

THE AYER FAMILY – 1802 TO 1903

VOLUME 1



Bill Scholtz
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Preface

Preface

This is the story of three generations of the Ayer family starting with James Ayer, Sr. and Sarah Bradley with a little on their ancestors. It's broken into three volumes, Volume 1 focusing primarily on the first two generations. Volume 2 focuses on the family of Ira Ayer, Jr. (3rd generation) and Volume 3 focuses on the rest of the 3rd generation and a section on the legacy of the family.

The Family Origins

The Family Origins

On 14 December 1794 James Ayer married Sarah Bradley in Haverhill, Massachusetts. James had been born in 1766 and Sarah in 1774.

Like almost everyone in that area of Massachusetts, all their ancestors for the last 150 years were descended from colonists who came to Massachusetts (mostly the northeast corner of the state) between 1630 and 1640. There was little intermarriage with the descendants of the Pilgrims who had come to Plymouth a few years earlier. The events that led to the migration started with Henry VIII, King of England from 1509-1547. As we know he had separated from Rome forming the Church of England. This continued through several monarchs through his daughter Elizabeth, Queen of England from 1558-1603. With no heirs, the crown went to James VI for Scotland. James' religious beliefs clashed with those of the English. He was born a Catholic but raised a Puritan. During his reign the first wave of immigrants to Massachusetts were the Pilgrims in 1620. Then, in 1624, James' son Charles I came to the throne. The religious conflicts worsened until in 1629 when Charles dissolved Parliament. The Puritans, who were opposed to any Catholic like rituals and believed more in the power of preaching, started migrating to New England. They came, not for personal religious freedom, but the freedom to impose their form of religion on everyone else.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was formed from all of what is now Massachusetts north of Plymouth up into Maine. The migration started with Governor Winthrop's fleet of 700 colonists in 1630 and continued until 1640 when Parliament was reinstated. During that time about 20,000 people moved to New England.

Sarah's great great grandfather Daniel Bradley had been killed by Indians in 1689 in Haverhill, Massachusetts, the town that both James and Sarah were born. Shortly after Daniel's death, his daughter-in-law and Sarah great grandmother Hannah Heath Bradley was captured by Indians twice and almost a third time. Several of her 11 children were also killed by the Indians.

At the end of the 18th century, almost everyone in New England was descended from either the Puritans or the Pilgrims and almost no one else.

James had been too young to fight in the Revolution, but his father Richard had responded to the call to arms. All we know about that service is that Richard was Captain of a Company in Col. Johnson's Regiment that marched to the "Alarm" of April 19, 1775. He served seven and a half days. He was also a member of a Committee of Correspondence for the town - appointed July 20, 1774. On January 30, 1775 he was appointed member of the Committee of Inspection for the town.

The Family Origins

With the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, six years before James and Sarah were married they found themselves in a brand new country founded on principals of political and religious freedom. These principals would have a huge impact on them and their descendants.

In 1794 George Washington was near the middle of his second term. In just over 2 years, John Adams, James' [4th cousin once removed](#) would be president.

[James](#) and [Sarah](#) had eight children:

1. [Low Bradley Ayer](#) (1796-1844) never married
2. [Martha Ayer](#) (1796-1852) married Moses Dart
3. [Gorham Parsons Ayer](#) (1800-1870) married Frances Abell (no children)
4. [Ira Ayer, Sr.](#) (1802-1880) married Julia Mariah Wadsworth and Bessie E. Cronkite
5. [Mary Low Ayer](#) (1804-1853) married Nicholas Beal
6. [Sarah Bradley Ayer](#) (1809-1895) married James Black (no children)
7. [Henrietta Ayer](#) (1811-1832) married Darius Atwood
8. [James Ayer, Jr.](#) (1813-1862) married Marcy Hathaway

Much of the information of this volume comes from two sources, "Reminiscences of the Life of a Pioneer", a memoir by Ira Ayer, Sr. and a memorial to Ira by LeRoy Oatman from 1889. Reminiscences is included here a chapter at a time with my comments in footnotes or gray boxes. The memorial is referenced and quoted. Enjoy the rest of the book.

Reminiscences of the Life of a Pioneer – Introduction

When James and Sarah's son Ira was in his mid-80s he wrote his memoirs and called them "Reminiscences of the Life of a Pioneer". Since I can't hope to improve on his work, I'll just include it here with my footnotes and blocks of inserted text where necessary.

Intro to Reminiscences

When Ira was born on December 26, 1802 in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Thomas Jefferson was President. Ira's father James owned a farm on the banks of the Merrimac River. When he was eight years old his family sold the farm put everything they owned in two covered wagons and moved out west; that is to Buffalo, New York. His father got a 439 acre piece of undeveloped land west of Buffalo in an area that is now part of the town of Evans. They built a one room log cabin where the family of ten lived for many years.

The first time Ira was eligible to vote, John Quincy Adams, Ira's [5th cousin once removed](#) was elected President.

In 1828 he married Julia Mariah Wadsworth and they had 7 children. Julia died in 1861.

The original of "Reminiscences" is hand written on all 100 pages of a note book. I have included the original drawings. It was written in the Ira's own hand or by his daughter Sarah sometime around the mid 1880s when the Ira was in his early 80s. It includes a portrait of an elderly man sitting down. This is assumed to be a self portrait.

Toward the end he mentions that his sister Sarah is 78 years old. She was born on April 2, 1809. This implies that the passage was written in 1887 or 1888.

He wrote the stories in response to a plea from two of his children. By about 1920 the book was in the hands of Julia Fletcher Ayer Jessup (Ira's granddaughter by his son Ira II). When Julia was planning to move she was going to throw out all her old things. She told her niece Angela Lucia Williams (daughter of Alice Wadsworth Ayer Williams and granddaughter of Ira II) that she could have anything in the attic. Angela found and rescued the book.

In the 1960s Alice Wadsworth Ayer Williams and her sister Clementine Ayer Morse were doing a genealogical study of their family and had the book typed up. The typed version suffered not only from not having any of the original drawings but the typist took many liberties in interpreting the stories. The typed version was full of changes, grammar brought more up to date, and significantly altered facts. Also the first and last sections of "Reminiscences" were excluded completely.

Reminiscences of the Life of a Pioneer – Introduction

In this version I tried to be as faithful to the original copy as possible. I wanted it typed for the ease of reading, but I wanted to retain as much of the original flavor as possible. I have included all the drawings with as much of the large hand printed parts as possible. I copied the text as faithfully as I could. If there was a word I couldn't read I put it in [brackets] with question marks for the letters I did not understand. The last section was the hardest to read and is full of []s. If I thought that something needed further explanation I put a footnote.

The grammar of Ira Ayer is therefore retained but this means that I also included many of his errors.

Alice and her sister Clementine added a Forward to introduce Ira Ayer. That Forward is included here. The section after that is the original Reminiscences.

Reminiscences of the Life of a Pioneer – Introduction

Intro to Reminiscences – By Alice Ayer Williams and Clementine Ayer Morse

OUR GRANDFATHER, IRA AYER, was born in 1802 on what he described as the most beautiful farm on the Merrimac River, and lived there with his brother and sisters until he was 9 years old, when his father, James Ayer, had the urge to pioneer to western New York so they were in time, ready to start with two wagons covered with blue painted canvas and four fine horses, who would act a very important part in the long journey to the Wilderness. After a fine and exciting trip, they were finally settled on a 430 acre farm on Lake Erie and they grew with the country and prospered. When our Grandfather was 16, he and his brother, 18, walked back to Haverhill to collect mortgages for their father, in all, over a thousand miles. One hundred miles in 3 days. He was born when Thomas Jefferson was President and had his first vote when John Quincy Adams was elected. Those were exciting years especially for the Pioneers. Buffalo on Lake Erie was burned to the ground by the Indians in 1812. Commodore Perry won the conflict over the British on Lake Erie. 1814, battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, and the capture of Fort Erie. The same year Washington was burned and in 1815 the decisive battle of New Orleans was fought. He was a Colonel at 34, and took part in the Patriot War. He had many commissions. And, when, over 60, and Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers, he recruited and trained a Company of young men, and as they were the first to be perfected and to report, were mustered into the service as Co. A, 116, Reg. N.Y. Vol., which served through the entire war. His youngest brother James also recruited and trained a Company and was killed in one of the Southern battles.

Alice Ayer Williams and Clementine Ayer Morse

1960s

Reminiscences – Preface

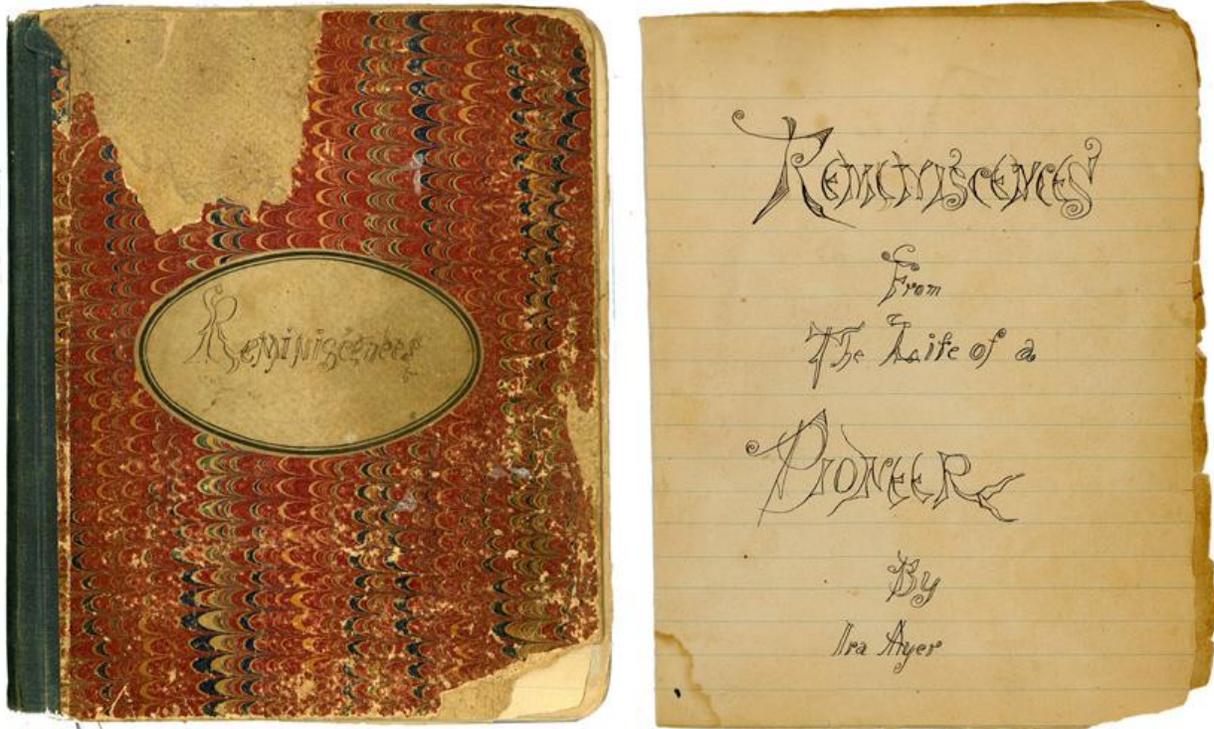
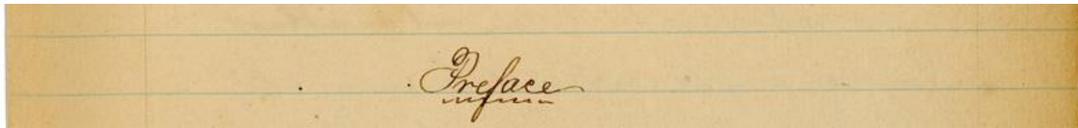


Figure 1 - Reminiscences from the Life of a Pioneer

Reminiscences – Preface



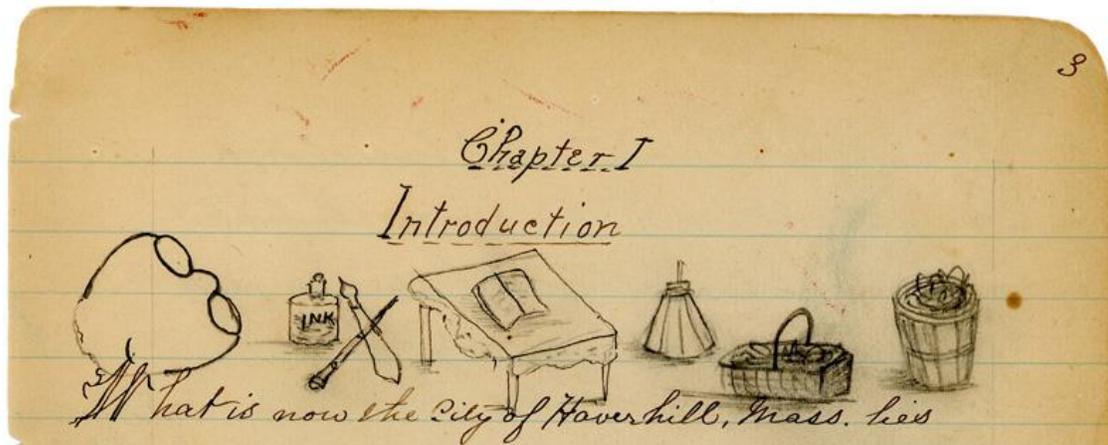
God in the creation of man, saw fit, in his wisdom and in the exercise of His goodness towards him, to give him a lesson of instruction, that he might know where his place was, not only as regards his maker, but also in relation to all animal creation. In this instructive lesson man found that he had a place very near his Creator, so that we find nothing in all animal creation that intervenes between the Creator and the Created man; more than this, God, in the creation of all things that had life placed within them the fear of man, and still more, has taught man to love and obey his Creator, and to rule well over the created. God, knowing the aptness of man to forget, and to let many important things drop by the way, caused it to be written out in a Book, that man might read and know in all generations to come, what the Lord had taught their Fathers; also in order to gratify their aspiration to know the particulars concerning the experience of the Fathers these four thousand years.

Aspirations in the human heart to know the experience of the Fathers of their own family, in generations long since gone by, have not abated in the least; this fact together with the fact, that my son Ira and daughter Sarah are very desirous

Reminiscences – Preface

that I should write out in detail the experiences of my early life, has induced me, in a circumscribed manner, to comply with their wishes.

Reminiscences – Chapter 1 – Introduction



What is now the city of Haverhill, Mass., lies immediately on the north shore of the Merrimac River, about 15 miles from its mouth. About one mile above the city is a very beautiful farm, exceeding any on the river. The north boundary of the river lot, was what is called the River Road. On this road, the buildings of the farm were placed. The house was wood color, and I should think, always had been. The west end was brick; it had a number of holes in it, said to be there for the purpose of shooting Indians in olden times. How this was I cannot say; judging from appearances however, it might have been so, for the house looked as though it had been through the wars. It had a chimney on the brick end. The kitchen, bedroom, and buttery were all the rooms below. There were only one square room and two bedrooms above. The stairs were one side of the chimney. The stories were low; the well was between the house and the barn

Reminiscences – Chapter 1 – Introduction

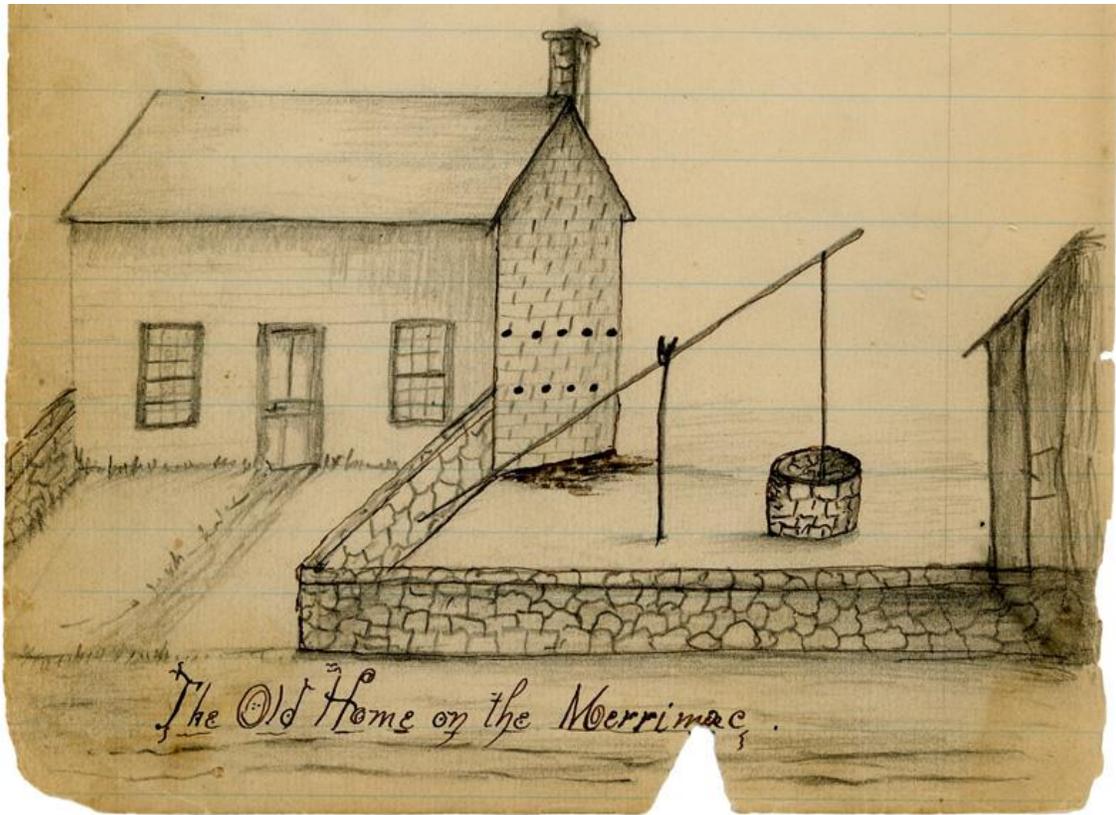


Figure 2 - The Old Home of the Merrimac

I'm not sure about the story of these holes. Haverhill had in the past had a lot of trouble with Indians. But those troubles ended by around 1725. It is entirely possible that the house was that old, but I would guess that by 1800 any holes would have been filled in.¹

The house was on River Road, now called Washington Street (what is now River Street did not exist back then) about a mile west of town. According to research done by the Haverhill library, the home was likely gone by 1851.

It was on this beautiful farm and into this less beautiful house that my parents moved in their early marriage, about 1794. You may ask, reader, "How was it that your father had the best farm on the river?" I cannot tell you how it was, but I can tell you how it was not; viz by any dishonesty, whatever. So I suppose it was by fair contract, just as all my father's descendants do business.

Old Mrs. Frink was a woman with one eye. She lived about half way from my parents' home and the town. It was said she was a witch. She saw my mother about the time of her moving into the new house and said "When you get moved, I will come and see you." I suppose Mrs. Frink was not pleased with my mother's

Reminiscences – Chapter 1 – Introduction

reply, for it was said that after that she looked over into the pigpen and bewitched the pigs. At any rate the pigs jumped out, so the story went, and ran about in such a way as to lead one to say they were bewitched whether they really believed it or not. I remember the old woman very well; she used to call when she came along, to rest herself. As I remember how the old lady looked, if I believed in witches, it would not be hard for me to credit the pig story.

