dying, as lay where they had fallen or were being moved from the field." In the battle of the following day, at Gaines' Mill, he received a gunshot wound in the right side and a severe contusion of the right arm. "Colonel Warner," he says, "mustered the regiment on the 30th, and I shall never forget the glow of soldierly pride with which he commended the company's bravery, and viewed its thinned but still compact ranks." And now came the change of base, with infinite discomfort to the wounded and worn-out soldiers. But a place of rest had not been gained before the enemy attacked, now at Charles City Cross Roads. The Reserves felt the first shock and were terribly scourged, but suffered no diminution of gallantry. In the Seven Days of this contest Captain Ayer's company lost more heavily in killed and wounded than any in the division. As it was the representative of one of the prominent colleges in the State, the fact may be regarded as significant.

At Bull Run, Captain Ayer received a severe wound. Passing over this field nearly a year afterwards the recollection of the battle were brought vividly to his mind and he thus wrote to a friend: "A little farther on we came to the scene of our last year's operations. There is the very field where we lay, Thursday night, August 28th, all day under a hot sun, covered a little from the enemy. This was near Groveton. Yonder is the wood where

## Appendix

our regiment made a charge to take a rebel battery, but without success, and there is the field where they shelled us after dark, throwing their missiles very accurately, but, as it happened, without effect. That was Friday evening, the 29th; and there is the field where our regiment stood picket the same night. Passing on a little farther we come to the house near which we lay Saturday, before we were ordered into the engagement. But here to the right is the very spot where the regiment fought. There fell Captain Hinchman, of Company A, and it is said that he is buried in that little rail enclosure. Here, too, fell Tryon and Pearl; and Phelps, out Lieutenant, a bold and dashing officer, was shot through the breast. No better men graced the ranks of the Union army. On this same ridge the rebel bullet struck my arm, and another went through my hat. The former made a sad hole in my canteen, causing all my cold coffee to run out. The boys in going over the field to-day found what they asserted to be the self-same canteen; but they were mistaken, for I carried it off with me." His wound was a severe one, fracturing the left forearm. At Gettysburg, while reconnoitering, he was fired at by two sharpshooters from an unexpected quarter, but was not hit. Turning suddenly back, a third shot was fired, which just grazed his side, making a deep abrasion, and would have done certain execution had it not been fired at the instant of his turning away, carrying him out of aim after the missile had actually left the piece.

He had been promoted to the rank of Major on the 18th of October, 1862, and on the 18th of December, 1863, was advanced to Lieutenant-Colonel and placed in command of the regiment. When it entered the Wilderness campaign it went with the free step and resolute mien of the best trained and organized soldiers. It had not penetrated far before the old foe was met. In a letter dated May 6th, the second day of the battle, he says: "Our division had been rapidly ordered forward, preparatory as was supposed to a charge upon the enemy's works. I was leading my regiment my regiment into line when hit by a bullet from the one of the enemy's sharpshooters, which passed through the large bone of my leg, causing a very painful though I hope not dangerous wound. I was compelled to leave the field at once, which I did after exhorting my men to do their duty."

For more than a year after the Reserve corps had completed its period of service and been mustered out he was disabled. He was brevetted Colonel for this action, and was warmly complimented by Generals Crawford and Fisher. Only by wounds, however, was he kept from the field, possessing a good constitution and actuated by real patriotism. In person he is six feet in height, well formed, and of fair complexion. At college he manifested a strong liking for mathematics and natural science, and later in his course for lingual studies. Strictly temperate--of tobacco and spirituous liquors abstemious--he was little affected by temptation, as the habits of youth are strengthened and firmed by time.

Colonel Ayer was married on the 21st of December, 1863, to Miss Jennie James, whose mother had, during the war, ministered at the bedside of many sick and dying soldiers, evincing a patriotism as sincere and fervid as the man who bore the musket and met face to face the foe. She watched at the side of one of the brave men of Ayer's company, Edwin B. Pier, a scholar of promise, and after his death wrote a most touching letter, descriptive of the Christian fortitude of the departed young soldier. When Ayer next visited Washington, he called upon the family to tender his acknowledgments for the kindness shown his beloved companion-in-arms, and then for the first time met the daughter. The acquaintance ripened into esteem, and finally resulted in their marriage. At

## **Appendix**

the close of the war, Colonel Ayer settled in Virginia, and now resides at Norfolk, where he holds a responsible position in the civil service of the General Government

***The Battle of Gaines' Hill by: Amanda Theodocia Jones (1835-1914)***

Published in Frank Leslie's Weekly. The author was at the time a friend of Ira's.