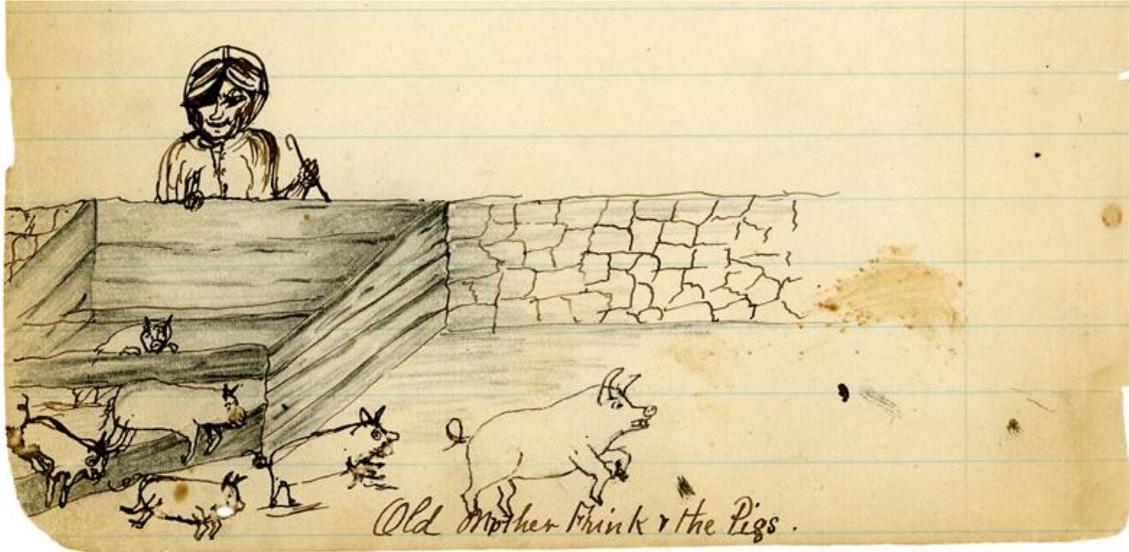
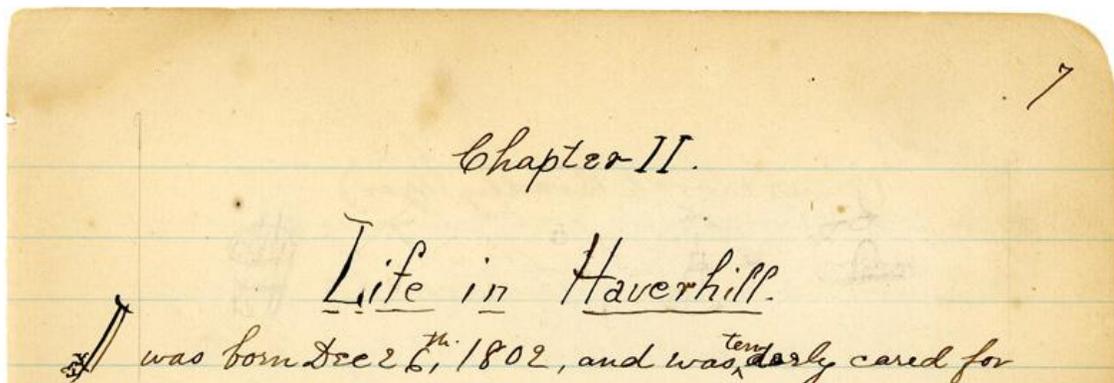


Figure 3 - Old Mother Frink & the Pigs

More on Mrs. Frink from the librarian at the Haverhill Library:

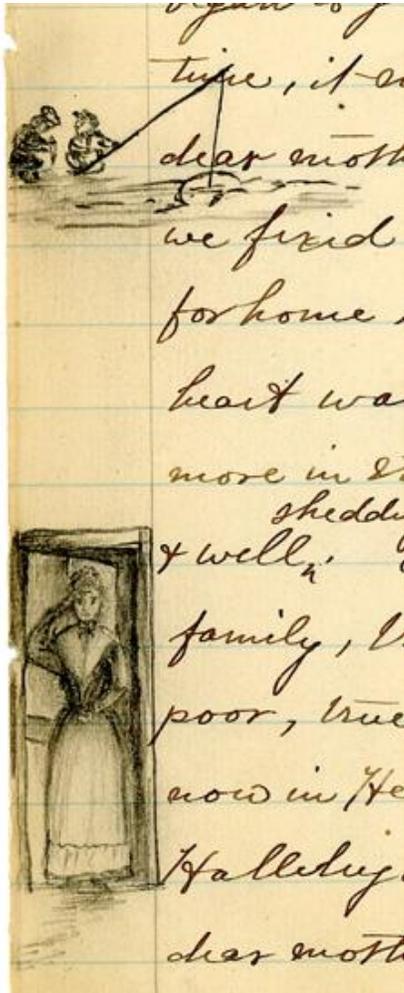
Old Granny Frink is a shadowy figure in Haverhill history. She lived by the river in an area called "Frinks's Borough" or later "The Borough". She must have been Elizabeth Hurley, wife of Andrew Frink. She died 11 May 1816, rather old as she was married prior to 1748 according to Vital Records. Ira describes her just as I imagined she would be.

Reminiscences – Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill



I was born December 26, 1802, and was tenderly cared for in early life, excepting in one case in infancy; my nurse, in a petulant mood, it was said took hold of one of my hands or feet and snatched me roughly into bed. How much this effected my after life I don't pretend to say, but this much I know, I never was such a strong heavy and laboring man as my Brother Goreham. But to say nothing more of this, I was blessed with parents of high respectability, who looked well after my wants, always ready to administer to my necessities. If they saw anything in my behavior not according to the rule of good manners, they admonished me of my fault, if in no other way by the shake of the head. I had only the advantages of a common school education as more than this was not expected except in the few. My parents (James and Sarah Bradley Ayer) were strictly a church going people; they were not professors of religion, but regarded those who were, perhaps we might say, with more respect than otherwise they would. They attended the close communion Baptist church. I well remember that cold Sabbath Day with four feet of snow upon the ground when, we had to go home from church 'cross lots, turning into the lot on the hill not far from Judge Foster's, coming into the road again opposite Shoemaker Harvey's. Here the whiffletree, or something, hit the bar post, or something and broke the harness, which had to be fixed by the shoemaker with his waxedend. Then we got home nicely.

Reminiscences – Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill



As soon as I was old enough, my parents let me go out around with Lowe and Goreham. I remember going fishing with them one cold winter's day, over a mile or two, to a pond. Two or three holes were soon cut through the ice and hooks dropped in; it wasn't long before we had a bite and then a pickerel out upon the ice. Never were our hearts so glad before; at least it will do to say so, he was a large fellow. We caught a larger one that day, at any rate, and I shouldn't wonder if this was the one, after all. We were a happy lot of boys, jumping and laughing, anyone a mile off could see that we had caught a fish, that is if they had pretty good eyes. We arrived home laughing and happy, with three fish and one was a bouncer.

While I was yet in my early boyhood I recall another fishing excursion. Brother Goreham and myself took it to our heads to go a fishing on the river ice, whether with or without the consent of our mother I am not sure. Be this as it may, off we went, a little down the River, I think about half way to the City Bridge. This we called our fishing ground. Our tackling was soon ready, and if we did not cut holes in the ice it was because there were cracks running up and down the ice caused by the tide from the ocean, through which we could fish. What luck we had, this time, I cannot say, but the hours passed on

Figure 4 - Gone fishing

so rapidly that we hardly realized how long we had been gone; rapidly with us, but slowly with dear mother. How little, children know the anxiety of their parents for their safety. We heard a halloing for quite a long time, but were not certain what it was; to be sure it seemed to come from the direction of the house and sounded like our dear mother's voice and yet we didn't know but it was the cock crowing; finally we come to this conclusion, hoping we were right, yet fearing we were wrong. Nevertheless, taking our chances, we kept on fishing; it may be until the evening shades began to gather around us. At the same time, it maybe, we began to feel that our dear mother was concerned about us. So we fixed up our fishing tackling and started for home. No doubt our dear mother's heart was much relieved to see us once more in the body, how happy to see us alive and well shedding it may be tears of joy. Dearest, dear mother, true to your family, true to your neighbor, true to the poor, true to the church, true everywhere and now in Heaven! Glory to God in the highest, Hallelujah to the Lamb forever! Blessed dear mother in Heaven, yes in Heaven! I trust I shall see you there bye and bye dear Mother, amen and amen! You are a stranger to grief now my dear

Reminiscences – Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

mother. The tears that fill my eyes now will be wiped away when I see you. Dear, dear mother, Amen--Amen.

Perhaps during the war of 1812 Brother James, then a baby, had his dish of bread and milk in his lap, while sitting on the floor in the log house. His dish was a pint cup with a handle on one side. While managing as well as he could, holding on to the handle with one hand and eating his bread and milk with the other, he made a little miss and all went on the floor; after his mother had scooped it all up into the dish with her spoon and was about to carry it away, Squire Gray, one of our neighbors said, "Let the baby have it, he will never know the difference!" The Squire spoke in a laughing way, but my dear mother was so far from joining in with him in the laugh, that she said, rather disapprovingly, "I would never give a child what I wouldn't eat myself."

While in my early boyhood, say five or six years old, I commenced going to a public school with brother Lowe who was about 12. Lowe took part with the ball players, while I was nothing but a looker-on. I suppose it was noon-time when the boys out on the sod were playing away briskly, each side striving for mastery as best they could. While thus engaged, with all possible might, young Bartlette sprang forward, with a furious jump to catch a rolling ball in time to hit another before he got to his goal. Bartlette failed; he was a little behind time, and said it was because Lowe Ayer was in the way, and in his fury took the ball, which by the way, was brother Lowe's and threw it at my brother as best he could. How the matter was settled I don't remember, that is, between Brother Lowe and Bartlette; between myself and Bartlette it remains unsettled. Our teacher Mr. Chandler, had but one eye, and had to wear a pad over it. Mr. C. was a very efficient teacher as well as gentleman. Bartlette in school time fixed a pad over his eye, the same as the teacher had, over his and went forward, up the aisle, to the teacher to be instructed in some question in his lesson. I don't suppose the teacher appeared to notice him, but of course it made a great disturbance in the school. This is the last of my remembrance of Bartlette. He may be living now. If so he is about 90 years old. If he by chance should call on me I might see a gentlemen, or a tramp and a scamp; if the former, he has made a happy change for himself, if the latter, he had no change to make. I may be a little prejudiced on account of the play ball affair.

Jim Lenane of the Haverhill Gazette wrote of the ball playing incident on July 28, 1990:

Ira carried this suspicious feeling toward Bartlett for years, and when writing the memoir in his 80s, Ira still wondered if Bartlett were still alive and if he had done through life as "a gentleman or a tramp and a scamp." He admits to a prejudice.. "On account of the play-ball affair."

The rudimentary baseball of those times had not standardized and there

Reminiscences – Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

could sometimes be only one base – called a goal then – or two, three or four or five. It varied. Also, baserunners or goalrunners, were not necessarily tagged out by the defense, but could be put out by having the ball thrown at them while off the goal. Perhaps the young Ira Ayer misunderstood this part of the early rules. At any rate it was decades before the mystical “invention” of baseball by Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown, N.Y.

It is known that the British troops played a baseball like game on the Boston Commons years before the Revolution. It didn't seem to be cricket, nor was it rounders – a game closer to baseball – but had goals and bases, and the thrown ball was hit by a “striker,” who ran to a single base or one of two, three or several.

As for “young Bartlette”, his father Bailey Bartlett, Sr., was a member of the US House of Representatives for the four years before Ira was born and his uncle was friend and classmate from Harvard of John Quincy Adams. The Bartletts are mentioned several times in Adams' diary. Of the two sons who are candidates for “young Bartlette”, the older and less likely, Bailey, Jr. died in Haverhill in 1886, a few years before Ira and the more likely one, died at his estate “Rockwood” Tarrytown, New York in 1867. So, contrary to Ira's prejudice, it is unlikely “young Bartlette” ended up a tramp and a scamp.

In the same summer, on a bright Sabbath day I was standing on the Little River bridge. It was the day appointed for baptism. The ceremony began, and a boy standing by me would say, as each candidate was baptized, “dip.” Only once he omitted to do so and the thought struck me that this one was the boy's sister. I afterwards made inquiry and found it to be as I supposed. However rude the boy was, we find this redeeming quality that he had respect for his own Sister.



Figure 5 - Great Grandmother's Marble's funeral

Now I will go back to the occasion of my Great Grandmother Marble's funeral which I can just remember of attending. I think it is the very first thing in my life that I can recollect. It has just come into my mind. She was about 90 years old. While living she was about as deaf as she could be, and I should think blind too. She lived in one of the old fashioned small wood colored houses, a mile or two back from the River Road and about three miles from us. I want to say a word or two about this old house; I should think it might have been one of the first framed houses ever built in that neighborhood “round about”. Oh how very, very old the old house looks to me, in my mind. When I think of it, it almost makes me lonesome. The funeral ceremonies, I suppose were observed with precision and solemnity. My great grandmother Marble is gone. I suppose she has been in her grave nearly eight years. Good bye dear Grandmother. I hope we shall meet again on the other shore. Amen. The friends went back from the grave to the house again for tea, before parting. I remember

Reminiscences – Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

the fried cakes were not quite cooked through. Good bye to the past; Every day carries it farther and farther away.

This is [Sarah Marble](#). She was the second wife of [Joseph Bradley](#). The only child they had together was [Enoch Bradley](#), Ira's Grandfather. After Joseph Bradley died she married John Marble. Before she married Joseph Bradley she was referred to as Mrs. French from Newbury. It is not known if the name French is from an earlier marriage or if it was her maiden name. She died on April 26, 1809 as age 97..

Goreham and I had the promise of going to see Grandma Bradleyⁱ, sometime, if we would be good children. The long wished for day finally came and off we started as laughing and happy as we could be. We were not long going two miles up the River Road to Grandpa's house. All was pleasant, all was happy: a day or two passed on with satisfaction to all. Finally dear Grandma thought it would be "a good time to get a lot of chips picked up, now the boys are here if they are willing." Of course we made no objections. Baskets, new and old were brought forward, and carried out to the chip yard for us to fill as best we could. We soon found the yard of chips was not sufficiently large to fill all the baskets with good chips, yet we supposed our dear Grandma expected we would fill all the baskets with good chips. Finally we concluded to solve the difficulty by putting small chips in the bottom of the baskets and good ones on top. In this way we could fill all the baskets to satisfaction, at least in appearance.

ⁱ Grandma Bradley is [Mary Low Bradley](#) (1747-1822), wife of [Enoch Bradley](#) (1749-1834)

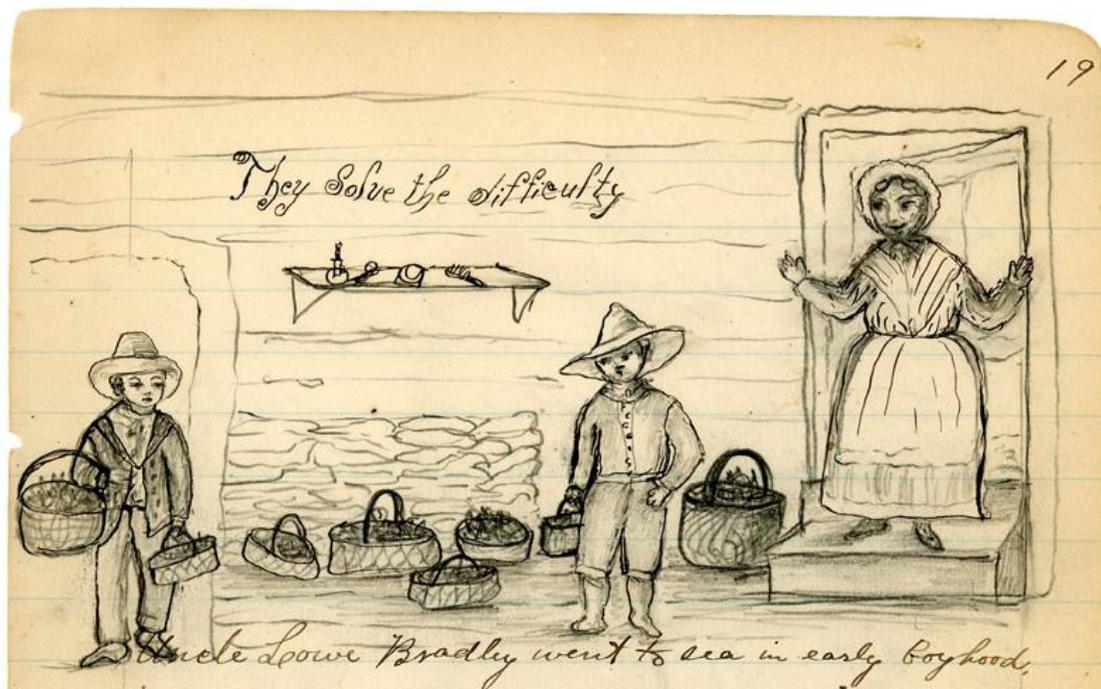


Figure 6 - They Solve the difficulties

At it we went and in due time we had them all filled and carried into the woodhouse. We heard nothing of our mode of filling the baskets until dear Grandma came to our house, visiting, when she told Mother all about it. Of course they had a good laugh at Goreham's and my expense: but as I remember about it now, it was a matter of necessity: so, at least, it seemed to us at the time. Dearest Grandma Bradley how long since you have passed away into the great future! How soon am I to follow! Your generation is gone and mine will soon be with it. How I like to indulge in the thought that we shall meet, dear Grandmother bye and bye. How beautiful, how grand the thought! It is engraved as we may stay, on the pillars of heaven! It is the paramount of glory. I hope we all will be there!

Uncle Lowe Bradleyⁱⁱ went to sea in early boyhood, I suppose by the consent of his parents. In after years he was captain of a vessel, was cast away and remained on masthead three days. He was a man of very fine appearance, more than ordinary height, straight, heavy, broad shouldered, commanding attention wherever he might be, without saying a word. After leaving the Sea, he bought himself a small farm about two miles above our house, a little off from the River Road, perhaps on the same place where Grandma Marble used to live. He built a very pretty house, not to say large and expensive, but just such a one as it might be expected a man of his appearance would build. On his way to town he would often call to see his sister. I remember that one of these occasions dear mother

ⁱⁱ Captain Low Bradley was born [Caleb Low Bradley](#), on 22 Feb 1780. He was between 25 and 30 years old at the time of the bird story to be described. He died 1821.

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had carpet rags around sewing, and Uncle Lowe took to show the children how to sew them. At another time, he called to take tea. Of course I was too young to sit at the table when Uncle Lowe was there, so I stood by the fireplace. In the mean time I had a young robin concealed in a hole under the oven. During the time of eating the robin made a loud chirping. Not thinking anything in particular was the matter with little robin, I didn't go near it for fear of Uncle Lowe's hearing that I had a robin in that dark hole. I knew if he found it out he would reprove me sharply for doing such a thing to a young innocent bird, and finally say so much I would have to let it go. The bird, after a while stopped its chirping and as I supposed, all was well. No sooner had Uncle Lowe left than I ran to the hole. An awful sight greeted me, one I had never seen before and I do not remember any since that, that ever gave me such a shock. The old cat had done the mischief. Had I known what was going on, Uncle Lowe or no Uncle Lowe I should at once have run to the rescue of robin. What added to my grief was, that I should have to wait a whole long year before I could have another, it being past the time to catch young birds.

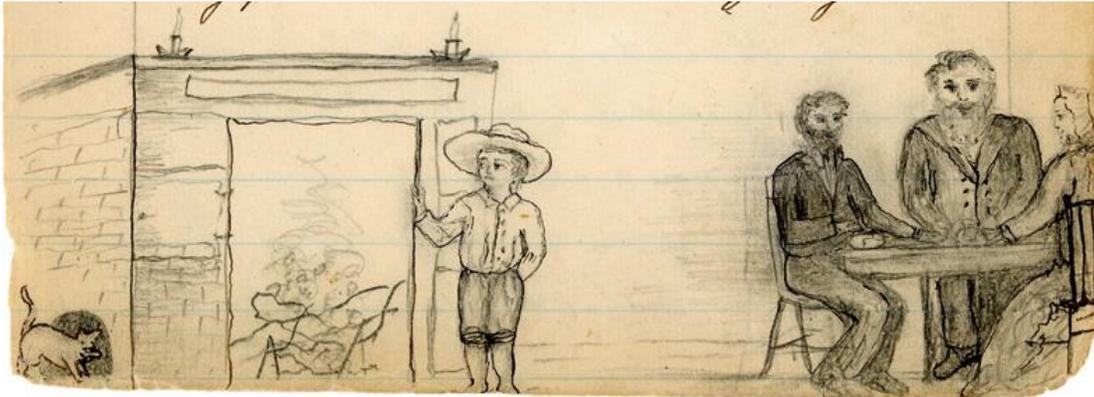


Figure 7 - Should have rescued the Robin

But I must pass on, Uncle Lowe has long since passed away, I hope to that better land.

The potatoes were [???]: the corn in the other end of the field was not gathered in: the after grass on the meadow was grown to make a good bite for the milk cows, but what was to be done! Father finally concluded to turn the cows on to the grass, and let Ira watch them to keep them from the corn. How long the corn was safely guarded, I am not able to say. After a while, watching the cows became an old story; so pleading loneliness I finally prevailed upon them to let Sister Mary go with me to watch the cows. This went on very well for a while, until we finally concluded to play at something. We decided upon making ovens by covering our feet with dirt, on the potato ground, in a very firm way, so that the dirt would not cave in when we drew out our feet. In this way we passed our time very happily for a number of days, it may be; in fact we began to think more of making ovens than of watching cows. It seems that the cows thought luck had

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turned in their favor; the watchers being on one end of the field and they on the other, they concluded to try a little corn with their grass: So into the corn they went, and began eating as fast as they could. Mary and I were so engaged in our play we had quite forgotten the corn, but, in the mean time, our father had seen, from the house that the cows were in the corn. Soon, we saw him coming as fast as he could with a small stick in his hand.

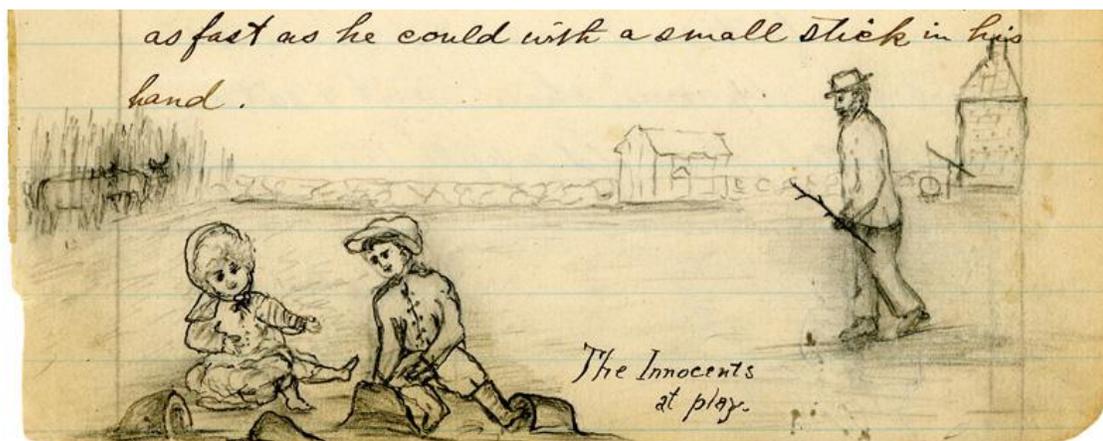


Figure 8 - The Innocents at play

I suppose we thought it a very strange way for Papa to come, so we asked him what he was coming for. He said "he would show us." Soon he had me by the shoulder with one hand, and was whipping me with the small stick in the other. Then he said "Go and drive the cows out of the corn." While the whipping proceeded Mary was crying to see how Papa was whipping Ira, not thinking that she herself might soon pass through the same experience. But no sooner had he finished whipping me, than he took her and did the same with her saying, "Now go to the house." Of course I ran as fast as I could and drove out the cows from the corn, then went and sat down in the crotch of an old apple tree as mad as I could be.

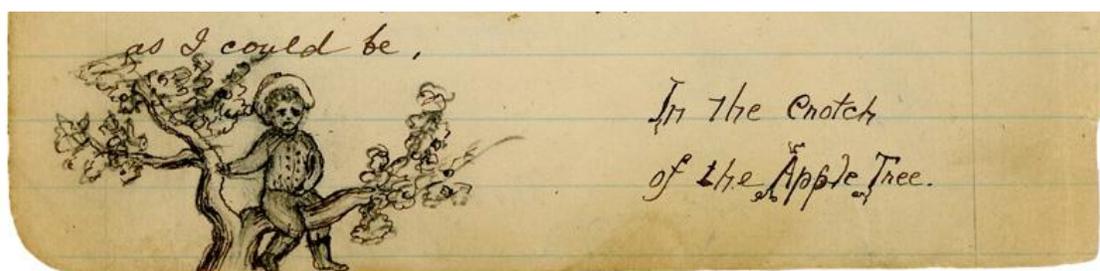


Figure 9 - In the Crotch of teh Apple Tree

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One day my dear Mother had a matter to attend to upstairs and took baby Sarah and myself with her. Soon she was ready to return and on her way said hastily, "you stay here Ira and take care of baby." Not giving me time to even say "I don't want to." I felt it all the same, notwithstanding. The words rang in my ear, You stay here, Ira, and take care of the baby. I looked the words over with much care, hoping to find some loophole where I might dodge out, but I found none. I could put but one construction upon it; in fact, it meant but one thing; just the right words were used, not one too many nor one too few. Now the question was, what did Ma mean by care. Well, I finally thought she meant



Figure 10 - Taking care of the Baby

keep baby from falling down stairs. So I kept the stairs well guarded, and let baby creep around as she would. By and by she crept into the bedroom: the window was low and shoved up. It may be baby thought it a good time to see what there was in the outside world, and in order to see to good advantage, she found it necessary to get her little stomach pretty well up on the window stool. Now, I thought, was my time; Baby will not come to the stairs now, and down I went. No sooner had I reached the floor than my dear Mother asked in a very earnest and excited tone, "where is baby." "Looking out of the window," I replied. "Run up and get her quick!" she exclaimed, more excitedly than ever. On the instant the point flashed into my mind, and the next moment I was at the head of the stairs, but no baby was there. I ran to the window just in time to see dear Mother taking baby from the ground. The little innocent was not badly hurt, after all. After she was rocked to sleep, Mother said to me, "I should have thought, Ira, you would have known better!" All I could say, was "I didn't know she would fall out of the window."

The common way of traveling for people going to Town from the back country, was on horseback. If the traveler was seen coming by the farmer, he would make it in his way to be by the roadside, in order to have a little talk with him. This was expected on both sides, for they believed, in those early days in the practice of reciprocity. Their greeting would seem to be almost in the form of a dialogue, commencing it might be in this way; "How do you do Sir?" This would be the

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introduction on both sides. Then one party would ask at the other "What may I call your name Sir, if I may be so bold?" "Not at all, Sir, my name is John Dole. What may I call your name, enquires horseback, with a respectful nod of the head. "My name is Ayer, James Ayer," with a genteel bow. "Well Mr. Ayer you have made a great improvement since I traveled this road before, excepting in the old house with a brick end; that looks just as it did in war time. Let me see, how old are you?" "If I live to see the 25th of next month I shall be 38 years old," was the reply. "Oh, I am a good deal the oldest. I was all through the Revolution. Well I was going to say something about the old house, it was wood color then, and its the same now: it don't look as though it ever saw a painters brush in the world, does it now? The old brick end looks the same as it did in war time, holes and all: we used to call them port holes. Often a company of us, after we had been out on skirmishing duty, would come down this way. If we saw a puff of smoke from one of the port holes, we knew there was trouble. If we judge we were strong enough to storm the garrison, we made a rush at once; if not we turned and run as fast as we could. In one instance while running in this way, one of the boys received a slight wound. Upon this we made a rush on them (Indians they proved to be) hit or miss and gave them a good flogging, killing a few and making prisoners of the rest. After hand cuffing them and tying them together with a bedcord we had with us, we took their guns and marched for town where the prisoners were securely placed in the "jug up," as we called it. That was the last trouble we had with the Indians.



Figure 11 - What might have been

While I do not say that the above conversation ever actually occurred I do say it is very likely to have occurred and in very much after the manner indicated.

I love this story because Ira starts out saying it is an example of the kind of greeting that would happen, but, since it gets so technical you forget that and assume it actually happened.. Again I don't know about the Indians being around at the time of the Revolution. I can't find any issues with Indians in and around Haverhill after 1725.

As for John Dole, I can't find a Dole in Haverhill at the time named John.

Is it a true story? Who knows?

The witch bridge was about a quarter of a mile above our house, on the River Road. I have sometimes thought in my own mind why it was called witch bridge, and finally concluded that in a very early day, grandmother Frink had stopped there possibly to take a drink of water from the brook and that some one who came along not knowing the old lady had gone home and told his folks that he

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had seen an old lady down by the brook bridge who looked like a witch and that ever after, they called it by the name of witch bridge.

Uncle Peter Ayer lived about a quarter of a mile above the witch bridge. He had a large family much respected by his neighbors. He had six daughters, Abigail, Harriet, Adaline, Ann, Jane, and Clarissa. His three sons were Richard, Robert, and Varnum. Abigail married Capt Lowe Bradley. They had two sons, one of them, I think, engaged in business in N York City. I have made some inquiry, hoping to find him the same Bradley that was chosen a member of the Pres't Hayes committee to decide who was Pres't; but as I couldn't make it appear very clear I let it drop.

Since Ira didn't have the benefit of Google, I figured I'd do it for him. His uncle had two sons, Caleb Low Ayer Bradley and Horace Strong Bradley. Caleb Low died in Haverhill in 1855. Horace was a silversmith in Utica, New York where he died in 1856 (not New York City). If you see any silver that has the stamp "H. S. Bradley Utica", you will know who made it. They both died long before Hayes took office in 1877.

By the way, since children of Ira's uncle Low and his first cousin Abigail, the sons were Ira's first cousins and first cousins once removed. Low and Abigail were not closely related though.

Richard Ayer married a girl by the name of Head. She lived over the River, about opposite, I should think. She was an only child but not generally thought to be very attractive. Her Father was said to be very rich. I don't know whether that had anything to do with the marriage, or not. Robert was looked upon as a sharp dealer, though as I should presume, highly respected by his acquaintances. Varnum, when we left Haverhill was yet in his boyhood. He was older than myself, yet we mated very well. On one occasion we were out in the barnyard, playing. His uncle James Ayer, my father, was cleaning out the stable. Varnum was maneuvering around, and happened to be standing right opposite and near by a large opening, between the boards. His uncle made up his mind that he, Varnum, was about to treat him in a way unbecoming to a man of his age, and an uncle at that. So he concluded to help master Varnum out with his play; that there should, in fact, be two parts to it, one part to be performed by Varnum on the outside and his own from within. The inside party discovered the beauty of the play depended upon his performing his part at the instant the outside party had finished his. A shovel full of fine manure was in readiness and at the right moment, thrown from within through the boards, with a force, that no doubt led Mr. Varnum to say in his own mind "Uncle James acted his part well," while his Uncle James felt that he had given as good as was sent, in other words, had paid for all receipts in full, to date.

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Varnum grew to be a clever man and married well; although it was said of him that he would not confine himself to water to quench his thirst, when he could get something he liked better.

I can't find on James Varnum Ayer and his thirst for drink other than water, but he was born in 1796 and died after 1850. He married first Mehitable Bradley (distant cousin) who died six years later and married second Mary Graves Kimball.

The history of Uncle Peter's family is ended. It may be I am the last to tell the story. What is man? He comes forth in the morning; he flourishes like the grass of the valley at noon day; at evening he is cut down like the mown grass, and is no more.

Uncle Peter Ayer was born in 1756 and died in 1825. His wife, Abigail Eaton died in 1815. I can't find much else on the family.

The time for going into a new country was near approaching. Some things were already packed; the looking glass was removed and nothing but the bare post remained where it had so long been hanging. All was confusion. The far west was the order of the day. Sister Martha was 13 years of age. Jim Kelly was a tall young man who had the appearance of not being favored with the advantages of social life, and seemed to care little for what might be said to him for his improvement. Martha occasionally would indulge in trying a joke on Jim. As luck would have it, about this time Jim came in; Martha met him with a look of excitement and said, "Jim, what is the matter with your face?" "Nothing as I know of," was the reply. "Nothing!" said Martha; "then what is it that makes you look so; I should like to know? have you been having a fuss with some body? do you have spells sometimes Jim? go look in the glass, and see for yourself." At the time Martha stepped one side, in order that Jim could see the way opened for him to go to the glass. While on his way Martha sprang for the door out of Jim's sight to enjoy a good laugh. Jim went up to the post with no little curiosity to take a look at his face, but to his surprise found nothing but a bare post; he saw the joke at once, and started for the door, grumbling as he went along, "that's just one of Martha's tricks." I have no recollection of hearing anything from Jim since Martha had a long laugh at the time, and I suppose for weeks after would laugh out when she thought of it.

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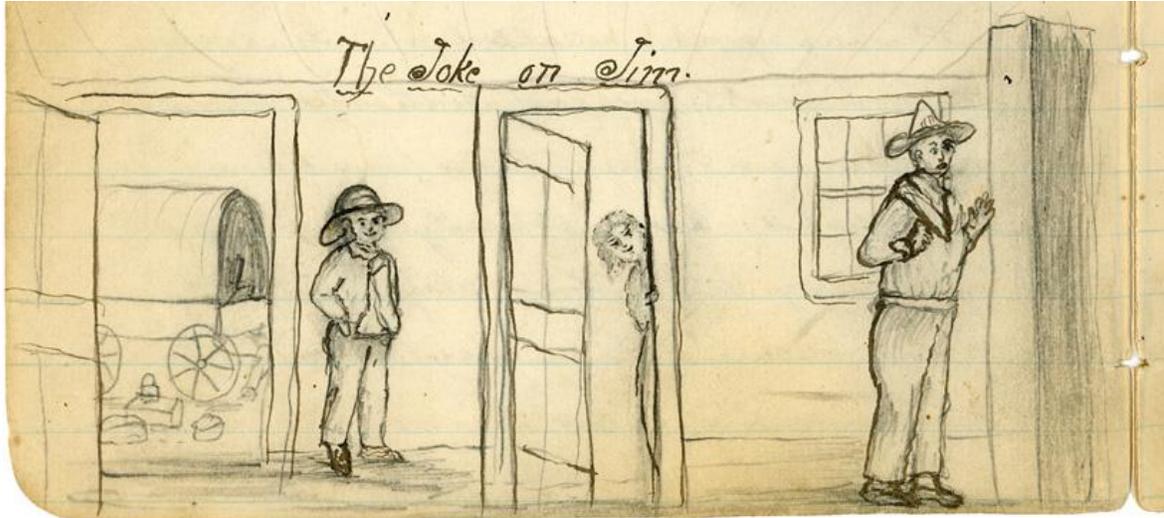


Figure 12 - The Joke on Jim

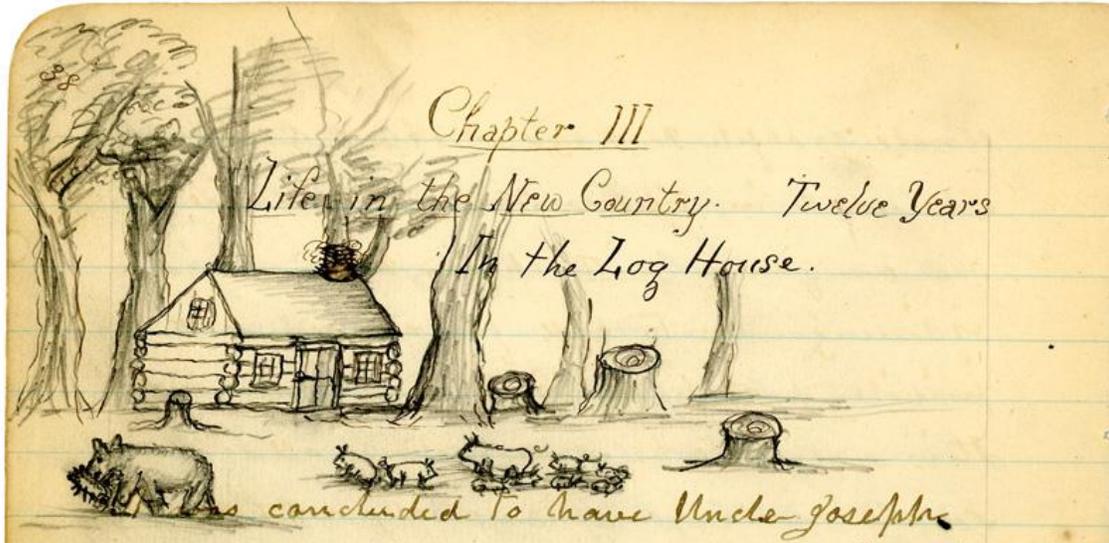
I haven't found anything in Jim Kelley. I found a James Kelley born in 1783 but he would have been almost 30 at the time of "The Joke on Jim". I have found no records of him after his birth.

More on Martha in the next chapter.

In a short time all was in readiness for a start. Two wagons covered well with painted canvass, one for the family, the other for the luggage; stood at the door. To them were attached four fine horses well [Red?] up, who seemed to understand they were to act a very important part in going the long journey to the far west. Some things for common use, such as table ware and the like were packed in the wagon; some pretty well worn were thrown away, and the balance I suppose was laid aside to go at auction. Neighbors to say goodbye had called; the Family were all seated in the wagon, tears all wiped dry. The horses at the crack of the whip, started.

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It was concluded to have Uncle Joseph Bradley go with us and have a voice in some of the movements of the journey. We started briskly on and reached Bilricaⁱⁱⁱ sometime before sunset, but Uncle Joseph thought it would be as well to stop for the night. This conclusion of Uncle's that it would be as well to stop for the night, together with the fact that Bilrica was to the left of the road that should have gone, appeared a little strange to Father, but after hearing all the facts in the case there was nothing strange about it. Miss Brower was Uncle Joseph Bradley's Prettiest girl, and she lived in Bilrica. From Bilrica we started on our journey with cheer. Our manner of living was to call for a room, with the privilege of providing our own meal. This seemed to be satisfactory all around. So we moved on pleasantly and happily. We crossed the Hudson at Albany, took the Cherry Valley road, and moved nicely on. It might have been somewhere on this road that it was thought it best to have a little change in our way of living. I think it was in a village place; we called for our meals right out. This made it much easier for dear mother and smoother as we might say all around. The bill was \$7,00; even after that, we fell back on the old plan. As days passed on, nearly four weeks passed by, until the number of days and number of miles to our journey's was complete. Here, in due time, Uncle Joseph left us, to go back to Haverhill, I suppose, by the way of Bilrica. I think we stayed in Buffalo about three weeks. We found it a new country town, nearly all; from where the Mansion House is now, to the Buffalo Creek was a swamp of adders. No one spoke of Buffalo as to what it was but, as to what it is going to be.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is Billerica, a town about 15 miles Southwest of Haverhill.

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The trip from Haverhill to Buffalo is about 500 miles. They were able to make the blazing speed of about 15 miles per day. Remember that there were no paved roads and few bridges. You drove through streams and rivers (mostly the Connecticut and the Hudson) were likely crossed on rafts. Usually there was a rope that crossed the river that was used to pull the raft from one side to the other.

Buffalo was first settled in 1789 and the town founded in 1801 as New Amsterdam (it was renamed Buffalo in 1808). That was only a few years before the Ayers arrived around 1811. The 1810 population was 1508 and Erie County as a whole, 4667². The town was burned by the British in 1813 as part of the War of 1812 and the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. By the time Ira wrote Reminiscences in the mid-1880s, the population of Buffalo was about 200,000 and almost 300,000 in Erie County. So, when Ira talks of Buffalo as being very different from when he first arrived, he wasn't kidding. It was a small village then. But if you compare 1880s Buffalo to Buffalo today, while the changes are huge, the population is around the same, 260,000. The County population is close to 1 million. Both are down from their peaks in the mid 1900s when Buffalo was close to 600,000.

During our stay in town Pa, I suppose, was inquiring what the farming lands were in every direction. He finally concluded to go up the Lake. Everything being ready, we went as far as the Eighteen mile creek, (Pa_ had already been to see Mr Palmer he was keeping Tavern at the mouth of the creek on the up Lake side, Mr Palmer showed Pa_ a small log house where he could move his family; the house was on the same side of the creek that the Tavern was) most of the way on the beach. It was dark. Pa Halloed, Mr Palmer from his home across the creek answered and soon he was out with a lantern. He shouted to us, the best he could where to go into the creek, and what course to take, when we got there. Pa understood, and drove as well as he could, and the horses pulled the best they knew how, and up the creek we went; sometimes, it may be, the water would run into the box; then we would find ourselves on the rapids; then would stop to hear what Mr Palmer said; then it may be, we would turn to the right or left as Mr Palmer would direct; so up the creek we went, about a half a mile; then another shout from Mr Palmer. "Come out of the creek here:" we stopped to hear what our guide said. "Come out of the creek here;" he cried the second time. Pa_ drew on the gee line and cried out at the top of his voice, "Getup!" The horses sprang; the next moment both wagons were high and dry: we found we had reached our new home. Dear Ma inhaled a full breath and all was right again. Pa and Mr Palmer consulted together a short time. The house was provided with a light; goods were carried in; the horses were cared for; supper was brought forward and placed on the table in good condition; everyone felt like eating their portion and all were cheerful and happy. Mr. Palmer after kindly doing for us all that was needed to be done said goodbye and went home. The bed time hour was at hand, beds were made ready and soon all were in bed sleeping sweetly.

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The next day was the time to put every thing in order. The old log house was small, yet a place was found for every thing and every thing was put in place. So far, so good, but where is our farm? was in inquiry. In a day or so Pa started to find a farm. He went to Springville and found one that suited him, I suppose, very well. He soon returned home and started for Batavia to get an Article. As he started along he called on Mr. Palmer and told him he was on his way to Batavia to get an Article of a piece of land in Springville. Mr. Palmer advised Pa to look up the Lake as he thought he might do better; so Pa turned and went home, and soon selected the farm, a part of which James Ayer now lives on. He soon started for Batavia the 2nd time and took an Article for 439 acres; but Ma and the family had a great fright about Pa; he was gone so long, we certainly thought that something bad had happened to him. We thought of many things; possibly he was taken sick, or the horse had been stolen, or that Pa had been robbed, or that he had fallen from the wagon and was badly hurt; possibly killed; as days passed on we more and more feared we should never see dear Pa alive. Again dear Ma began to look over our situation to see what would be best to do if we had lost dear Pa. We kept looking and wondering until our last hope had almost faded out. By and by while all this was going on in our minds, some one cried out, "Pa is coming!" All ran to look; "yes" said another "that's dear Pa!" Then as with one voice they all cried out "Yes our dear Pa is coming! dear dear Pa Pa is coming!" Soon he was at the door. All ran to kiss him. After the greeting was somewhat subsided, dear Mother said, "Mr. Ayer what has happen to you that kept you so long?" "nothing;" said dear Pa, "only bad roads." He had gone and done his business all right, and come home as soon as he could. Now for moving to our new neighborhood. After a day's rest, dear Pa went up to see what was the first thing to be done.

Following the Revolution, New York and Massachusetts signed a treaty to determine who own what is now western New York. It would be part of New York State, but Massachusetts would own the rights. In 1788 Massachusetts sold the western most 6 Million acres of New York State to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, both of Massachusetts, for \$1 Million. That's about \$20 Billion today. After various activities, in 1793 the western most 3.2 Million acres were sold to a group of Dutch investors calling themselves the Holland Land Company in what was known as the Holland Purchase. In 1801 the company set up an office in Batavia (about 60 miles east of where the Ayers were staying) to sell the land to individuals.³ It seems from what Ira said, you first picked your plot of land locally and then took the paperwork to Batavia to arrange for payment. The Holland Land Company was in business until 1840 when they sold off all remaining lands.