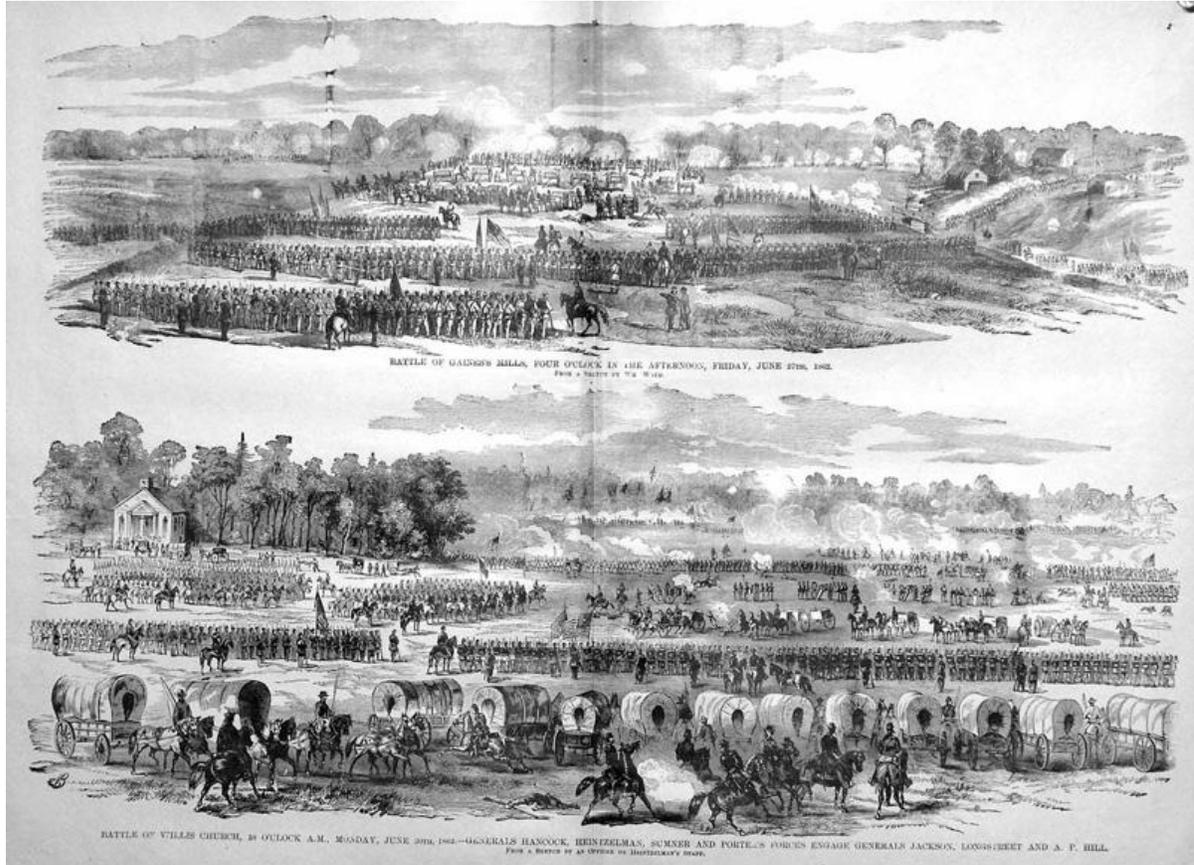


Figure 49 - The illustration that may have accompanied the poem in Frank Leslie's Weekly

June 27, 1862.

INSCRIBED TO THE GALLANT PENNSYLVANIA RESERVES.