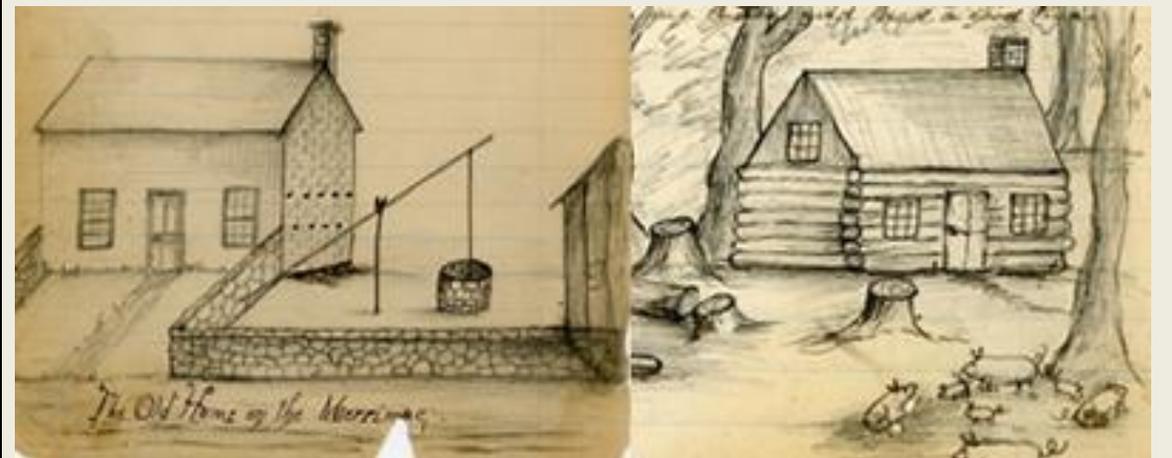
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Figure 13 - Holland Purchase

We don't know what possessed the family to sell their beautiful farm on the Merrimac River in Haverhill and move to what was literally the wild west. They moved from where their families had lived for over 170 years to an area where they knew no one. We learn later that the farm in Massachusetts was sold for over \$1,000, not too shabby. So, it was not that they were financially strapped. Maybe they decided to sell their relatively expensive farm in Massachusetts for a relatively inexpensive one that may have been much larger. It's not likely that they had 439 acres in Massachusetts.

Even though Ira says that the farmhouse in Haverhill was not the most beautiful part of the farm, it was like a mansion compared to the home they would live in in New York. The one in New York was a one room log cabin. The one in Massachusetts had a center room and two bedrooms on the second floor. That one room house was where the growing family lived for 12 years according to Ira.



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Now Pa is gone, it will be a good time to tell what a scare I had with a bull dog. I had made myself a squirt gun and was playing with it around, and as I and bull dog were standing near the bank of the creek together, I squirt some water in bull dog's face, I thought by bull dog's actions he didn't like it very well; he stood on his hind legs, so that we stood face to face, his head as high as mine; he appeared to be angry. I kept the dog between myself and the creek as well as I could then went to patting him, saying, "good bull dog!" After a while, he seemed to cool down and I carefully separated from bull dog. I never squirted water at bull dog after that.

In a day or two, Pa returned. He said that a man by the name of Taylor had very kindly offered to have us move into his house, until we could build ours. Pa said Mr. Taylor's People were mechanics and would help us about building. We got ready as soon as we could and moved in with our new Neighbor. Arrangements were made at once for building our log house; soon all was ready and Neighbors from far and near, were invited to the raising. At the appointed time they come dodging through the bushes from every quarter. When night came, the log house was up. All were friendly wishing us good luck, saying they were glad we had come to take a part in the woods with them and with a friendly goodbye, left for home.

I think before we had time to do anything more to the house four feet of snow fell. This was a set back, to be sure, but perseverance was the order of the day; all hands went at it with a will: every day told something I think. In about six weeks the house was ready for the new comer; no chimney, no hearth, and I think no chamber floor, yet the house was ready for the newcomers. At the word ready we moved in at once; the winter was cold but wood was plenty, and near by; we cut our wood 4 feet long, sometimes our backlogs would be 2 feet through. We would stick the ax in one end of the log; the men get hold of the helve next to the ax; then the women would get hold of the mens hands and all pull together. The log would move at once: sometimes the first haul would take it to the right spot for rolling onto the fireplace where it belonged. The next thing would be back stick about a foot through, the fore stick about the same size. All this we would call a good foundation for a fire. (One thing I have forgotten to tell you; for hand irons we used short pieces of wood.) Now would come on the kindlings and small wood well rounded up with the latter. The large sticks would last 24 hours round, the small wood put on as needed. In this way we would have a variety of climate as dear Mother used to say, in cold weather freeze on one side and burn the other. Dear Pa made it his first business to cut all the trees within reach of the house so they would not be falling onto the house by the wind, or any other cause. While engaged in this business, he came to a tree that seemed to say to the woodsman use your best skill to make me fall this way or that way, I will go where I am a mind to. It was a large beach, rotten on one side. Dear Pa didn't pretend to be much of a woodsman but thought he would try it any how. It leaned a little towards the house. Pa commenced chopping, using all the caution he could, to keep the tree from falling on the house. The baby was in the corner by the fire. Dear Mother was near, if not in the very place where the tree fell, looking

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through, between the logs, watching the tree. As the time drew near for its falling, anxiety increased on the part of all. Dear Mother and baby were on the side of the house where the tree was about to fall. All was silent but the sound of the ax. Soon there was trembling in the top, a sure indication that a tree is about to fall, dear Mother was looking out between the logs. The tree started. Pa Halloed to the top of his voice, Mother ran to the baby to run out with it if possible in time to escape harm. The tree fell just where she had been standing. You see Mother was saved by her love for the baby.

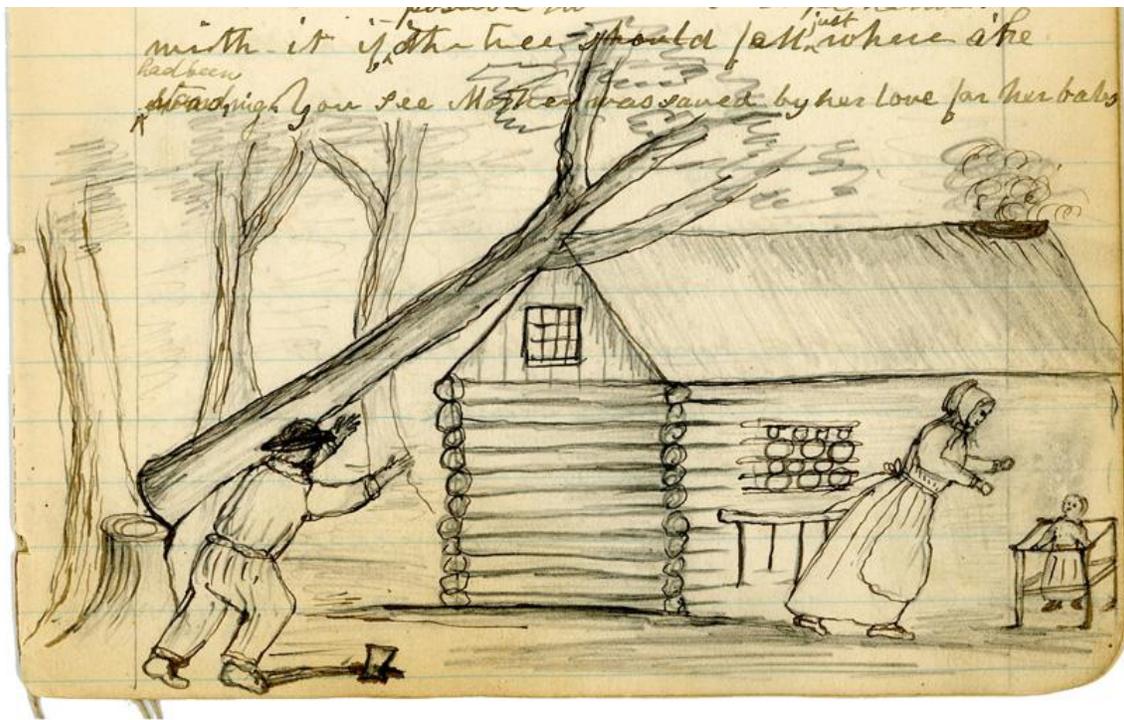


Figure 14 - Saving Baby

Baby is James Ayer, Jr. (1813-1863), the only child to be born in New York.. Having survived the Saving Baby incident, he died in Baton Rouge of disease while fighting in the Civil War as a Captain for the Union Army.

We had been living in the log house about two years. Bear thought it about time to make the newcomers a fashionable evening visit, but when he got to the house of the strangers he found all in bed fast asleep; bear thought it not worth while to disturb them; there being plenty of young hogs around, he could get his own supper all very well: as he was somewhat tired by his long travel he felt like lying down a while and possibly take a short nap. He slept longer than he intended to. Looking about he found it was almost morning and finally concluded on account of it being so late he might as well take his breakfast with his supper all at the same time. It was not long after he came to this conclusion, before he made a pounce on a small pile of young hogs. He was very fortunate, or as it

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might be he so intended, to catch the best hog in the lot. We never doubted that bear carried out his intention to eat supper and breakfast at the same time. Bear concluded he had better be going, for he didn't know what folks would think. In the morning they might say we will have his hide for pay. As soon as the family were up the cry was, "Something had killed one of the hogs!" We were New England people, and hardly knew what to think about the whole affair. We sent for Mr. Dustin, one of our neighbors who was better acquainted with gaming, than we were: he said it was a bear that had done the mischief. Well what was to be done? for we didn't like our fashionable caller very well for a neighbor on account of his taking so much liberty among strangers. The cry was, "Set a trap for him!" Dear Pa asked Mr. Dustin what he thought about it, and enquired of him if he could set a trap. Yes he said, I can set a trap well enough. We took what hog there was left for last and started for the woods. A log trap was soon in readiness. In the course of a week or so Mr. bear was caught. Sure enough, the log on his back brought him down on the log below, to the very pinch. It was cold weather and it was thought best to take him into the house to skin. This we did and had a good time.



Figure 15 - Mr. Bear visits

Time passed on, counting baby James Ayer we were ten in the family. Clothes were getting thread bare. New ones were wanted, new ones we must have soon, and no money to buy with and what shall we do? This question no one could answer. Dear Mother was the first to see a star of promise; it was this, we must make our clothes, and went on to tell the story. We must get some sheep, we must raise flax, we must have spinning wheels, we must do our own spinning, we

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must do our own weaving. All were standing around and Pa with the rest. Three cheers for Mother, the children cried out but where will you get the loom Mother? "I will see to that," was the reply. Soon, Mr. Gray and Mr. Taylor were sent for. They came with broad ax and plane and such framing tools as they wanted to build the loom. The first thing to be done was to get the best white ash log that could be found in the woods (of suitable length of course) the next thing they wanted was a beetle^{iv} and wedge. The splitting was a matter to be accomplished just right: it must be not too large not too small. While Mr. Taylor was doing the splitting, Mr. Gray was hewing^v. This too, was a very nice part of the work. The line was to be split if possible it must not be hewed too large it must not be hewed too small. As soon as the splitting was done, Mr. Taylor commenced framing and so they worked together, until the loom was finished (and a very nice loom it was). I made the warping bars. In the meantime, Sister Martha called on some of the weavers to learn what she could about weaving. As soon as she pretty well understood the art, a web was ready to put into the loom, and in it went, and as soon as the whole thing could be brought around, we had the wool and the flax^{vi}. We had the big wheel humming and the little wheel whirling and the loom a slamming. Every one knew their own work and could do it without oversight. Pa would dress the flax, Ma would hatched^{vii} it, and card the tow^{viii} into rolls and spin the flax on the little wheel. Sister Mary and Sarah did the spinning on the large wheel, and so it was humming with the large wheel, whirling with the little wheel, slamming with the loom, all going on at once. All this was for summer wear. By and by the wooling rolls came from the carding machine. The spinning of them was the work of the large wheel. This renewed the humming. All was pleasant cheerful and happy. As soon as the warp of a woolen was spun, Martha was ready to put it in the loom and go on with the slamming. All this worked nicely for years until cloth was so cheap, that it was better to buy than to make.

The Industrial Revolution was getting started in England in the early 19th Century. Clothing was one of the first products. This is very likely what Ira is talking about when he says, " All this worked nicely for years until cloth was so cheap, that it was better to buy than to make."

Yet we had our discouragements, but not without courage to go with it. We had been in the habit of getting money from a fund we had in Haverhill to help us over the tight places. The last we sent for, was \$140,00. As the money always had come safe, we supposed this would come in the same way so we lived on credit, as we had need, but the money never came. You may ask reader, if we were

^{iv} A beetle is a tool consisting of a heavy weight or head, usually of wood, for driving wedges, and ramming down paving stones, etc. (from "Concise Genealogical Dictionary" by Maurine and Glen Harris, Ancestry Publishing)

^v Hewing is carving with an ax.

^{vi} The fiber from a flax plant.

^{vii} A hatchel is an instrument for combining flax.

^{viii} Tow is coarse and broken part of flax separated by the hatchel and ready for spinning.

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discouraged at this disappointment. O no no no dear friend to be sure it was a great disappointment but we had no room in our history for the word discourage. Years passed away and the time came when Goreham and Ira should go to Haverhill. It had been talked about for some time. We had \$1000, coming to us there, which would be enough to get a deed of our farm. We were well fitted out for our long journey. Our clothing was made of the finest wool of our sheep. Our boots were new, our hats I suppose the same, our canes were made of good hickory, with a suitable amount of lead run on the top. We were to go a foot. We were to go to Vermont near Montpelier, to see Uncle Jonathan Ayer. This was about one hundred miles out of the way; but we wanted to see Uncle Jonathan. It was about January 1, 1818. Ira was 16 years of age and Goreham 18^{ix}. I think we had our knapsacks to carry provisions with us, in order to make a little money go as far as possible. It was early morning we kissed goodbye and started. The first day we reached Cold Springs, stayed I think at Hodges Hotel. So went steadily on, sometimes we would catch a ride. One day we rode nearly 20 miles in a six horse wagon with a tire six inches wide. The business of these wagons was to carry Merchandise from Albany to Buffalo. We went to Saratoga Springs. There we stopped a while to rest and take some spring water. Possibly it did us good and helped us on the way. I think we crossed the Hudson at Sandy Hill, about 10 or 12 miles above Troy. Now we began to feel that we were on our way to Uncle Jonathan's. We had got over our lameness and we stepped off with good face and cheer. In a few days we were at Rutland; from thence we passed over the mountain, there took a road to Montpelier. It was not many days before we reached Uncle Jonathan's. We knew Uncle very well, he looked so much like Pa, but we had to tell him who we were. After finding out who we all were we had a laugh and a happy time. I think we stayed two days. All that time Uncle did what he could to make it pleasant for us. We had a five dollar bill we asked Uncle to change it for us. He gave us two dollars and told us to keep the bill. We had about 200 miles, before us yet to go. We went through New Hampshire and called at Chester, about 15 miles from Haverhill, to see Mr. Walkers and wife. Mrs. Walker (whose maiden name was Betsy Gay) was a girl that dear Mother brought up, I suppose from a child. We had a fine time. Mr. Walker done what he could to please us. He took us around to show us this and that, and among the things he showed us a Meeting House they had lately built, (probably Presbyterian) which led us to think he might be a member of the church, Mrs. Walker was almost overjoyed to see the boys. Kisses were almost showered down upon us. All this was acceptable to Goreham and myself, for they were the first kisses we had received since we left home; We stayed one or two days and started for Haverhill. There I suppose we were expected: no great demonstrations except kisses; much of this was done of course for we met cousins in abundance all around. Many questions were asked by all, about the new country which we listened to and answered the best we could. Uncle Enoch Bradley was very kind to us to take us to Town, and round about to see Relatives, and old Neighbors, that we might have it impressed on our minds how

^{ix} On January 1, 1818, Ira would have just turned 15 and Gorham would have just turned 17. Either the date or the ages were wrong.

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Haverhill looked, and who our friends and neighbors were, and how they looked, so it was we received many kindnesses from all, which were treasured up, and brought Home with us and not forgotten for a long time. I think we stayed about two weeks at any rate. The time came for us to go. The night before starting dear Grand Mother had our shirts hanging on the chair to air. The \$1000, was already in Goreham's shirt pocket; The thought entered Grand Mothers mind what if the chair that had Gorham's shirt hanging on it with the \$1000 in the pocket, should tip into the fire. She sprang in an instant and ran into the sitting room and made all safe. The next morning came, every thing was ready, and we started. Uncle Enoch Bradley took us with his carriage, as far as Methuen, 6 or 8 miles, where we had to cross the River. He saw us safely across, and we parted.

Grandmother is Mary Low Bradley (1747-1822) (she lived only four years after this last visit). Grandfather Bradley, Enoch Bradley, Sr. (1749-1834) lived a few more years. Both Ayer grandparents had died before Ira was born.

Now after doing the business all right that we came for, and took our last look at Haverhill and our friends we started on for home with a good pace and cheer. We looked through the mist of 500 miles and saw the log house and dear Father and dear Mother and all the dear Brothers and sisters and we longed to be there. We stood on our best nerve and said If the Lord will we will be there and on we started with light hearts and a quick pace. Our manner of living was to buy what we wanted to eat, where we could get it: but we had our three meals a day. When the hour came for a meal, we would call at some good looking house, and tell them we would be pleased to have them get us some tea; we had vituals with us in our knapsacks. The tea would be forthcoming. We enjoyed our meals nicely, and on we came, making one hundred miles in three days. Sometimes we would do better than that; much depended on the condition of the roads. After some days we come to green Mountains; how defiant they looked! but we almost laughed at the proud Goliath: up and down we went for nearly two days, we went slowly up and faster down. Sometimes we would run going down. Before we got over the mountains, in going down on the run I caught my cane between my legs and it snapped like a pipe-stem; but not knowing what use we might have for it, having a \$1000, in our pockets, I thought it best to keep the lead end. This I did by holding the lead end in my hand and running the other end up my sleeve. So the days passed on, every one telling from 33 to nearly 40 miles nearer home. During our absence, nothing had been heard from us, that is to say, I think so. We soon told the folks we had the money all safe. Soon Pa went to Batavia and got the deed for 439 acres all safe to be laid away.

Now I will go back and tell a short story about the war before Perry's victory on the Lake. The British Navy seemed to pride themselves in sailing up and down the Lake near our Shore. After a while they took into their heads to make a friendly call and get something to eat. In one case they took Mr. Bates, living within a few rods of where I now live and Cap. Gates living on the Salsbury

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Place. The alarm was soon given around the Neighborhood. A friendly Quaker that lived about a mile off not feeling it right to go himself with a gun, came over as fast as he could and told Pa what had happened and I supposed advised him to go to the Lake as quick as he could (Sister Martha had it in a poetical form. "Come James Ayer to the lake repair, for the British have come o'er: they have taken Capt. Gates, they have taken Bill Bates, and carried them from our shore.") This was for the benefit of our friendly Quaker. The prisoners were taken down nearly as far as the Eighteen mile creek and put near enough shore so they could wade the rest of the way. After that I think the Neighbors kept a guard here on the bank, until the victory before mentioned.

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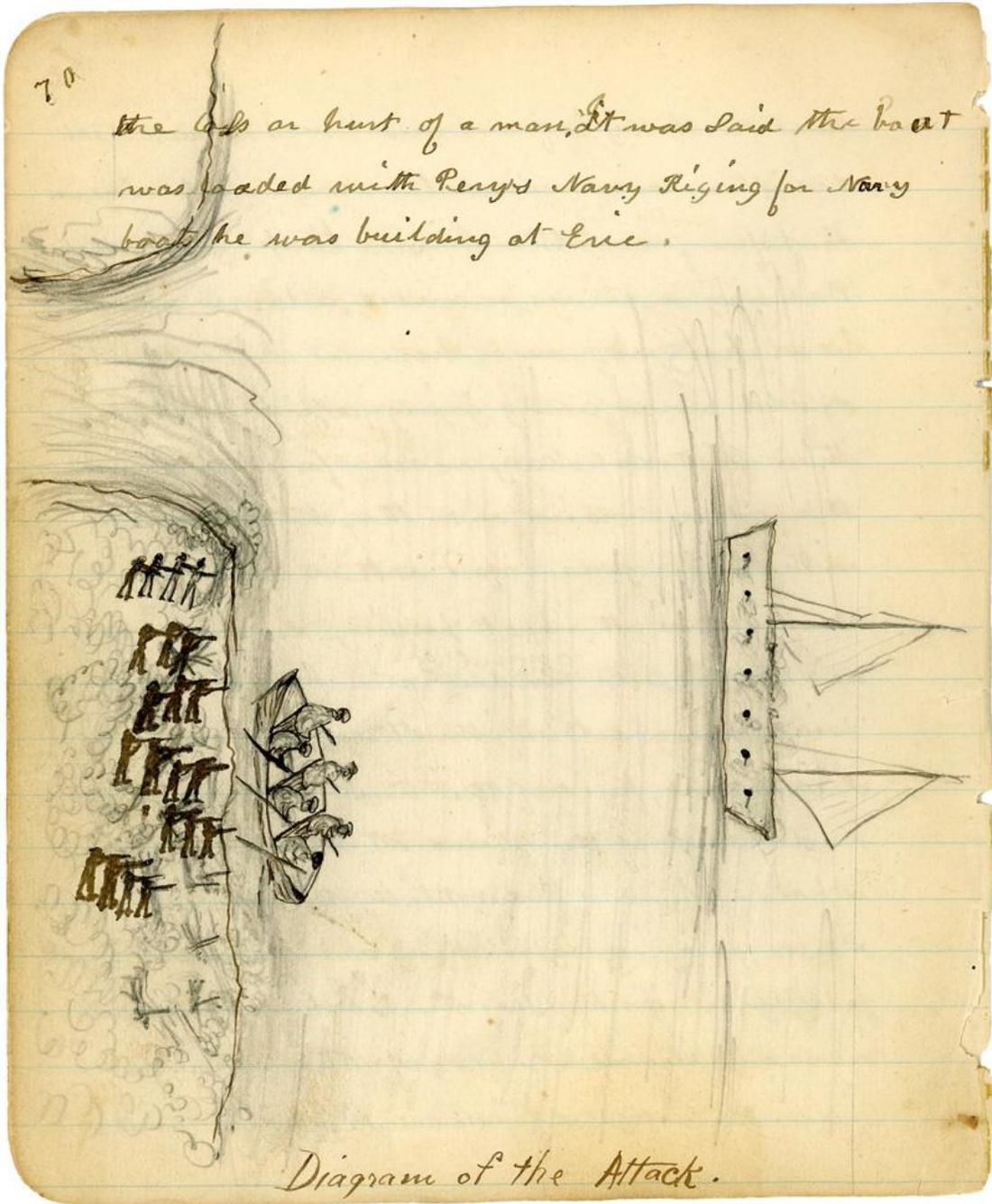


Figure 16 - Diagram of the Attack

I will tell one story more about the war and close. Not far from the time that Gates and Bates were taken prisoners, a large open boat hugging our shore as close as it could come along, going up the Lake the British Navy made for the boat; the alarm went out; the Neighbors ran with their guns as fast as their legs would carry them; the boat pulling away as fast as they could covered by our fire. The Navy doing their best with their cannon, firing I suppose, part of the time at the boat, and part of the time at the men on

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shore judging by the whistling balls and falling limbs to say the least they had a very liberal share of the Navy's fire. The boat got safe into Cattaraugus Creek without the loss or hurt of a man. It was said the boat was loaded with Perry's Navy Rigging for the Navy boats he was building at Erie.