The battle's last, long thunders rolled;  
The witness-cloud to heaven was swept;  
And night, the ghostly seer and old,  
Around our blood-drenched borders crept:  
Upon our arms we slept.

We slept: but night, that ancient seer,  
Conned o'er us his prophetic lore;  
And whispered low in many an ear,  
"Thou art, but thou shalt be no more  
When next the cannons roar."

Sleep, that should lift the rugged cross

## Appendix

From staggering souls, but deepened pain,  
With conscious sense of coming loss,  
That like a wind preceding rain  
Blew cold across the brain.

But ah, the rain to come! No noise  
Within our guarded limits ran;  
But heavy hands shook slumber's poise,  
And wearily, in rear and van,  
Our dark retreat began.

The stars, with crimson torches, sought  
Their darkened pathways through the skies,  
When woke our challenge-guns, and brought  
From wary foemen's batteries  
The boom of quick replies;

As if fresh slaughter to prelude:  
The while--by stratagem discreet--  
Receding, pausing, scarce pursued,  
With no disorder of defeat,  
So moved our slow retreat.

But when the sun his sword unsheathed,  
And smote us sore, at bay we stood--  
To God, the Just, our lives bequeathed;  
Planted our guns by vale and wood,  
To wait the rain of blood.

It came! Full soon the war-fiend came--  
Stern as hell's king, and fiery-browed!  
We saw him smite, with hands of flame,  
The solemn battle-harp and proud,  
Where rose the sulphurous cloud.

Behind our potent guns we stood--  
Therefrom the awful war-bolts flew;  
Bomb following bomb, full many a rood  
They plowed the smoking woodlands through,  
And what beside--God knew.

We waited till the hour approved,  
To hurl our forces undismayed,  
Where Death in all his grandeur moved;  
God's cause and Liberty's to aid  
By bayonet, ball, or blade.

## Appendix

There, fires that leap when patriots fall,  
All startling sights that cowards shun;  
All sounds that hurtle and appall--  
The bursting shell, the roaring gun--  
O'er all, the seething sun!

Full closely swarmed the traitor horde;  
Across the hill their bullets sang;  
Along our yielding van they poured--  
Their shouts like peals of victory rang--  
Then, at the word, we sprang.

Sweeping into the front we came;  
Awhile along the hill-side bent,  
Charged through the deep ravine, to claim  
Its walls, for none but heroes meant--  
God with us, as we went.

Then did War's crashing music roll!  
Then did the fire of battle-wrath  
Rush hot through every loyal soul;  
And where we swept, o'er all the path,  
Was agony and scath.

The leaden hail smote left and right;  
The air was like a furnace red;  
The sky was dizzy with the sight;  
The sun was reeling overhead:  
You could not count our dead.

We saw their broken columns swerve;  
They shook and faltered at the test;  
New vigor shot through every nerve,  
And hand to hand and breast to breast,  
The glorious charge we pressed.

We drove them from the gory banks--  
Through forest-aisles their courses urged;  
By field and wood their eddy ranks,  
Like storm-tossed billows backward surged,  
By Northern valor scourged.

\* \* \* \* \*

The battle's last, long thunders rolled;

## Appendix

And down the vaulted skies, once more,  
Came night, the ghostly seer and old,  
To read fulfillment of his lore,  
In streams of stiffening gore.

And we, with weak and gasping breath,  
With hearts that bled for comrades slain,  
Reeled, shuddering, from the hill of death,  
And laid us down to sleep again,  
The soldier's sleep of pain.

But every step upon the ground,  
And every whisper stealing near,  
Smote us anew with crashing sound,  
As if the cannons rent the ear,  
So loud the dead might hear.

The stars their darkest pathways trod,  
When we once more, with staggering feet,  
Low whispering to ourselves and God,  
"Only the sleep of death is sweet!"  
Began our long retreat.

## Appendix

### ***Ira's Civil War Battles***

Date	Battle	Comment
20 December 1861	Dranesville	
26 June 1862	Beaver Dam Creek	
27 June 1862	Gaines' Mill	
30 June 1862	Glendale	
1 July 1862	Malvern Hill	
29-30 August 1862	Second Bull Run	
1-3 July 1863	Gettysburg	
12 July 1863	Skirmish at James College	
13 July 1863	Skirmish at Williamsport	
14 October 1863	Bristoe Station	
7 November 1863	Second Rappahannock Station	
27 November – 2 December 1863	Mine Run	
5-7 May 1864	Wilderness	

## Appendix

### **Letter from Ira Ayer to Mr. L. Matthews**

Office of A S A Commissioner  
Dist of Augusta, Ga. March 5<sup>th</sup>/66

Sir;

It has been reported at this office that a Mrs. Jeddin Adams of your county has failed to comply with the terms of a contract made between her and certain employees (free-people); that the said Adams drew a pistol upon one [Ellafair] [Smens], using the following language - "I'll put six balls through your heart." that a Mr. George Mills acting in the interest of said Adams struck the said freewoman two blows and threatened to "knock out her brains." and further, that the said Mills pursued one Henry [Smens], employee, having a rope with which he threatened to the said employee, with the intention of whipping him.

It is unnecessary for me to inform you that the treatment as reported in inhuman and inexcusable and cannot in any instance be tolerated.

It is further reported that when complaint was entered to you in the above case you [obrectes] the complainants to return to service and in case of a similar occurrence to report again to you.

It becomes my duty respectfully to inform you that if the case receives no further attention at your hands than represented, you failed to give it the investigation which the barbarous and murderous spirit manifested upon the part of the employers demanded that you should.

Hereafter you will not wait for the treats "tieing", "whipping", or "shooting", or any other threats incident to a condition of slavery, to be repeated. The relation of the former slave is now changed. He is a free man, and those who seek to render his condition otherwise must be made to feel the power of the Government to protect them in their freedom. As Agent of the Government you are expected to see that strict justice is maintained between the former owner and the former slave. So far from the countenancing by silence, such conduct as the above, you must bring the offender, whoever he or she may, to sure and speedy punishment. At the same time it is your privilege and duty to encourage the continuation of kindly feelings and mutual good will among all the classes. The interests of humanity and the restoration of civil law and order so essential to the happiness and prosperity of your state are in a measure entrusted to your care. If you do your whole duty you will, in the end, have the sincere gratitude of all intelligent and rightminded citizens.

You will give the previous case a full investigation and if evidence appears of brutal, or unfair, or unkind treatment upon the part of the said Adams or of anyone acting in her interest, you will cause her to pay the complainants an equitable amount as compensation for services rendered. You will also [interssace] your official authority to ensure the peaceful removal of all their effects from the premises of their late employees.

Very respectfully

Ira Ayer, Jr. Bvt. Col. [UVR]

A S A Commissioner

Mr. L. Matthews

## Appendix

Agent Bureau R F A L  
Washington Co. Ga.

## Appendix

### ***Murders and Outrages reported on by Ira Ayer***

After getting out of the army in 1868, Ira Ayer started reporting on “Murders and Outrages” committed on freed slaves. Here is a list from the [Freedmen’s Bureau website](#).

**No. of case:** 30. **On whom committed:** Freedman. **White or colored:** ---. **By whom committed:** Leroy Mallory. **White or colored:** white. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** June 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr. A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in the case:** Report under Cir. 10 for mo. ending May 31<sup>st</sup>/68. Assault and battery on Freedman by Mallory. Case tried before two Magistrates, Wm. Carpenter and Dr. Rd. Berkley. Case dismissed and costs thrown on plaintiff. From evidence the decision was most unjust and in violation of law and evidence.

Sworn statement of plaintiff with names and addresses of witnesses sent to Military Commissioners.

**No. of case:** 54. **On whom committed:** John Lewis. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Robert Doswell. **White or colored:** white. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Aug. 10, 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in the case:** H. 220 R. F. & A. L. Va., 1868, dated Aug. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1868. Reports murder of Lewis by Doswell. Lewis was an old family servant of the Doswell family and aged 65 or 70 years. It appears that Lewis gave some directions to some of hands working in the garden which young Doswell considered an assumption of authority and resented. After some words Doswell struck Lewis on back of head with a hoe from which he died almost instantly. A coroners inquest was called and brought a verdict that the deceased came to his death substantially as above stated, but that the deed was committed "without malice or premeditation." A preliminary trial was held before Justice J. A. Smith, who committed the accused to bail in the sum of \$2000. Forwarded to Hd. Qrs. 1<sup>st</sup> Mil. Dist. Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1868 requesting arrest of Robert Doswell by the Military Authorities.