Just over a year after the Ayers arrived in Erie County the War of 1812 broke out. Lake Erie was a major theater of the War. Almost immediately after the outbreak of war the British took control of Lake Erie and held it until the Battle of Lake Erie on 13 September 1813 when Commodore Perry defeated the British capturing 6 vessels and over 300 men. The battle took place west of Cleveland near Put-in-Bay, Ohio. The Americans maintained control of the lake for the rest of the war.

The boat that Ira talks about with rigging for Perry's boats was headed for Erie Pennsylvania where Perry built his fleet. Cattaraugus Creek empties into Lake Erie a little west of where the Ayers lived.

Even though Perry controlled the lake, Buffalo was attacked and burned on 30 December, 1813 in retaliation for the burning of a Canadian town. The war ended on 16 February 1815.

Martha at the age of 15 or 16 years was called on to teach a school in Hamburg in the Neighborhood of a Christian people. Martha met with them at their Preaching meetings, prayer and class meetings. It seemed all new to her, on account of the spirit manifested by the Brethren and Sisters, also on account of the spirit she felt herself. She said nothing for a while. At the same time the spirit of God seemed to be pressing upon her; it was all new to Martha, such manifestations as she saw in the people and what she was experiencing herself. Finally she spoke to one of the Sisters about it; she told Martha it was the Lord's Spirit in the hearts of the Brethren and Sisters and in her heart too. Martha said to the sister she was never in such a meeting before and wanted to know what she should do. The sister told her she must pray. Martha asked her if she wouldn't pray for her, for she had never prayed in her life. Yes the sister said, and was about to kneel down; Martha hesitated and asked the sister if it wouldn't do as well in another room. Yes the sister said she didn't know but it would but hadn't we better kneel here? if you think best, we will, was the reply. They both knelt, and the sister prayed that Martha might have faith to believe that things are ready. Martha saw the point and said "I do believe." It was the same instant she said this that she experienced religion, and was made very happy in the Lord. The Brethren and Sisters soon saw what the Lord had done for their teacher and rejoiced greatly. Reader let us praise God for his goodness and loving kindness to the children of men.

Martha at once joined the Methodist Church and conformed to its rules in dress as well as in everything else; not so much because they were the rules of the Church, but because she loved them, as well; and all this, because she was a

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new creature, and old things had passed away. She got her a Quaker bonnet and a dress and other wearing apparel to compare with it. She soon wrote home to dear Mother, and in her letter she spoke of Brother Canfield so and so Brother and Sister Oakes so and so and some good old Mother in Israel so and so. What does all this mean? says dear Mother. It can't be Martha is going to or has got married. In the mean time an aged Sister of another denomination came up from the lake through the woods nearly a mile and a half, and told Mother that Martha had joined the Methodists and went on to tell dear Mother many things that were quite disparaging about the Methodists. It seemed that the old lady took all this pains in coming so far, to let Mother know in time, what was going on in Hamburg, that if possible to save the girl before it went on any farther. It was all new to dear Mother. She didn't know what to do about it or think about it. She finally concluded it best to keep still a while, until Martha came home. Then she could tell better. As soon as school was out, Martha came home. She brought her story with her. She told it; it was a good one; it was the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; no room for Calvinism___: to every one that believeth. The old lady no doubt meant well but we heard nothing from her after her call. In the course of a week or so, Brother James Hall called on us. Martha had formed an acquaintance with him in Hamburg, probably an arrangement was made between the two for his coming. Before going to bed, he proposed prayer and then after prayer he spoke to the whole family as they sat around in the form of a class meeting. He talked to them about religion. He told them of its importance, and how they must get it. I suppose He stayed and preach the following Sabbath. Rev. James Hall was one of the Great Men of the Earth. He lived to see 90 years or more, and died in Mayville, Chautauqua Co, New York. His wife lived a number of years after, and died in the same place.

Martha went off to this school around 1814, a very important time in American history.

The events leading up to the Ayers' conversion to the Methodist Faith can in a very real sense be traced by almost 200 years to when all the ancestors of the Ayers arrived in northeastern Massachusetts. They didn't come for religious freedom, but the right to impose on their neighbors their form of religion. That religion was Puritanism and its descendant Congregationalism. Different areas of the colonies had different religions but most were based on offshoots of the Church of England.

Little by little new religions found their way into the colonies and in some cases they were tolerated as long as they didn't seem to impose too much of a threat. Starting in the mid-17th Century, Virginia had laws restricting other religions by requiring that they can't meet. In 1776 the Baptist Church petitioned the Virginia Assembly for the right to congregate. Thomas Jefferson took up their cause. Jefferson, like many of the founding fathers, followed a religious thought called Deism. They believed the relationship between people and God was a personal

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one and did not involve and organized church. Since they had no meetings and didn't recruit people, they were tolerated.

Jefferson said to the Baptists that while did not agree with their religious beliefs he would defend their right to have them. This was a huge change in political thought. There is a huge difference between tolerating small religions and defending their right to exist.

Jefferson found stiff opposition from other members of the Assembly from people like Patrick Henry. Henry believed that if you don't have a state sponsored religion, people would stop going to church. Jefferson was unsuccessful in changing the law in Virginia but a little over 10 years later Jefferson got the right to follow whatever religion you want as part of the US Constitution. It was a huge step for religious freedom.

As it turns out, Patrick Henry was both right and wrong. He was right in that after the ratification of the Constitution, church attendance was much lower than it was before the Revolution. But he was wrong in that it was not because people weren't religious. It seems to be more because people thought that if they had the right to choose any church, they needed to choose the right one.

The Ayers may very likely have fallen in this category. Ira says they were religious but did not attend church on a regular basis.

But, at the beginning of the 19th Century people started going back to church in droves, but not to the same old religions. Religious revivals were big. Revivals were remote gatherings from a day to several days where people would connect with their religious beliefs. Many of them were held in remote areas of the country at a time where there were no forms of transportation other than by foot or horseback. Many times it would take weeks to get there and back. By 1811, over 1 Million people a year were attending revivals, almost 20% of the population.

Chief among the churches running these revivals were the Methodists. The Methodists movement started in England in the early 18th Century: From Wikipedia:

The movement focused on Bible study and a methodical approach to scriptures and Christian living. The name "methodist" was a pejorative name given to a small society of students at Oxford who met together between 1729 and 1735 for the purpose of mutual improvement, given because of their methodistic habits.

The religion exploded in the US in the early 19th Century.

I believe that this was a time when people exercised religious freedom more than any time in history. Before that, changing religions was frowned upon and could cause your death. After that the religion people practice is almost always that of

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their parents. People change religions today but not nearly as much as they did between the ratification of the Constitution and the early 1800s. So, the Ayers were living a very important part of American history by choosing their own religion.⁴

Our family at this time consisted of the following persons:

x Father - James Ayer Sr	Born about 1766	He Died Mar 13, 1839 Age 73
x Mother - Sarah B. Ayer	Born about 1774	She Died Dec 7, 1844 Age 70
x Lowe Ayer	Born Dec 1796	Died Sept 18, 1844 Age 48
x Martha Ayer	Born Dec 1798	Died May 1852 Age 54
o Goreham Ayer	Born Dec 1800	Died Oct 4, 1870 Age 69y 10m
Ira Ayer	Born Dec 26, 1802	
x Mary Lowe Ayer	Born Nov 1804	Died 1853 Age 49
Sarah B. Ayer	Born Apr 1808	
x Henrietta Ayer	Born Apr 1810	Died Aug 29, 1832 Age 21
o James Ayer	Born Aug 14, 1812	Died Jan 4, 1862 Age 50 In camp in N Orleans

x Buried in the Cemetery at Evens Center, Erie Co., NY

o Buried in the Cemetery at Angola, Erie Co., NY

I must say more about Martha. It seems she was chosen of the Lord to be the first to carry Salvation to her Fathers house. She did this. She was a true messenger with the Bible in her hand, she told the story of the cross, as it read: Whosoever will let him come for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. It seemed to be her delight to do all she could. She would take the family to a stable that was vacated for a time, to hold prayer meetings, and probably enquire meetings, to know how each were getting along in the good way. All was interesting and encouraging because the Lord was with them. As the fruit of her labor, she soon saw five or six of her own family, besides some from without, formed into a church of her own choice. But her work was not done and she felt it never would be done as long as she could hold up a hand for Jesus; her course was onward, all of her Fathers family sooner or later were converted to God. Eight of them joined the Methodist, one the Baptist and one who went South I think I understood joined the Cumberland Presbyterians. Please reader allow me to go back to the time when Martha first came from Hamburg, then I will proceed and tell you more about Martha in coming years.

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When Martha first came from Hamburg, (after it was noised about she had experienced religion) she found she was on the battle ground of Calvinism. Her own family all took her part. Her Father and all. The Presbyterians would bring forward Bible to prove that Calvinism was right and Methodist was wrong. Martha would make her best defense as far as she knew the Bible. If they brought forward anything that she was not prepared to defend at the time, she would pass it off and drown it into forgetfulness for the time as best she could, until our Ministers came around. Then she would lay the matter before them in order to get the right interpretation of what she had been talking about, with the Presbyterian brother. If opportunity offered, she would call the Presbyterian's attention to what they had talked about when they last met; then Martha would tell him just how it was and bring forward scripture to prove it. In fact Martha got the argument and the Presbyterian brother felt the force of it, and would be glad to start for home as soon as courtesy would allow. Often times the Calvinist would talk with Pa on the Calvinistic doctrine. Pa's way was to give them a blow over the left where they least expected. I will give you a case. Pa and Dea. Talman were working together and were talking on the subject of Foreordination. They were through work for the day. Pa finally asked the Dea. if he supposed that the Lord decreed that he shouldn't strike another blow tonight. The Dea. answered in the affirmative. Pa struck another blow and said, I have broken one decree anyhow.

Sister Martha was married in the log house. She brought up quite a large family most of which were pious in their early years, and joined the Methodist Church. Her grandchildren I knew but little about except Julia's family who were mostly if not all, professors of Religion. One of them, Rev. Ward Platt^x is a prominent member of Genesee Conference. He is preaching the word in power and demonstration of the Spirit. Sister Martha lived to a good old age. She was a devoted advocate for the Christian Religion from the day of her first experience, until the day of her death, when the Lord took her. In the course of a few weeks I think of making a visit to the grave where her precious dust lies. Hoping and trusting I shall meet her in the sweet bye and bye to part no more forever.

In the balance of my writing may be found the names of Sarah Black^{xi} Ira Ayer and family. Mrs. Sarah Black experienced religion soon after the return of her Sister Martha from Hamburg. Sarah had a full benefit of Martha's experience which was a great help to her. Martha told her that faith and repentance was the ground work to build on, though in the days of early youth, she seemed to understand the way, and embraced it as a foundation, to build for her present good and everlasting welfare. Sister Sarah Black proved to be a sister in the church well fitted to fill every place where she could do good. Her seat would be filled at the preaching, her voice would be heard at the prayer meeting; and at the class meeting. She had a good story to tell. Her motto was, it must be done; her

^x It is assumed that Martha had a daughter named Julia who married a man named Platt and they has a son named Ward.

^{xi} Ira's sister Sarah married a man named Joe Black.

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exhortation was to her Brethren and Sisters onward. If Meeting House was to be built, or buildings to be repaired, she and her worthy husband Joe Black, also a devoted Christian were always ready to share her portion of the expense and a little more. She is now seventy eight years of age, ready to go when the Master calls.

Ira Ayer^{xii} embraced the great doctrine of Salvation at an early day. He has been a decided advocate for the teachings of the Bible ever since. He looks upon it as the word of God, he loves it as his own book, he is ready to battle with the Infidel or even the Skeptic on the side of the Bible. He has much of a Lady for his wife. She has a judgment in business matters and she is ready to tell her Husband what it is, moreover, it is often accepted by her Husband as being the best way. Ira has a family of 6 children, one son, the rest daughters. I was told by relatives who visited Mrs. Ira Ayer in New Jersey not long since, that they had a family of children much to be admired. In the war of the Rebellion Ira Jun. joined the Army in an early day. He was a scholar in the Meadville College at the time. He went as Capt. His command was made mostly, I suppose of the scholars of the Collage. He joined the 10th Reg. of the Pennsylvania Reserves. When all was ready, the Regiment went forward to do battle for the country. Soon they were called to take their place in line of battle. 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 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. Ira had a number of narrow escapes during the war. The rim of his hat was pretty well shattered, his side in one instance was grazed by a ball and I think there were other cases where he very narrowly escaped. He finally was wounded in his leg so seriously that within the last few years the bone has become diseased and he has had to use crutches from time to time. But in all the war and in all the battles sometimes not so threatening, at other times when the balls would fly like hail around, yet in every case it would seem, the Lord would say to the flying bullets, thus far thou canst come but no farther; what words! the firing of small arms, swords in the sunlight flashing, cannon roaring, all was confusion, the voice of man could not be heard, yet God spoke in a low yet commanding voice, thus far shalt thou come but no farther. Ira was saved. O Praise the Lord for this goodness and His loving kindness unto us. Ira and your dear family. Ira is now engaged in Government business at San Francisco

Jesus our all to Heaven is gone.

^{xii} Ira Ayer Jr.

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He whom we [fis?] our hopes upon
His track we [?ce] and we will pursue
The narrow way tell Him we view

Sarah^{xiii} is a lover of God and has been for many years. In early days she was taught by her own Mother to be good, and if she wanted the Lord to love her she must love Him and many things her Mother taught her that had a lasting benefit even until the Present. Sarah is now a Christian woman. Her voice may be heard on the Lord's side. She advocates the right in all things. In this she is outspoken, though it may be but a small matter controverted if it embraces the sentiment of right, Sarah's voice is heard on the side of right, whether it is asked for or not. She is loved in her own town. The Ladies of Titusville look to Sarah as being competent to take a leading part in literary matters.

^{xiii} Sarah Tiff, Ira's daughter.

The Ayer Family in Erie County

The Ayer Family in Erie County



Figure 17 - Erie County 1829 – Buffalo is in blue at the Eastern end of Lake Erie and Evans is the town in pink on the left

The Ayer Family in Erie County

Pioneers in Western New York

There's nothing we can add to the life of the Ayers while back in Massachusetts beyond "Reminiscences" and my comments. So, we will start with Evans.

When the Ayers arrived in Buffalo in 1811, it was truly a frontier. There were fewer than 2000 residents of Buffalo and fewer than 6000 in the entire county. The first jail had been built only a year before the Ayers arrived.⁵ From Oatman's memorial:

In matters of local interest—he was twenty-three years of age when the Erie Canal was opened, was thirty years old when Buffalo, with about ten thousand inhabitants, was chartered as a city, and over forty before there was any railroad communication eastward to Albany.

When he came to this town, a boy eight years of age, there was not a public highway nor a house, except the few log cabins of the pioneers and probably less than twenty families resided within the present limits of the town of Evans. He had resided in this town more than forty years when the first locomotive ran from Buffalo to Dunkirk.

Referring to the records of the early history of Erie County I find that the first settlement in what is now the town of Evans was made in June, 1804, by Joel Harvey who located on the west side of Eighteen Mile Creek, near its mouth. During the succeeding few years, several farmers built cabins in this town but moved away after a brief stay and their names have not been preserved.

The Holland Purchase

Following the American Revolution, what is now western New York was under dispute. Massachusetts believed the land was part of grant for the Massachusetts Bay Colony back in 1628. New York believed it was part of the land taken by the Dutch in 1664 and given to the Duke of York (not Prince William the present Duke of York but the one who became James II, King of England, Scotland and Ireland). And, the Federal Government believed it belonged to the Iroquois Nation.^{6 7}

In 1786, the Treaty of Hartford, signed by New York and Massachusetts determined that the land would be part of New York and Massachusetts owned the rights to buy the land from the Iroquois. Two years later in 1788 Massachusetts sold those rights to all the land west of what was called the Pre-emptive line to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham for \$1,000,000. The payments were to be made in three installments. It was the 6,000,000 acres of land west of Seneca Lake. They then bought the rights to the eastern 1/3 of the land from the Iroquois for \$5,000 plus \$500 per year.

The Ayer Family in Erie County

When Phelps and Gorham defaulted on their 1790 payment, the western 3,700,000 acres reverted back to Massachusetts. In 1791 Massachusetts then sold the land to Robert Morris \$3,333,333.33. Morris was the richest man in the United States, had helped finance the Revolution and had signed the Declaration of Independence. Morris then sold 3,250,000 acres of the land to a group of Dutch businessmen in what was known as the Holland Purchase in 1792-3. From that, the group formed the Holland Land Company.



Figure 18 - Phelps and Gorham showing the Pre-emptive line and the Holland Purchase

In the Treaty of Big Tree in 1797 between the Seneca Tribe of the Iroquois, the US, Morris and the Holland Land Company, the Iroquois gave up rights to all but about 200,000 acres to be used for Reservations. For this the tribes received \$100,000 after the owners of the land had essentially paid \$1,000,000 for the right to negotiate with the tribes.

Now the Holland Land Company was free to break up their land and sell it for settlement. The company opened their office in Batavia, New York in 1801 hoping to make huge profits and sell all the land quickly. The first transfer was not complete until 1804 and they didn't finish selling the land until 1840. The problem was that it wasn't the wealthy who wanted to move to the wilderness, it was more often the poor. The investors back in the Netherlands wanted the terms of sale to be over four to seven years. The four year sale would require a $\frac{1}{3}$ deposit and the seven year sale, a $\frac{1}{4}$ deposit. Joseph Elliott, the agent hired by the company to sell the land realized these terms would never work. The people coming to buy the land didn't have that much money for the down

The Ayer Family in Erie County

payment and since there were no major roads or easy transportation could never pay the loans off that quickly. The company lowered the down payments to 10% but even this was too high.

Elliott ended up often letting people work off their down payments building roads or company buildings and often allowed them ten to twelve years to pay the loans off.

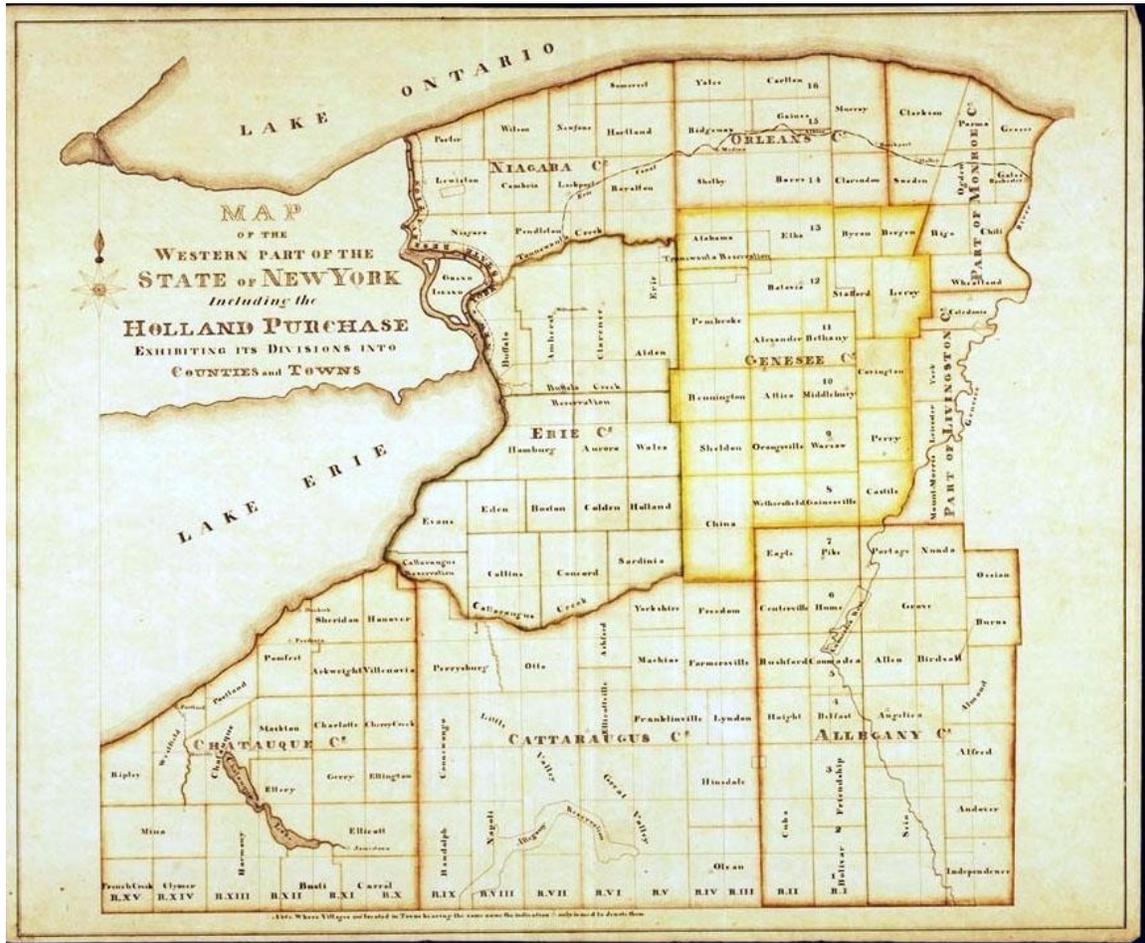


Figure 19 - Holland Purchase

We don't know what kind of terms James Ayer got. We know he bought about 440 acres and the land was going for around \$3.00 per acre. We also know the final payment from their old farm made about 8 years after selling it was \$1,000 which by itself should have been enough to just about pay for the whole farm. One day I hope to find the records of the sale. They should be on microfilm, copies of which are in several places including with the Mormon Church.