Referred from Hd. Qrs. 1<sup>st</sup> Mil. Dist. Aug. 22/68 to Attorney Genl. Ste. of Va. to know if the offence is bailable. Returned to Mil. Head Qrs. by Atty. General stating that the offence in his opinion was bailable. Returned to Asst. Comr. Aug. 30, 1868 inviting attention to endorsement of Attorney General Ste. of Va. Filed.

Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. Reports under Cir. 6 for month ending Aug. 31, 1868. Reports further on Doswell case and encloses certified copy of verdict of coroner's jury by clerk of County Ct.

Ira Ayer Jr. A. S. A. C. H. 345 R. F. & A. L. Va., dated Dec. 11, 1868. Submits report in case of Robert Doswell giving evidence to show that Doswell was insane and upon which plea he was acquitted. Filed.

W. A. Coulter, A. A. A. Genl. LS 813, R. F. & A. L. Va., dated Dec. 17, 1868. Addresses Ira Ayer Jr. A. S. A. C. and calls for report of full names of Justices trying this case, and their disqualification, if any, under the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution of the U. S.

**No. of case:** 78. **On whom committed:** Anthony Pierce. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Civ. authorities. **White or colored:** -----. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Sept. 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in this case:** Report under Cir. 6 for mo. ending Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1868. Reports that James D. Benson (white) was sentenced to one hour in Jail and \$50 fine for stabbing Pierce.

Jany. 1867. Ira Ayer Jr. Report under Cir. 6 for mo. ending Feb. 28, 1867. Reports stabbing of Anthony Pierce (colored) by James D. Benson (white). Wound about 3 inches long and 4 inches

## Appendix

deep. Assault unprovoked. Pierce formerly belonged to the 1<sup>st</sup> US C. C. which fact was known, and is believed to have been the cause of the assault. Filed.

**No. of case:** 86. **On whom committed:** Robt. Winston. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Civil authorities. **White or colored:** white. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in this case:** H. 33, R. F. & A. L., Va. 1868, dated Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1868. Reports that in January last, Winston rented a house and lot of Thos. Stanley at \$30 per year - he also rented of the same person some land, he to pay 1/4 of crop and find one horse. A Mr. Mark Harlow had been renting some land from Stanley, occupying a house & lot, for which he paid no extra rent, each finding a horse and dividing the crop equally. After Winston had entered into the contract, Stanley sent him word by Harlow that if Winston was willing they would annul first contract, and he might cultivate the place on the same terms as Harlow. To this proposition Winston agreed & each found a horse & the crop was satisfactorily divided about December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1868. Winston states that up to that time he understood he was to pay no extra rent for the house and that Stanley had never called on him for rent, altho by the first contract \$15 was due the latter part of June. Stanley demanded rent and was refused. When asked why he charged rent he told Winston that it was because he had not made as large a crop as anticipated. Stanley brought suit for \$15, which was given against Winston. The property of Winston has been attached by the Constable and he appeals to the Military for protection. Forwarded to Col. Chalfin, A. A. Genl. 1<sup>st</sup> Mil. Dist., Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1868 requesting reference of the within to the proper Mil. Comr.

**No. of case:** 87. **On whom committed:** Jacob Powell. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Robert F. Rice. **White or colored:** white. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr. A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in this case:** Reports under Cir. 6, Series 1866 for mo. end. Nov. 30/68. Reports that Rice shot two colored men, one on purpose the other accidentally, that he afterwards gave himself up, and was committed in default of bail for \$500. Extract of report returned to Ira Ayer Jr. Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1868 for the names of the colored men injured and a more explicit report of the within case.

Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. H. 346, R. F. & A. L. Va. 1868, dated Dec. 10/68. Reports fully on above case, and states that Rice was employed by Major Archer, that he went to the kitchen premises to eat his breakfast, that after eating he was sitting by the kitchen fire, preparing to smoke, when Jacob Powell, colored, entered and kneeling down between a col'd man & woman presently remarked in a jocular way that he could "knock down any man in the room." Rice got up, walked into middle of room and said "come out here" - after a few passes Powell knocked Rice against the wall, when the latter became enraged, seized an axe and drew it as if to strike Powell - here the other colored men interfered and begged Rice not to strike. Rice went out to a pile of bricks and took up one and threw it at Powell; he then went to a building where he procured a shot gun, which was loaded. Returning with this, he saw Powell standing in the door of the kitchen and immediately drew and fired at him. Several shot struck Powell, one in the eye destroying his sight - with this exception he has recovered. The other colored man was also hit, but not materially injured. After the shooting Rice went immediately and gave himself up to Dr. T. G. Lumpkins, J. P., stating that he had shot Powell intentionally &c. At the November term of the County Court that Grand Jury found a true bill against Rice for shooting Powell. At the trial the counsel for the defence appealed to the prejudices of the Jury-Rice was "an ex-confederate soldier," a "Virginia Gentleman," a "white man," that Powell was a "nigger" &c. The jury found Rice guilty of unlawful shooting and sentenced him to one cent fine and 12 hours confinement in the County jail.

W. A. Coulter, A. A. A. Genl. L. S. 813, R. F. & A. L., Va., dated Dec. 17, 1868. Addresses Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. and calls for a report of full names of Justices trying this case, and their disqualification, if any, under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the U. S.

**No. of case:** 89. **On whom committed:** Jack Parker. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Civil auth. **White or colored:** ----- **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Nov. 1868. **By**

## Appendix

**whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr. A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in this case:** H. 349, R. F. & A. L. Va., dated Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 1868. Civil authorities at November term of Court refused to find a true bill against Peter McGhee (white) for stabbing Parker. Gives particulars of case. Forwarded to Col. Chalfin A. A. Genl. 1<sup>st</sup> Mil. Dist., Va., Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1868.

**No. of case:** 90. **On whom committed:** Andrew Jackson. **White or colored:** colored. **By whom committed:** Calvin Bullock. **White or colored:** white. **Where:** Hanover Co., Va. **When:** Dec. 1868. **By whom reported:** Ira Ayer Jr., A. S. A. C. **Character of the outrage and action in this case:** H. 350, R. F. & A. L., Va., dated Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1868. Reports beating of Jackson by Bullock over the head with a stick. Case has been referred to a Magistrate. Filed.

## Article About Ira Ayer and the Tin-Plate Industry

New York Times, December 15, 1891:

### COL. AYER'S TIN-PLATE FIGURES.

#### HIS SYSTEM FOR SECURING REPORTS OF THE "INDUSTRY."

Col. Ira Ayer, special agent appointed by Secretary of the Treasury Foster to collect statistics on tin plate, has begun sending out requests for information on that subject. He said yesterday that he expected to have some official information, which he would forward to the Secretary about Jan. 1.

Mr. Ayer has headquarters at the Public Stores. He has recommended to the Treasury a system of reports to be made quarterly. Col. Ayer explained that this work was being done in order that the Government might have information on which to act on that provision of the McKinley tariff law which provides that

"On and after Oct. 1, 1897, tin plates and terne plates lighter in weight than 63 pounds per 100 square feet shall be admitted free of duty, unless it shall be made to appear to the satisfaction of the President (who shall thereupon by proclamation make known the fact) that the aggregate quantity of such plates lighter than 63 pounds per 100 square feet, produced in the United States during either of the six years next preceding June 30, 1897, has equaled one-third of the amount of such plates imported and entered for consumption during any fiscal year after the passage of this act and prior to said Oct. 1, 1897, provided that the amount of such plates manufactured into articles exported and upon which a drawback shall be paid shall not be included in ascertaining the amount of such importations."