The Log Cabin

We don't know why James Ayer decided to take his family from a perfectly good farm in the comforts of civilization of Haverhill, Massachusetts and move to the

The Ayer Family in Erie County

wilderness of Western New York. Sarah and James' parents were from Haverhill as were their grandparents. All their great grandparents were from Essex County, the county Haverhill is in as were their great great grandparents. Just about all of their great great great grandparents had come from England between 1830 and 1640 and settled in Essex County. All their families had been in Essex County for over 160 years.

The farm on Haverhill must have been productive because they sold it for at least \$1,000. Ira referred to it as the most beautiful farm on the banks of the Merrimac River. It's likely that the farm in New York was significantly larger than the one in Haverhill. It could just be that the thrill of the unknown appealed to James. The Holland Company had been open for 10 years and it may be that news or sales pitches had reached Haverhill and James couldn't resist the temptation.

In any case the whole family, James, Sarah and all seven of the children born in Massachusetts arrived in Buffalo in 1811. The process was you pick your plot of land through a local agent and then you go to Batavia to finalize the deal.

After figuring the area they wanted to live in, the family went to stay with a Mr. Palmer who lived southwest of Buffalo from where James could find a place to live. The first place that James found was in Springville, about 30 miles southeast of Buffalo and inland. Mr. Palmer suggested that it would be better to be further northwest and closer to Lake Erie so James found a place in what is now Evans, part of Angola. This one was 439 acres. James now had to go to Batavia, a distance of about 50 miles. He probably had to walk and was gone for quite some time. It was not common for the family to be separated like that and Sarah and the kids became quite worried. But, eventually he came back with all the paperwork finished and they moved to their new plot of land.

With the help of the few neighbors there were, the Ayers built a one room log cabin where ultimately 10 people lived in for 12 years.



Figure 20 - The log cabin

The Ayer Family in Erie County

The War of 1812

For such a remote place it sure was busy in the next few years. On 18 June 1812 the War of 1812 broke out. The British quickly took control of Lake Erie. The north shore of the lake is Canada and the south shore is the US, New York, Pennsylvania and what will be Ohio and Michigan. The British already had two ships on the lake and one being built. From LeRoy Oatman's Memorial to Ira Ayer:

The war of 1812 soon demanded attention and the armed vessels of the British annoyed the pioneers who had settled along the lake.

The "Queen Charlotte"^{xiv} would often send its boats ashore on foraging expeditions, seizing whatever could be found, and many times taking one or more of the residents prisoners for the purpose of intimidating any who might oppose them.

Here I will repeat Ira's description of the war:

The British Navy seemed to pride themselves in sailing up and down the Lake near our Shore. After a while they took into their heads to make a friendly call and get something to eat. In one case they took Mr. Bates, living within a few rods of where I now live and Cap. Gates living on the Salsbury Place. The alarm was soon given around the Neighborhood. A friendly Quaker that lived about a mile off not feeling it right to go himself with a gun, came over as fast as he could and told Pa what had happened and I supposed advised him to go to the Lake as quick as he could (Sister Martha had it in a poetical form. "Come James Ayer to the lake repair, for the British have come o'er they have taken Capt. Gates, they have taken Bill Bates, and carried them from our shore.") This was for the benefit of our friendly Quaker. The prisoners were taken down nearly as far as the Eighteen mile creek and put near enough shore so they could wade the rest of the way. After that I think the Neighbors kept a guard here on the bank...

A similar story comes from "Our County and Its People" by Truman C. White, 1898:

While at the beginning of the war the Americans had not a single armed vessel afloat, the British had three—the Queen Charlotte, twenty-two guns; the Hunter, twelve guns, and a small schooner. The first-named vessel cruised along the lake shore off Hamburg and Evans and kept the settlers in constant alarm during the first summer of the war. Her boats were frequently landed and their crews sent among the settlements for plunder. On several occasions men were captured, taken on board the vessel, and after being kept a few days were liberated. On one occasion a party of the British landed near the farm of Aaron Salisbury in Evans and began their work of plunder. Most of the neighboring settlers were absent,

^{xiv} The "[Queen Charlotte](#)" was a 118 Ft long sloop-of-war.

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and young Salisbury took his musket, pursued and overtook the marauders and began firing on them from the wooded shore; they returned his fire but without effect. They then embarked and sailed northward. Believing they would seek the excellent landing-place at the mouth of Eighteen-mile Creek, Salisbury hastened thither and arrived just as a landing was being made. He again began firing on them. The astonished British, imagining the whole lake shore was swarming with desperate settlers, fled to their boats and the vessel.

In the middle of all this Sarah had her eighth and final child James, Jr. on 14 August 1813. A month later, Master Commandant Perry defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Erie off the coast of Ohio. He did it with boats he secretly built at Erie, Pennsylvania. Ira related another story prior to the Battle of Lake Erie.

I will tell one story more about the war and close. Not far from the time that Gates and Bates were taken prisoners, a large open boat hugging our shore as close as it could come along, going up the Lake the British Navy made for the boat; the alarm went out; the Neighbors ran with their guns as fast as their legs would carry them; the boat pulling away as fast as they could covered by our fire. The Navy doing their best with their cannon, firing I suppose, part of the time at the boat, and part of the time at the men on shore. It was thought by the men on shore judging by the whistling balls and falling limbs to say the least they had a very liberal share of the Navy's fire. The boat got safe into Cattaragus Creek without the loss or hurt of a man. It was said the boat was loaded with Perry's Navy Rigging for the Navy boats he was building at Erie.

Later that year, in retaliation for the burning of a Canadian town, the British burned Buffalo. From Oatman:

Eighteen hundred and thirteen was an eventful year. Buffalo was burned by the British and Indians, only one dwelling remaining, and the inhabitants were compelled to flee into the sparsely settled portions of the county and depend upon the scattering homes of the pioneers for shelter.

In 1814, occurred the battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, and the capture of Fort Erie, while in the same year Washington was burned, and in 1815 the decisive battle of New Orleans was fought. These stirring events in the history, not only of our county but of the Nation, could but have their effects upon the boy who was of an age that was susceptible to impressions regarding scenes of battle and who had personal knowledge of the dangers of frontier life.

The Battle of Chippewa was a US victory between Buffalo and Niagara Falls on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. 20 days later the British won a victory nearby at Lundy's Lane. Finally the Americans won the Siege of Fort Erie, again on the Canadian side of the river. At the same time Washington, DC was burned, but this was the last of conflicts in and around Lake Erie. The treaty ending the war was ratified in Great Britain in December of 1814 and by the US

The Ayer Family in Erie County

in February of 1815. But because of a lack of communication there was one more major battle in New Orleans that the Americans won. Again from Oatman:

News in those days was, to a large extent, a matter of verbal communication.

One weekly paper, smaller in size than the Angola Record and known as the "Gazette" was all that was published in Buffalo and that could not reach the settlers of this town regularly until the postoffice was established in 1818.

Weeks must have elapsed before news of the Battle of New Orleans could reach the scattered homes of the pioneers upon our frontiers.

Growing up in Evans

Again from Oatman:

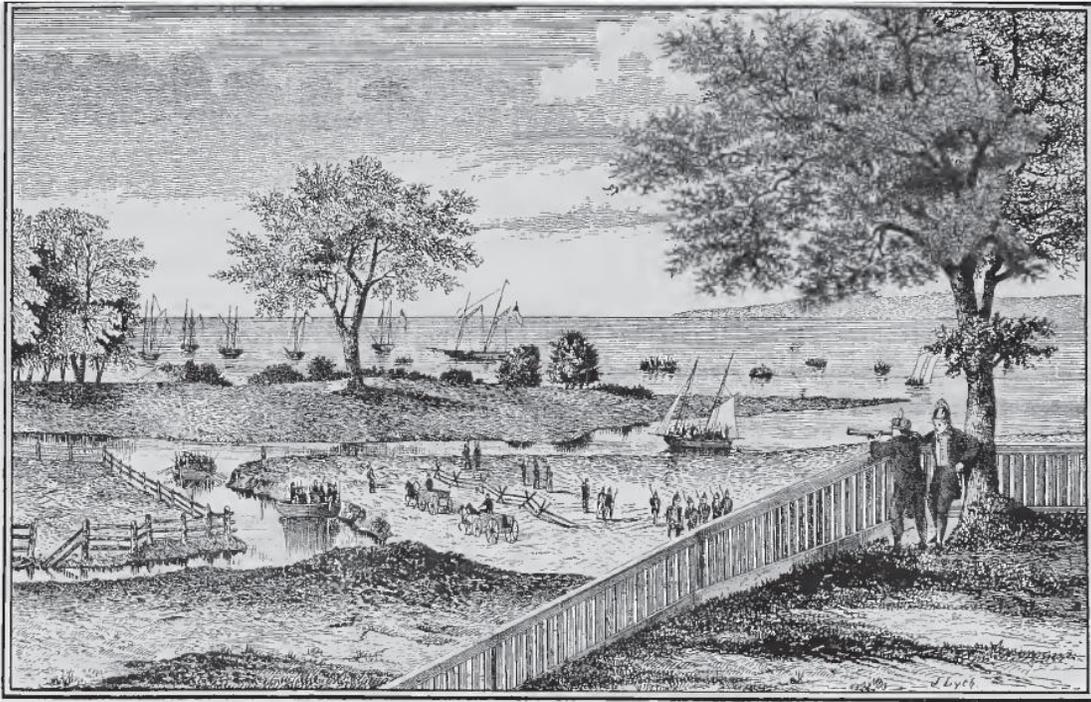
In those early days it was a matter of necessity to visit the village of Buffalo to procure needed articles for family consumption, and it was not an unusual occurrence, when a boy of fourteen or fifteen, for Ira to walk to Buffalo, carrying two jars of butter by means of a neck-yoke, such as some of us have used in carrying water, and, having marketed the same, return with groceries, ammunition, or other needed supplies suspended in the same manner.

It's hard to comprehend today having to walk 20 miles each way for supplies and mail, but that's what life was like on the frontier. According to "Our County and Its People, A Descriptive Work on Erie County", edited by Truman C. White, 1989 talking about the period prior to the War of 1812:

Money was scarce almost beyond present conception, and was difficult to obtain even when there was the best of produce for sale. Excellent wheat was, at times, worth so little that its value was absorbed in making a journey to Batavia or elsewhere to sell it. At one period it brought only twenty-five cents a bushel. The only relief for the settlers in this respect was in the sale of crude potash, or "black salts," as it was called, which could be sold at the asheries, of which many were established in the county between 1808 and 1812. When potash was produced from the salts it could be transported east with so little expense compared to its value that a profit was realized, and a little money was brought into the county.

But all these adverse conditions served to stimulate a spirit of self-reliance and perseverance under difficulty among the scattered families, which not only carried them through the years of privation, but bore fruit in later times in the development of a sturdy manhood among the forefathers, which was transmitted to a later generation.

The Ayer Family in Erie County



VIEW OF LAKE ERIE AND THE BAY FROM BUFFALO IN 1816.

Figure 21 - Buffalo Harbor 1816

As Ira got older though, the frontier population got larger and with more people, the family would have to travel to Buffalo less often.

Ira mentions that he was getting a good education back in Massachusetts but doesn't talk at all of his education following the move to Erie County. The only thing we know of is from Oatman:

The advantages to acquire an education were limited, as schools did not abound in those days and boys had something else to do. I do not know how much our comrade attended during his youth, but I have learned that during the winter of 1821-1822, when Dea. Joseph Bennett was teaching school Ira Ayer was one of his pupils.

New York State stated a legislative plan to help fund schools and school districts starting around when the Ayers moved to New York. However, in the early years when Ira was of age to go to school, compliance within the county was spotty at best.

The title of Chapter 3 of Reminiscences is "Life in the New Country – Twelve Years in the Log House". This would mean that around 1823 (Ira is around 20) they moved out of the log house. My guess is that the family built a new house or houses.

Status of the family around 1823:

The Ayer Family in Erie County

Low Bradley (26)	Low Bradley, the oldest, never married and as far as we know he never moved off the farm.
Martha (24)	Martha was married and having her second child while living in Hamburg
Gorham (22)	We don't know when Gorham got married and he never had any kids. He doesn't show up in the census until 1840 and then he was in Mississippi.
Ira (20)	Ira never moved away from Evans. Eventually he would own the eastern half of the farm and later moved to a farm on the shore of Lake Erie.
Mary Low (18)	Mary probably married around 1828.
Sarah (14)	Sarah was not likely married yet. She and her husband lived in Evans, he was a shoemaker and she was always listed as a tayloress in the censuses.
Henrietta (12)	Henrietta didn't marry for about another 10 years.
James, Jr. (10)	James never moved off the farm and would eventually own the western half.

The 1820 census is constant with everyone^{xv} living at home except Martha.

We have some evidence that Ira had a wild youth. He had a friend named Joseph Bennett who fortunately kept a journal. And, fortunately again, Kevin Siepel, a local author wrote a book on Bennett's journals called "Joseph Bennett of Evans and the Growing of New York's Niagara Frontier". It's a fascinating look at the area throughout most of the 19th century. There is one particularly event that Joseph talked about that is of interest to us. It took place in the winter of 1823-4 when Ira was 22 years old. From Siepel:

During this winter he and his friends came up with an idea for winter fun that was a little out of the ordinary. To carry it out, five yoke of oxen were produced by Joseph and three of his friends, Ira Ayer, James Reed, and "young Bates." Also produced was a quart of whiskey, to which was added a quart of molasses to make a large jug of blackstrap. A bag of some "johnnycake and dried [sic] beef" was packed up, whether to ward off the effects of the cold or the blackstrap is not clear. A driver, one Harlow Rowley, was hired to ride, but would be required to walk with the oxen all night on the planned eight-mile round trip. His compensation would be fifty cents and unlimited blackstrap access.

"All arrangements being made," wrote Joseph, "we now ordered the driver to bring up the carriage." The harnessed oxen, forming a line nearly fifty feet long, were now brought to the door and the sled box filled with straw. There were no seats. Piling into the box with the jug, their provisions, and a five-foot long tin boat-horn, the revelers gave the orders to move on. "Away we went," said

^{xv} The 1820 census only lists the number of males and females in each of several age groups. The numbers are consistent for everyone except for Ira and his mother who are listed in groups off by no more than 1 year. That type of error is very common.

The Ayer Family in Erie County

Joseph, “at the rate of 3 miles to the hour.” The cold was intense, he recalled, but, burrowed into the straw, all were “comfortable and happy.”

Driving west from today’s Roat Acres area along the stump-filled lakeshore road, they stopped first at the house of town supervisor James Aldrich, near present-day Bennett Beach. One suspects that their stops were decided on the basis of whether young females were at home. They took “peaceable possession” of the Aldrich family home, remembered Joseph, the family seeming to “enter into the spirit” of the festivities. The family was reluctant, however, to enter completely into that spirit. “Had to almost force them to drink out of the jug,” wrote Joseph, “but they did.”

Heading back to their “sleigh” and their doubtless shivering driver, they moved on to the house of O. H. Dibble, Joseph’s employer of the previous summer. “Mr. Dibble was not in the house but Mrs. Dibble entered into the spirit.”

On we went. The snow being very deep, our driver became very tired and begged to ride. Would not have him in the sleigh with us but consented to let him ride astride the sled tongue. The passengers took turns at blowing the horn.

The merrymakers’ next stop was at Whiting Cash’s, near Point Breeze. “At all our stopping places they had large fires,” recalled Joseph. “They were also very pleasant at this place, as at others.” But at Cash’s a serious accident befell the group: someone knocked over the jug of blackstrap. Ira Ayer drew cleanup duty, but the floor was reportedly already too dirty, pre-spill, for this operation to succeed. (The Cash family having a number of young children in a log cabin, wrote Joseph, the floor was not “in perfect order.”) At 10PM they moved on to “old Mr. Cash’s,” where they found that the “2 Misses Cash” had tuned in.^{xvi} Upon the visitors’ “strong and urgent requests,” the Misses Cash got up to join in the revelry. “We had a nice time,” wrote Joseph, “proved ourselves liberal with our refreshments.”

Just after midnight, they turned their patient oxen homeward, four miles through snowy darkness, arriving home nearly two hours later.

To me, this outing seems very much in keeping with Ira’s description of his youth, but very much in contrast with the Ayer family’s new found religion (see the end of Chapter III of “Reminiscences”). The Methodists frown on such partying. It also seems very different from the Ira of a few years later. In 1828 Ira sat on a county Grand Jury investigating public nuisances. They issued their findings on 6 March 1828 (Ira was now 26). Here is a summary of their findings:

to denounce and present to this Court and the People of the County, as
NUISANCES, and vices of the highest order in the catalogue of crimes—

^{xvi} Note from Siepel: By “old Mr. Cash,” Joseph is presumably referring to William Cash, who was just over 60 at the time.

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DISSIPATION, or habitual drunkenness—GAMBLING, or privileged plundering ; HOUSES of ILL-FAME,-where so many of the rising generation, are stripped of their property and their character.—These vices we consider the sorest evils which burthen the people of this Community, and others in the county; we denounce these vices to the honest indignation of the Ministers of Justice : we denounce them to the withering contempt of the wise and good : we denounce them as subversive of the morals, and infracting the laws of the land : we denounce them as opposed to the religion of Christ, and as defying the vengeance of Heaven.

The report goes on to describe the effects of the vices, not with specific examples but with typical examples. They even, at the end, complain of:

the conduct of the last Theatrical Company, who played in Buffalo village, was, in the opinion of this Grand Jury, immoral and disgraceful; it is in evidence that a quarrel and fight was had on the stage behind the scenes ; that from the disorderly conduct of those who attended the performances, the necessity of a strong police, was apparent.

This sounds just like movie descriptions of the “Wild West” of the 1880s. But, this is actually the “Wild West” of the 1820s.

Well, somewhere around this time Ira was visiting his sister in Hamburg where she was teaching (Hamburg is about 10 miles northeast of Evans). We will let Ira take it from here:

I was on a visit to Sister Martha's in Hamburg and who should come around but the prettiest girl I had ever seen. As soon as I had opportunity I enquired of Sister Martha what girl that was? (This enquiry was made in a whispering tone of course) She told me she was their school teacher. So much the better, I thought in my own mind, and finally it was established to myself at least that she should be my wife some day if my efforts could bring it about, for she was my prettiest girl. As it happened she went out the same after noon to pick currants for tea, as a chance thing I happened to come around where she was picking, and said a few words suited to the occasion, and finally one word led to another, until I ventured to say I would be happy to call to see her sometime if she pleased. My prettiest girl with a slight blush and with hesitancy said if you please; the time was agreed upon that I should call. I was true to meet the engagement, and I found the girl was as true to meet me, at the time and place agreed on. Time passed on, I made frequent calls on my prettiest girl, for a few months, until the time of Marriage was agreed upon. I think it was December 26th 1828 that Julia Mariah became the wife of Ira Ayer.

Ira and Julia did in fact get married on 26 December 1828. Julia Maria Wadsworth was born on 27 October 1808 to her unwed mother, Nancy Davenport. Within two years, Nancy married John Davenport in Canaan, New York where John appears to have adopted Julia. Nancy and John went on to

The Ayer Family in Erie County

have at least five children. It's impossible to know the circumstances of the relationship between John, Nancy and Julia. Many people list John as Julia's father. Sometimes they fudge he birth date and sometimes they just ignore it. However, I don't believe that Julia ever did. On the 1850 and 1860 census she was listed as being born in Massachusetts. Also, her gravestone lists the 1808 birth date. Given the attitude back then toward unwed mothers, Nancy was lucky to get married.