The statistics which Col. Ayer is after include points enough to settle all the questions which may be raised under this section. He has recommended to the department for adoption a system of reports which prescribe that the forms of invoice shall embrace the brand, number of boxes, size, number of sheets per box, weight of box, total weight, quantity lighter than 63 pounds per 100 square feet, and 63 pounds and over per 100 square feet. Statements from all the rolling mills showing the names of the manufacturers to whom sheet iron and steel have been sold will be asked for. The stamping companies will then be asked to make affidavits as the amounts which have been stamped into articles and afterward tinned or terne plated.

Mr. Ayer said yesterday that he had received reports from the "Tinned Plate Manufacturers' Association of America," which gave the names of concerns engaged in making tinned plate and those which were preparing to do so.

"Will these reports be used in making the official statement to the Government?" he was asked.

"No, they will not," he said. "In making the report to the Treasury nothing will be considered except the sworn statements of the parties making the goods."

The list of concerns counted by the association as engaged in the "tin-plate industry" makes an imposing array—on paper. It includes twenty-three firms. An examination of this list, however, shows that the greater proportion are still doing a business in "futures." The total capacity of these plants, which are to be completed "soon," or which "propose to make tinned plates," is put down by the association at 300,000 boxes a week, which is regarded as a very comfortable figure by those whose enthusiasm on the subject has led them to earn a reputation as "tin-plate liars." Closer examination of this same summary of the association shows that the statement is made that only five of the twenty-three concerns are actually making tinned or terne plates. The five, on their own showing, have a capacity of 3,150 boxes per week, which is said to be barely enough for samples for use in the trade.

## **Bibliography**

- See Volume 1

## Endnotes

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Smith, Ernest Ashton, “Allegheny – A Century of Education”, The Allegheny History Company, Meadville, PA, 1916.
- <sup>2</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers”, B.Singly, State Printer, 1869, Volume 1, pages 813-844
- <sup>3</sup> Smith, Ernest Ashton, “Allegheny – A Century of Education”, The Allegheny History Company, Meadville, PA, 1916
- <sup>4</sup> From Smith, Ernest Ashton, “Allegheny – A Century of Education”, The Allegheny History Company, Meadville, PA, 1916. Smith does not name the person who gave the account.
- <sup>5</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter XII, Pages 818-821.
- <sup>6</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter X, Pages 752-754
- <sup>7</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter X, Pages 752-754
- <sup>8</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter X, Pages 752-754
- <sup>9</sup> Company I muster roll
- <sup>10</sup> Company I muster roll
- <sup>11</sup> Company I muster roll
- <sup>12</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter XII, Pages 818-821.
- <sup>13</sup> Wikipedia, Methodism, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism#Temperance\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism#Temperance_movement)
- <sup>14</sup> AdventurousMuse.com, <http://www.adventurousmuse.com/2010/01/american-civil-war-reenactor-musicians-and-their-instruments.html>
- <sup>15</sup> McCracken, George W, Dedication address for the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Reserves Monument, Gettysburg, 2 September 1890
- <sup>16</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers”, B.Singly, State Printer, 1869, Volume 1, pages 813-844
- <sup>17</sup> Ayer, Ira, Jr. Civil War File, National Archives.
- <sup>18</sup> Price, Angel, “Whitman's *Drum Taps* and Washington's Civil War Hospitals”, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/hospital/whitman.htm>.  
And from PA-Roots.com: <http://www.pa-roots.com/pacw/hospitals/dchospitals.html>
- <sup>19</sup> History Engine, University of Richmond, <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/2036>
- <sup>20</sup> Fromwalt, Lee W., “The Origins of African-American Politics in Southwest Georgia: A Case Study of Black Political Organization During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867”, “Journal of Negro History”, Volume 77, No. 4, Autumn 1992.
- <sup>21</sup> The Jerseyman, Morristown, NJ, Friday December 18, 1885 – Page 3, top of 2<sup>nd</sup> column
- <sup>22</sup> New York Sun, March 1, 1888
- <sup>23</sup> The Jerseyman, March 16, 1888
- <sup>24</sup> Wikipedia “[Great Blizzard of 1888](#)”
- <sup>25</sup> Bates, Samuel P., “Martial Deeds of Pennsylvania”, PHILADELPHIA: T. H. DAVIS & CO., 1876, Part II, Chapter XII, Pages 818-821.