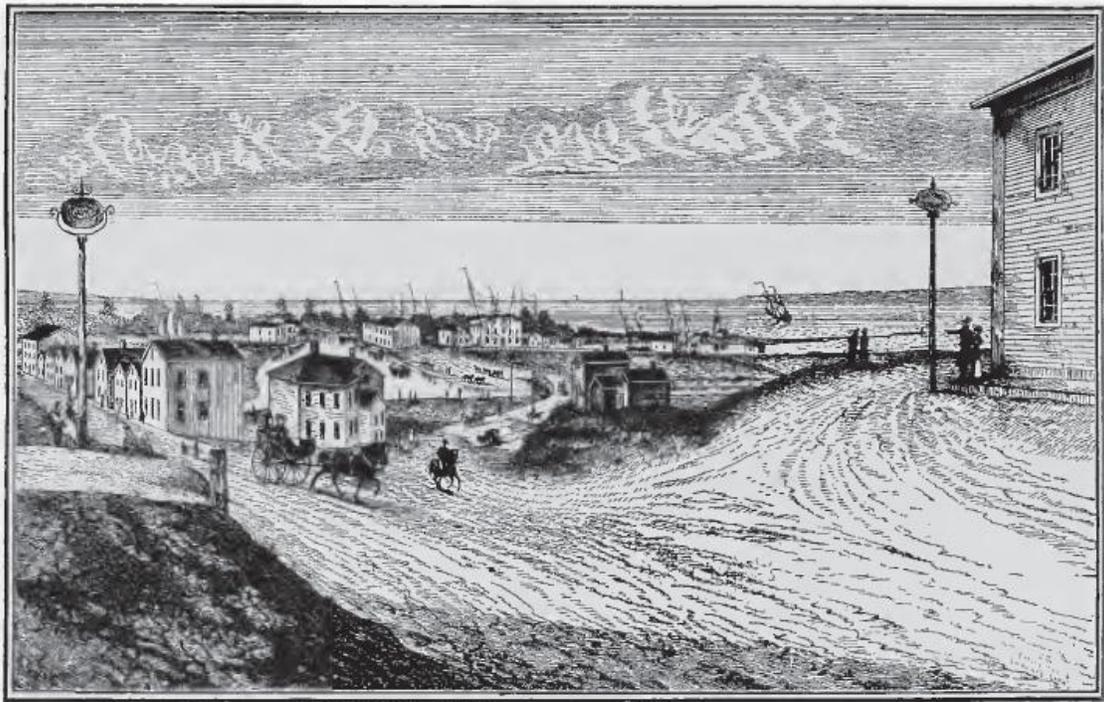
Nancy's parents were Joseph Davenport, revolutionary war veteran and born 22 May 1756 in Newton, Massachusetts and Mercy Crocker, born 25 December 1759 in Millbury, Massachusetts. I have not been able to find any information about Mercy other than from family records.

Shortly after getting married, Joseph and Mercy moved to what was Partridgeville but is now Hinsdale in Berkshire County where they had 11 children.

When Ira and Julia they must have had a home of their own because Ira says the Julia had a friend live with them so "for a companion, home with her, that our family might be sufficiently large to form a ring, in order that our social hours might be improved to better advantage than otherwise they could." I don't know but to me this sounds like a chaperone. This didn't work too well because about 10 months after getting married they had their first child. However, wherever they were living, Ira soon decided to build a new house:

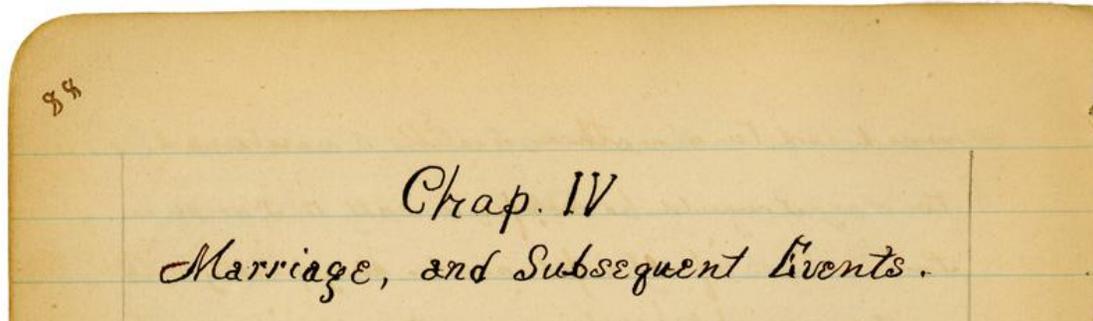
Time passed on pleasantly; yet we soon found that getting married was not all there was of life, though we both regarded it, as a good beginning. The first thing to be considered was the building of a new house. The size was to be 24 by 36 feet. The out side finish was to be plaster with a heavy coat and gravel thrown in, as thick as the plaster would hold. This made a good finish, and was somewhat fashionable in those days. As soon as we could reasonably bring it around, we started to build the new house. The mason was already paid for doing the out side work. The first thing to be done was digging the cellar wall, and drawing stone from the lake for stoning it up. This was all going on at once, and in due time the cellar was up, and a fine cellar it was too. It may be, by this time the house was ready to raise. If so, it wasn't long before it was up. Now the time for making arrangements for the rooms had come. Mrs. Ayer was at hand to do her part of this work. Of course it was a very important part. This Mrs. Ayer well considered finally in due time the house was finished enough to live in but it was a number of years before it was fully completed.

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VIEW OF BUFFALO HARBOR—FROM COLDEN'S MEMOIR, 1826.

Reminiscences – Chapter 4 – Marriage, and Subsequent Events



I was on a visit to Sister Martha's in Hamburg and who should come around but the prettiest girl I had ever seen. As soon as I had opportunity I enquired of Sister Martha what girl that was? (This enquiry was made in a whispering tone of course) She told me she was their school teacher. So much the better, I thought in my own mind, and finally it was established to myself at least that she should be my wife some day if my efforts could bring it about, for she was my prettiest girl. As it happened she went out the same after noon to pick currants for tea, as a chance thing I happened to come around where she was picking, and said a few words suited to the occasion, and finally one word led to another, until I ventured to say I would be happy to call to see her sometime if she pleased. My prettiest girl with a slight blush and with hesitancy said if you please; the time was agreed upon that I should call. I was true to meet the engagement, and I found the girl was as true to meet me, at the time and place agreed on. Time passed on, I made frequent calls on my prettiest girl, for a few months, until the time of Marriage was agreed upon. I think it was December 26th 1828 that Julia Mariah became the wife of Ira Ayer. Mrs. Ayer invited a Lady friend Suphronia Hard for a companion, home with her, that our family might be sufficiently large to form a ring, in order that our social hours might be improved to better advantage than otherwise they could. Time passed on pleasantly; yet we soon found that getting married was not all there was of life, though we both regarded it, as a good beginning. The first thing to be considered was the building of a new house. The size was to be 24 by 36 feet. The out side finish was to be plaster with a heavy coat and gravel thrown in, as thick as the plaster would hold. This made a good finish, and was somewhat fashionable in those days. As soon as we could reasonably bring it around, we started to build the new house. The mason was already paid for doing the out side work. The first thing to be done was digging the cellar wall, and drawing stone from the lake for stoning it up. This was all going on at once, and in due time the cellar was up, and a fine cellar it was too. It may be, by this time the house was ready to raise. If so, it wasn't long before it was up. Now the time for making arrangements for the rooms had come. Mrs. Ayer was at hand to do her part of this work. Of course it was a very important part. This Mrs. Ayer well considered finally in due time the house was finished

Reminiscences – Chapter 4 – Marriage, and Subsequent Events

enough to live in but it was a number of years before it was fully completed. During the latter part of the time mentioned I was engaged in building for my Neighbors; after some years I built a saw mill. This I found to be a good investment. It was profitable for ourselves as well as convenient for our Neighbors, so work increased on our hands; that is the more we done was an opening to more that wanted doing. In about 1842 or 3 there was a blessed Revival of Religion in Brant. I will call it blessed, because the Lord was there. I never shall forget the time nor the little school house about 14 by 16 feet. I felt truly the time had come for the Lord to give me what I had been asking for so many years. All were blessed all around more or less. The year following it, was concluded by the brethren and Sisters around the Center to build a Meeting House at the center. A meeting was called, but few attended. Yet the few, thought best to go forward notwithstanding. A vote was taken to build a Meeting house. Those that wasn't present at the meeting or at least a part of them made enquiry if they had a meeting. O yes was the answer. did they do anything? yes. what did they do? they voted to have a meeting house was the answer.

The stake was struck, and well driven, and no one dared to move it. Timber was hewed the coming winter; a part of it on our own farm. This gave dear Mrs. Ayer an opportunity to help some. She Love the boarding of the hands. White wood logs were drawn to mill for sawing, the same winter, for inside finishing. Two teams were engaged drawing stone from the lake for underpinning; at the same time the framing was advancing, and before haying. The meeting house was raised. The following year it was dedicated to the Lord. Presiding Elder Gleson Filmore Presiding. I think this evening while writing that the Reformation in Brant a year or two before was a moving Element in building the House.

Ira describes it as a team effort but LeRoy S Oatman describes it differently. In his Memorial to Ira Ayer he said:

Until 1844 the worshipers met in private houses and school houses. During that year Ira Ayer determined that a Church should be built. He began alone, cutting the trees and hewing the timbers, and though others came to his aid from time to time he labored almost daily until the house was completed. In his younger days he had worked some as a carpenter and soon after his marriage he had constructed a saw mill near his home on the Little Sister Creek. The trees were mostly, if not all cut on the Ayer farm and sawed at the Ayer mill and a large portion of the work was done by him or under his supervision until the Methodist Church at Evans Center, which was occupied until a few years ago, was completed. From his early manhood until his decease he was an official member of the Church and of his exemplary Christian life it is unnecessary to speak.

Dear Wife raised a family of seven children Ira, Low Bradley 1, Low Bradley 2, Lavinia, Sarah, Henrietta, Julia and Martha (the eldest). She died Aug 14, 1861

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leaving an evidence that our loss would be her gain. It rejoices our hearts for the evidence we have that dear Wife and dear mother is in Heaven.

Miss Bessie Cronkhite and Myself were joined in marriage Oct 14, 1869. There is quite a comparative difference in our ages but this in our social relation is hardly ever mentioned or thought of, as I know she has ever manifested a great interest in all matters for the welfare of the family. When ever or where ever help was needed out doors or in, she is ready to give a helping hand. My family of children were her family of children as well. Receiving visits and going to see them with all the tenderness and love that she would if they were her own. Little Lolah is our darling. Sometimes she behaves like every thing but we like her all the same. She loves devotion, always ready to bow her head in prayer.

The 3 January 1884 edition of the Buffalo Express said:

Judge Hammond yesterday granted an order of adoption authorizing Mr. and Mrs. Ira Ayer to adopt Lolah B. Cash. Mr. and Mrs. Ayer have no children and Lolah is motherless. The child will be hereafter known as Lolah B. Ayer.

The Buffalo Courier on the same day said the child was 12 years old.

I couldn't find a Lolah B. Cash in the area, but I did find in the 1880 census Viola Cash of Evans, New York, age 10, the oldest of 6 children (the rest boys) and living with her parents Ashley and Sophia. Sophia died 9 March 1883, but Ashley lived until 1897. As the newspaper said, Lolah was motherless, not necessarily fatherless.

But it couldn't have been Viola because her 1913 obituary from Nebraska says:

Viola Sophia Cash was born at Evans Center, NY, September 11, 1870, passing to her reward Monday, September 1, 1913. When but twelve years of age she lost her mother, and came to Nebraska in the year 1885 to make her home with the family of her uncle, Ambrose Cash, at Rising City.

The confusing thing is that a 19 March 1885 issue of the Buffalo Courier lists heirs to the estate of William Thompson (likely Lolah's maternal grandfather). It lists Lolah B Cash and four of her brothers (one had died) from Evans and Louise M. and Viola Sophia Cash of Rising City, Nebraska.

So, maybe there was a Lolah B and a Viola Sophia. And it turns out there was. I found on the web a genealogy that said there was. There were 6 children in 1880, one died in 1882 and Lolah B. Cash was born on 7 March 1883, 2 days before her mother's death. That makes the only conflict the fact that Lolah was listed as being 12 years old (the age of Viola) when she was actually almost 10

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months old.

This makes much more sense. Ira and Bessie probably took care of Lolah almost from the start and adopted her officially in at age 10 months. I'm sure that a newborn was that last thing the widower with 6 children could deal with.

The amazing thing is that Ira was 82 and Bessie was about 43. The thought of taking care of a newborn while in your 80s is beyond my imagination. As Ira says, "Little Lolah is our darling. Sometimes she behaves like every thing but we like her all the same."

Reader, How wonderful are the ways of Providence. We would do well to observe this more then what we do. I have told you that Pa started for Batavia to get an article of a farm in Springville and on his way he met Mr. Palmer, who advised him to look in Evans for a farm and I have told you also Reader how it was that Martha experienced Religion and come home with the story of the Cross upon her lips and as the fruit of her labor most of the family were converted to God and joined the Church and no doubt the influence of Martha's christian experience was wide spread. Now, if Pa hadn't met Mr. Palmer, Pa would have moved to Springville and as far as we know into a Neighborhood of sinners, where the family would have lived and died sinners.

If you look at the map you can see that there are only about 15 miles between Evans and the possible "Neighborhood of sinners", Springville. Evans is near the lake and Springville is 15 miles further inland.

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The Patriot War

(There are two periods of fighting called "The Patriot War", the first was a fight with the Spanish over Florida during the War of 1812. The second and the one we are interested in was on the US/Canada border between 1837 and 1838)

Ira, like many of his peers joined the military reserves. Not only was he a member of the militia, but he had quickly risen in rank. From a letter by his son, Ira, Jr., published in Oatman's memorial:

I have in my possession his Commissions : The first as Lieutenant in the 48th Regiment of Infantry, with rank from July 11th, 1827. This is signed by "DeWitt Clinton, Esq., Governor of our said State," the form of which seems somewhat quaint in contrast with those of more modern date.

Subsequent Commissions as Captain, Major, and Lieutenant Colonel followed, and on the 16th day of October, 1837, he was Commissioned by Governor Marcy, Colonel of the 48th Regiment of Infantry, with rank from Sept. 9th, 1837.

He was then thirty-four years of age, in the strength of young and vigorous manhood...

He was possessed of a fine voice and had a martial spirit and bearing.

Full of fire, but genial and sympathetic, he was endowed by nature with those characteristics that make a popular commander.

He was a thorough master of the tactics pertaining to company and battalion evolutions and was therefore never at a loss for the proper word of command, which even in the more complicated movements was given with ease and precision, and with a force and spirit that not only inspired confidence, but awakened enthusiasm.

The year after the date of his commission as Colonel, the Patriot War difficulties in Canada caused a feeling of insecurity along the frontiers and the Brigade of which the 48th Regiment formed a part was ordered to Buffalo.

Between 1837 and 1838 we were on the verge of a third war against England in 60 years. It was known as the Patriot War or the Upper Canada Rebellion. The fact that no one has ever heard of the Patriot War is in no small part due to the cool head of Ira.

Basically the Patriot War was a war to gain the independence of Canada from Great Britain. The rebellion was started by some Canadians known as the

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Patriots but was supported by many Americans. The War of 1812 was only 25 years earlier and there were a lot of Americans still upset with the British.

Because the rebels had little money and little support their main tactic was to use American soil to support their attacks in an effort to get the British to attack the US and thereby bring us into the war. President Van Buren wanted to avoid this at all costs. He was at the time busy fermenting problems with Spain in Florida.

Since the winter of 1837/38 was warmer than normal, the Niagara River had not yet frozen. Boat traffic was still moving and there had been some incidents along the Niagara River (see the section on the Patriot War at the end of this document for more details) and an American ship was burned and sunk by the British.

The Patriots were led by General Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, the son a famous War of 1812 general. The British troops were commanded by Colonel McNab. Van Buren sent General Winfield Scott ("Old Fuss and Feathers") to Buffalo to command the American troops. The American Troops were made up primarily of the New York State 48th Regiment since they were made up of Erie County residents. Ira was a Colonel at the time.

To understand the engagement, you need to know that the Niagara River flows north from Lake Erie at Buffalo to Lake Ontario. About half way is Niagara Falls. Navy Island is a small island belonging to Canada right off a much larger Grand Island belonging to America. The Patriots installed themselves on Navy Island in early January so they could harass the British troops from there.

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Figure 22 - Map showing Buffalo, Grand Island, Navy Island and the Niagara River. The river flows north from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario.

From Oatman we learn:

During the Patriot War, in 1838, our comrade was found on duty as Colonel of the Forty-Eighth Regiment, New York Militia. How many the regiment contained or from how large a territory it was recruited I have been unable to ascertain. Three members of the regiment, Amos Avery, Daniel Mosher and Elijah P. Smith, are still residents of this town

I have ascertained that they marched to Buffalo, remained over night in one of the warehouses near the dock, marched in review before General Winfield Scott, proceeded down the river, and crossed by flat boats to Grand Island. I am not aware that they had any encounter with the enemy, though they showed their loyalty by leaving their homes and taking position as directed by the general, commanding.

According to Ira, Jr. from Oatman's memorial:

The 48th, though made up of companies from the country, and quite widely separated, was the first to report at Buffalo, and was immediately ordered to Grand Island where it remained, if my memory serves me correctly, some four weeks, the principal duty being to maintain the peace and preserve the neutrality of the border.

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It appears that here something in the nature of an " Artillery Duel " took place between the Patriots and the regular forces on the Canadian side.

I remember to have heard father tell of one poor fellow, who was possibly out foraging with the natural instincts of a soldier, and who got within range of the firing and was killed by a cannon ball that evidently overshot his mark.

This, I believe, was the extent of the casualties, but this short campaign was apparently pleasantly remembered by those who participated in it.

The part that I find historically most significant is that while Ira was stationed on Grand Island and cannon fire from McNab was flying overhead, rather than retaliate, Ira sent a message to McNab. From the 23 January 1838 issue of the Hudson River Chronicle we find the following letter:

From Col. Ira Ayer, 48 Reg. 47 Brig. N. Y. Militia.
U. S. Barracks, Grand Island
Jan. 13, 1838

Sir – For several days past, cannon balls and shells have been thrown from the batteries on the Canadian frontier, upon Grand Island, within the territory of the United States. – This was particularly the case last night or this morning, when several shots were received, and two or more shells burst upon the Island, and in the vicinity of the American Barracks. Our barge has also been fired upon, when bearing the American flag.

I write to apprise you of the circumstances, and whether they have been taken place by accident or design, to remonstrate against this carelessness in the one case, and wanton violation of national neutrality in the other.

Hoping to receive such an answer as will prevent the necessity of any unpleasant communications to the American authorities,

I have the honor to be, &c. &c.

IRA AYER

Hon. A. N. McNab, Col. Com'g Her Britannic Majesty's force, at
Chippewa.

McNab's reply from the same newspaper:

From Hon. A. N. McNab, Col. Com'g. Chippewa, to Col. Ira Ayer, Grand Island.
Head Quarters
Chippewa, 13th Jan., 1838.

Sir – I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this day, apprising me that, "For several days past cannon balls have been thrown from the batteries on the Canadian frontier, upon Grand Island," and that, "in one instance," your "barge has been fired upon, when bearing the American flag."

With regard to the cannon balls or shells from our batteries reaching your frontier, it is quite possible that this may occasionally have been the case, but I can assure you that it is altogether the effect of accident, and that not one shot or shell has reached you shore by design. You must be aware of the difficulty (from

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the situation of Navy Island, and the position of our batteries,) of keeping our shot and shell always within our own territory, but you may rely upon my best endeavors to do so; and I sincerely trust that no accident has occurred on Grand Island, in consequence of some of our shot having occasionally reached it.

With respect to your complaint of our firing upon one of your barges, bearing the American Flag, I have only to say, that this is the first time that such a report has reached me, and I am quite convinced that, upon inquiry, you will find it wholly incorrect. It may possibly be got up as a sort of set off to the outrage committed by a party of men under your immediate command, and directly under the American flag, by firing upon Lieut. Elmsley, R. N., while peaceably sounding the river; and I shall be much obliged to you to make the communication to your authorities upon this subject, which you mention in your letter, together with a copy of your letter to me, as I desire nothing so much as a full investigation of the charges you have preferred.

I have the honor to be,

Sir, your obedient humble servant,

ALLAN McNAB, Col. Com'g.

Col Ira Ayer, 48th Reg. 47 Brigade, N. Y. Militia

Tensions eased and just two days later in the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser:

Schlosser, Monday Morning, Jan. 15, 1838.

Navy Island was evacuated last night. – The cannon belonging to the U. S. has been returned, and are lying at Schlosser.

Thus far the dispatch of our correspondent. We give such additional information as we have subsequently learned.

It is believed that the larger portion of Van Rensselaer's men have landed on the adjacent parts of Grand Island, having previously sent across muskets, &c. belonging to the State, which were committed to the custody of Col. Ayer. The further movements of the disbanded force are left to conjecture.

Without the possibility of US involvement, there was no reason to continue the engagement. This marked the end of hostilities on the Erie County area and with the exception of a few other engagements, the end of the Patriot War. While I'll admit that there is a small chance that I'm biased, I believe that due to the cool headedness of Ira and others, an all out war was averted and that's why we don't learn about the Patriot War in school today (thanks to Ira).

Again, in the letter from Ira, Jr. in the memorial:

Well do I remember how, in my younger days, father was frequently called upon to respond to the warm and friendly salutations of passerby who proved to be men of the 48th Regiment that had " served under him on Grand Island."

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These meetings, though brief, were exceedingly cordial, being generally accompanied with some reminiscence, and the parting was always one of hearty respect and good will.

Ira and Julia Raise a Family

The first of the Ayer family to die was Henrietta. She died in 1832 at only 22 years of age. She was married at the time.

James, Sr. He died at age 73 a year after the Patriot War.

A few years later in 1844, the family lost two members. Low Bradley, the oldest and the only one who never married died at the age of 47. A couple months later Sarah Bradley Ayer died at age 70.

We know almost nothing of the Ayer family following the Patriot War. We know that Ira was supervisor of Evans 1857-8 for two years and his brother James was supervisor from 1860-2.

During this time Ira and Julia raised their family. We believe they had at least seven children

1. Martha Cecelia Ayer: born October 1829 – she only lived to about age 5.
2. Lavinia Ayer: born 18 August 1834 – she married and had one child before dying at age 34.
3. Ira Ayer, Jr.: born 14 July 1836 – he married and had 6 children before dying at age 66.
4. Sarah Cecilia Ayer: born 29 November 1842 – she married and had 4 children before dying at age 63.
5. Julia Maria Ayer: b 17 January 1845 – she married and had two children before dying at age 26.
6. Lowe Bradley Ayer: born July 1850 – he died before the age of 2.

We also know from the Ayer memorial at the Forest Avenue Cemetery in Angola that Julia and Ira had two children named Lowe Bradley. Some family notes state that Ira, Jr. had a stillborn twin brother. The other Low Bradley may have been that stillborn twin. Also, there are five years between the first and second child. This is fairly unusual so there may have been lost children then (possibly Lowe Bradley) or miscarriages.

In addition to raising children, Ira and Julia raised crops and livestock. According to the 1850 and 1860 agricultural censuses they had about 150 acres of land. In 1850 about half of it was farmed (improved) and about 80 percent in 1860. They

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had 8-10 milk cows and about 13 cattle altogether making about 2000 lbs of butter and cheese a year. They also had several horses and pigs. Their other output was beans, potatoes, barley and honey.

Lavinia (Vinnie) was the first to get married. She married Doctor George W. Barr on 8 August 1858. A year later they had their first and only surviving child Iris Barr. Iris lived to almost 90 but never married.

The Civil War

(Unless otherwise specified, all the quotes in this section are from LeRoy Oatman's "Memorial to Ira Ayer", 1890)

On 12 April 1861, the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor and the Civil War began. The people of Erie County found themselves involved in the third war in 50 years.

Ira's son, Ira, Jr. was at school in Pennsylvania and within a few months he and many of his classmates had formed company and were in the process of enlisting. We will have more on him later.

Back in Evans, Ira, Sr. was dealing with a sick wife. I don't know how long she was sick before Ira, Jr. was mustered in he visited her to say goodbye. Knowing the end was near, he wrote her a goodbye [letter and poem](#) in early July. Julia died on August 14. Ira still had two daughters at home, Sarah and Julia, ages 20 and 16.

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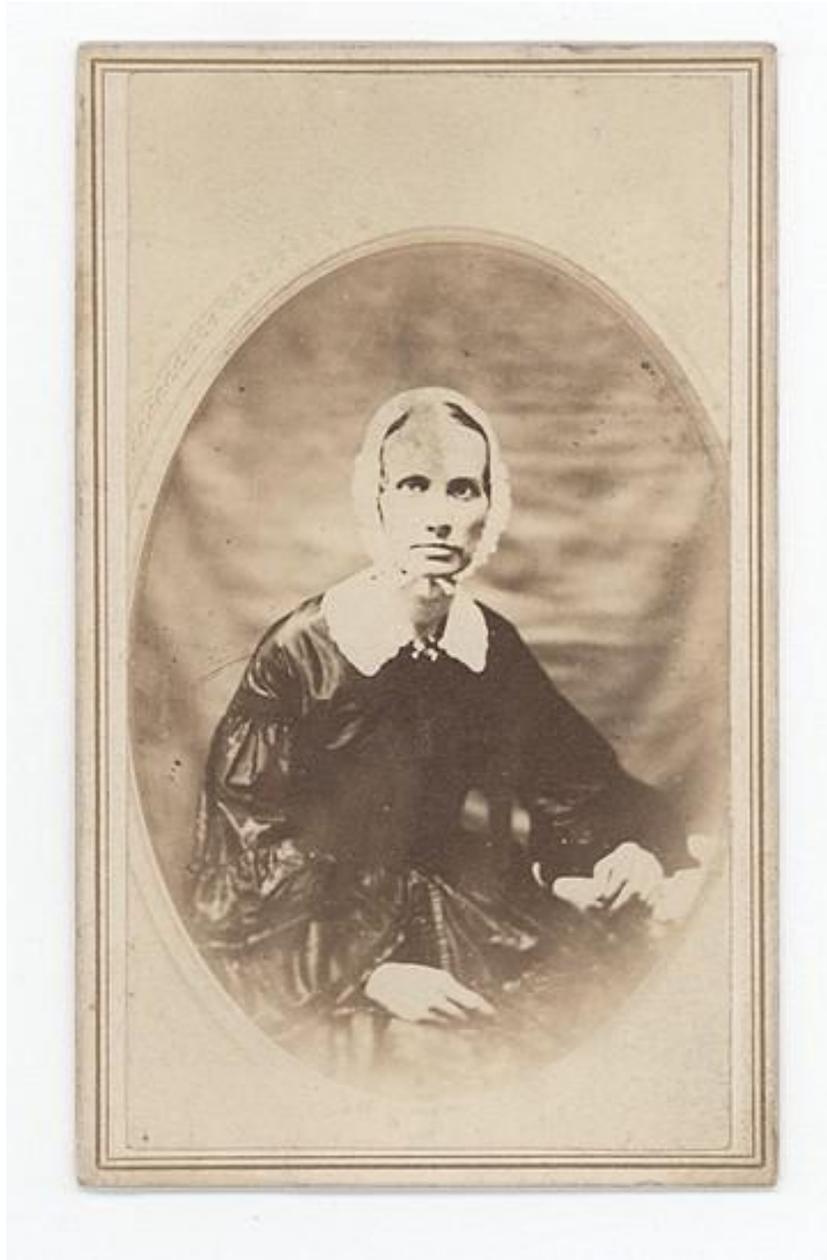


Figure 23 - Julia Mariah Wadsworth Ayer

Recruiting a Company

The early war was not going well for the North. After an initial optimism about a quick victory Lincoln realized he would need more troops. On July 2nd, 1862 he called for 300,000 volunteers. Governor Morgan of New York set quotas for each district. Erie County made up the 31st military district and the committee was organized on July 10th. From Oatman:

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Our deceased comrade could not remain inactive when the life of the nation was in danger.

Among those who applied for authority to recruit a company was our late comrade, Ira Ayer. His expectations were fully realized, as when it was known that one of his military experience and high social position was to command, the young men responded quickly and on the 11th day of August he marched into Fort Porter—then know as Camp Morgan— at the head of nearly a full company and reported to Colonel H. K. Viele, who was in command.

As ours was the first organization that had been perfected we were mustered into the service as Company "A," of what was afterwards known as the One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry

One of the ways Ira recruited his company was to travel from town to town to what were called War Meetings at the end of July through early August where he signed up people wanting to join. Among towns he visited were North Evans, Evans Center, Brant and Langford. A newspaper account of the 28 July North Evans meeting said:

War Meeting at North Evans – On Monday evening a glorious war meeting was held at North Evans and the spirit of the “second uprising” was present. Col. Ayres presided, and Lyman Pratt, Esq. of Eden, appointed Secretary. The meeting was addressed by Wm. Dorsheimer, Esq. and F. J. Pithian, Esq. in a style that called out all the patriotic feeling of their large audience. Col. Ayres announced his purpose to raise a company for the new regiment, and received a number of recruits upon the spot. An Executive Committee was appointed for the town, to take measures to forward recruiting and to raise necessary funds, and the meeting adjourned with a feeling of resolute enthusiasm which promises well for that patriotic township.

At the Brant meeting the newspaper said:

As Col. Ayer rode into the grounds, he was greeted with three hearty cheers, in expression of the universal respect which is entertained for him. He has seen service, and gained an enviable reputation as an officer. His military genius and Christian patriotism have a most happy effect in obtaining impulse of heart, his every expression portrays his fitness for a commander.

Ira was the first from Erie County to recruit a full company and almost everyone was from Evans, Eden, Hamburg and Aurora, the towns southwest of Buffalo. He very likely knew most of these people. On 11 August, only a few days after starting his recruiting, Ira marched his new regiment into Buffalo. According to a newspaper account:

Recruits for the New Regiment – Capt. Ayer who has been engaged in raising a company for the new regiment arrived in the city at ten o'clock yesterday morning with one hundred and twenty two recruits, enlisted in the towns of East

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and West Hamburg, White's Corners and Evans. They came in their own conveyances, and assembled at the New York Central Railroad depot, on Exchange street, where they were formed into line, and, headed by the White's Corners Band, marched up Exchange street to Main, up Main to Niagara, and thence to the military depot on Prospect Hill. They were attended in their march by a large crowd of people, and were frequently and loudly cheered.

The men were all athletic, intelligent looking fellows, and Capt. Ayer has every reason to feel proud of his company.

The speed and efficiency at which Ira recruited his company so impressed the Senatorial Military Commission that they presented him with a regulation sword in a ceremony before 500 people the day after Ira and his company showed up at camp. On 14 August 1862 both local papers ran this same story:

An Interesting Incident at Camp Morgan

Yesterday afternoon the members of the District Military Committee presented a splendid regulation sword, together with belt, sword knot sash and shoulder straps, to Capt. Ira Ayers; the present being an individual testimonial from these gentlemen of the valuable services rendered by the gallant Captain in bringing in the first full company for the new regiment. The presentation ceremony was a very interesting one. The Committee, together with a number of gentlemen of the city, were present, and the whole of the new regiment, some 500 men, were drawn up in double line in front of the portico of the stone house in the camp. The affair was really a surprise to Capt. Ayers, who was called in from his duties just at the proper moment. Judge Hall and His Honor Mayor Fargo were the presenters, and gave the sword and its accompaniments, together with the following letter:

BUFFALO, Aug. 12, 1862.

Capt. Ira Ayers, N. Y. S. Volunteers:

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, desiring to manifest their individual sense of your patriotism and energy, as well as to evidence, in some slight degree, the public appreciation of your valuable services, in raising and bringing into camp the first full company of the regiment of volunteers now organizing in this district, have procured a suitable service sword, sword belt, sword knot, sash and shoulder straps, and have requested the Mayor and Judge Hall to present them to you, in their behalf, as evidence of the public gratitude for the services you have already rendered to the country.

We beg you to accept this sword and the accompanying articles, in full confidence that it will be honorably borne and bravely wielded in the service of the country, and in the maintenance of Constitutional Government

We are, very respectfully,

Your friends and servants,

N. R. HALL,
HARRY L. LANSING,
ALEX. W. HARVEY,
J. BAYER,

Ira Ayer, Sr.

JOHN GANSON,
A. 8. BEMIS,
P. DORSHRIMER,
Wm. G. FARGO.
S. G. AUSTIN.

The Captain replied in a brief speech full of sincere feeling. He thanked the gentlemen warmly for their gift and said he snapped they did not mean it to hang idly at his side or upon his shelf at home. If they thought it was made of steel tit to fight, with, he would try its temper in the battle, and he hoped earnestly that their highest expectations of him would be more than realized. In receiving the sword he felt burdened with the responsibility that came with it, but he trusted, and, by the grace of God, he dared to promise that though he would not bring it back with all its present brightness and beauty, it should come back with none but stains of honor upon it.

The speech was received with loud applause and three cheers were given for the gallant Captain by the regiment and all present As its owner took the sword and showed it to his men it was hard to tell whether they or he were the prouder of the noble gift. "We never will see any body take that from you, Captain !" said one fine looking fellow in the ranks. .The soldiers further indulged In rounds of cheers tor the Colonel, the city of Buffalo, the ladies of the city, and the star spangled banner, and the Incident wound up with the best of feeling all round.

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The sword is documented in the book "Inscribed Union Swords" by David D. Stroud, 1983. The inscription says:

Capt. Ira Ayer
Co. A. 116th Reg.
N. Y. S. V.
Presented by
Senatorial Military Comm.

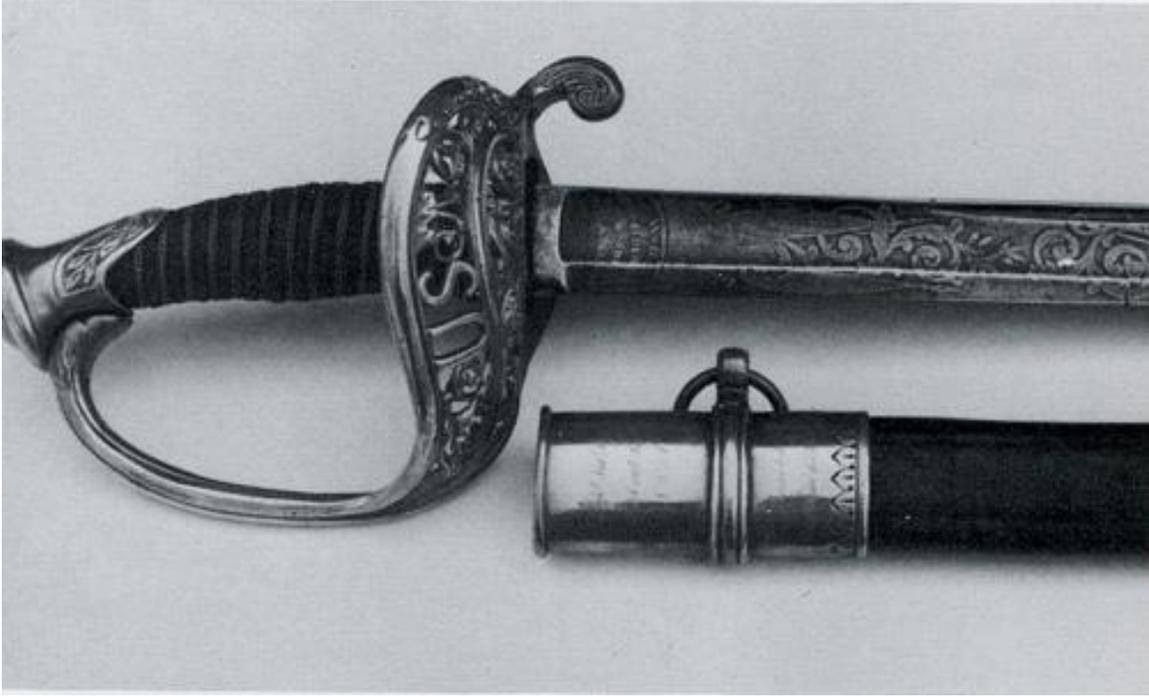


Figure 24 - Ira Ayer, Sr. Sword – From Inscribed Union Swords: 1861-1865, David D Stroud

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 25 - Ira Ayer, Sr. Sword – From *Inscribed Union Swords: 1861-1865*, David D Stroud

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 26 - The only known picture of Ira Ayer, Sr.

At nearly 60 years old, Ira was significantly older than others in his company.
From Oatman:

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Of the ninety-seven under Captain Ayer's command, thirty-seven were boys from eighteen to twenty years of age and of the others only eleven were over twenty-eight. The average age of the members was a little less than twenty-three, while our Captain was nearly sixty....

Though not possessing the same vigor as when he rode at the head of a Regiment, the same spirit inspired him and he believed that the young men would respond to his call for volunteers. More than a year had elapsed since Fort Sumter had fallen.

Ira was not the only member of the Ayer family to lead a company. His little brother James, Jr. was captain of Company K in the same regiment. Of the nine companies in the regiment (A-K), Ira and James were captains of two of them. Since Ira and James probably knew all the same people, since Ira had recruited his company so quickly, it may have been hard for James to recruit his company. That may be why his was the last. From the Oatman biography of James Ayer (the full biography is in the appendix):

I have heard it stated at various times, though I am not prepared to substantiate the fact from any records, that James Ayer was the first white male child born within the present limits of the town of Evans. His early life, like that of his older brother, developed military ability.

When a young man he was Captain and afterwards, by successive promotions, Major, Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel of a Regiment of New York State Militia.

He resided all his life in the town and upon the same farm where he was born.

As a citizen he was honored and beloved by all. In a long acquaintance with him and with those among whom he resided I never heard other than words of esteem spoken of him as a neighbor, a friend and earnest and exemplary Christian citizen.

Like his brother he had been called to pass through great affliction.

A short time before he offered his services to his country he buried his wife and was left with two motherless children of tender age to care for.

He, however, did not falter in his convictions of duty and receiving authority to recruit a company he soon found himself mustered into the service as Captain of Company " K," One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry. He was an efficient officer and had he lived would undoubtedly have gained promotion, as he had the entire confidence of his superior officers.

In the service he exhibited the same spirit of kindness and solicitude for others welfare that had ever been a prominent trait in his life and character and the more intimately the members of his company came to know him the stronger was their attachment to him as a friend and their admiration of him as an officer.

James was just turning 49 so he was much younger than Ira.

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Deployment

The regiment left Buffalo on 4 September 1862 by train, heading for Baltimore to a camp at Druid Hill Park where they would continue their training. From Oatman:

In the matter of discipline Captain Ayer excelled. Always carefully obeying the orders of his superior officers, he exacted the same obedience from those under his command. Upon parade, and in all the duties of camp life his neatness as to uniform and equipments was an example to his men.

As to mastering the manual of arms and the new tactics and commands it was not an easy matter for him and very much of that duty devolved upon the Lieutenants and the non-commissioned officers.

They were in camp for just over a month before the first time they were called to action:

October 11th, about midnight, an orderly from General Emory's headquarters galloped into the camp. We were immediately aroused, ordered to cook three days' rations and be ready to move early in the morning. It was reported that General Stuart with a large force of Confederate Cavalry had started upon a raid into Pennsylvania.

On 11 October 11 General Stewart had led a raiding party of 1800 men to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania where they raided a Union warehouse. Anything they couldn't carry they burned. By the time the 116th Regiment arrived on the 13th, Stewart had crossed back into Virginia. But, to get there the Regiment had traveled through Gettysburg 9 months before the famous battle, a battle that Ira's son Ira, Jr. would be in the middle of.

Heading South

The regiment was back in Baltimore by the 16th. They didn't stay long, however.

November 5th we embarked upon boats and proceeding to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, found a large fleet assembling, destined for some distant service.

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 27 - Fortress Monroe, Virginia – Harpers Weekly 22 June 1861

Fortress Monroe is was in Virginia strategically placed at the mouth of the Chesapeake and the James River heading to Richmond. It was an important place for the Union to keep during the Civil War because it made it much easier to maintain the blockade of the South.

The regiment traveled in small boats from Baltimore down the Chesapeake to Fortress Monroe. There they spent a month on their ship waiting to leave for distant shores. But the life on the ship was very unhealthy.

Nearly a month in close quarters upon the boat was disastrous to the health of the regiment and one hundred and fifty—twelve of whom were from Company " A " were left in the hospital at Fortress Monroe, when " Banks' Expedition," of which we were a part, sailed December 4th. We; had a very rough voyage and many vessels of the fleet were disabled in the storm, which we encountered.

Their destination was the Mississippi River but the boats were too deep to cross the bar at the mouth of the river. So, on the 13th of December, they stopped on Ship Island, about 20 miles off the coast of Gulfport, Mississippi. Here they waited until after Christmas to board boats to take them up river.

There was a tradition in the military that on the day after Christmas, the enlisted men would elect officers and run the company for a day.

I referred to Captain Ayer's exactness in obeying orders. A little incident will illustrate this: Christmas, 1862, Colonel Chapin allowed the enlisted men to elect their company officers from among their number, and they in turn to elect field officers, and, for that day, the officers so elected were to be absolutely in command of the regiment.

It was considered a good opportunity to show the officers how well we could discipline the regiment, and to that end many of them were arrested and ordered to perform some of the duties of a private soldier. Captain Ayer was found by the guard outside of camp, was brought before the proper company officer and as a

Ira Ayer, Sr.

penalty was ordered to do police duty; or to make it plain to you who are civilians, was ordered to clean the company streets. This was a matter in which he had always been very exacting, insisting that the streets and ground around the tents should be kept scrupulously clean. .

Arrayed in the blouse of a private, armed with the necessary implements and escorted by the guard he proceeded to obey orders, and though the following day was the sixtieth anniversary of his birth I will venture to assert that the streets of Company " A " were never better cleaned than when he reported his task completed and was released from arrest.

On 30 December 1862, Ira now 60 years old, the regiment headed up the Mississippi River.



Figure 28 - Entrance to the Mississippi, Ship Island is one of the islands near the top - Harpers Weekly 2 January 1863

The boats traveled up the Mississippi River Delta toward New Orleans. As you may recall, Gorham, Ira and James' older brother had a farm along the Mississippi River Delta.

The morning of the 30th we entered the mouth of the river and passed Forts Jackson and St. Philip, of whose capture by Farragut's fleet we had read when at home.

We now had our first glimpse of real Southern scenery. Magnolia trees in full bloom and orange trees laden with fruit in mid-winter. Gorham Ayer, the older brother of our comrade, lived near the banks of the Mississippi, and I remember

Ira Ayer, Sr.

with what interest Captains Ira and James scanned the various plantations until they located their brother's home.

I don't know what Gorham and his wife did during the Civil War. I don't know if they stayed in the south or if they went north or if they suffered any. But, I think Gorham was still there because on 1 February 1863 in a letter to Ira's daughter Vinnie, Ira's son Ira says, "I wonder what kind of a meeting that will be – Pa, Uncle James, Uncle Gorham?" If they had, I'm sure Oatman would have mentioned it.

We soon reached New Orleans, Louisiana, and passing on landed at Carrollton, five miles above the city. After about one month of the routine of camp duty we again embarked on steamer, and February 4th were at Baton Rouge, the capitol of the State.

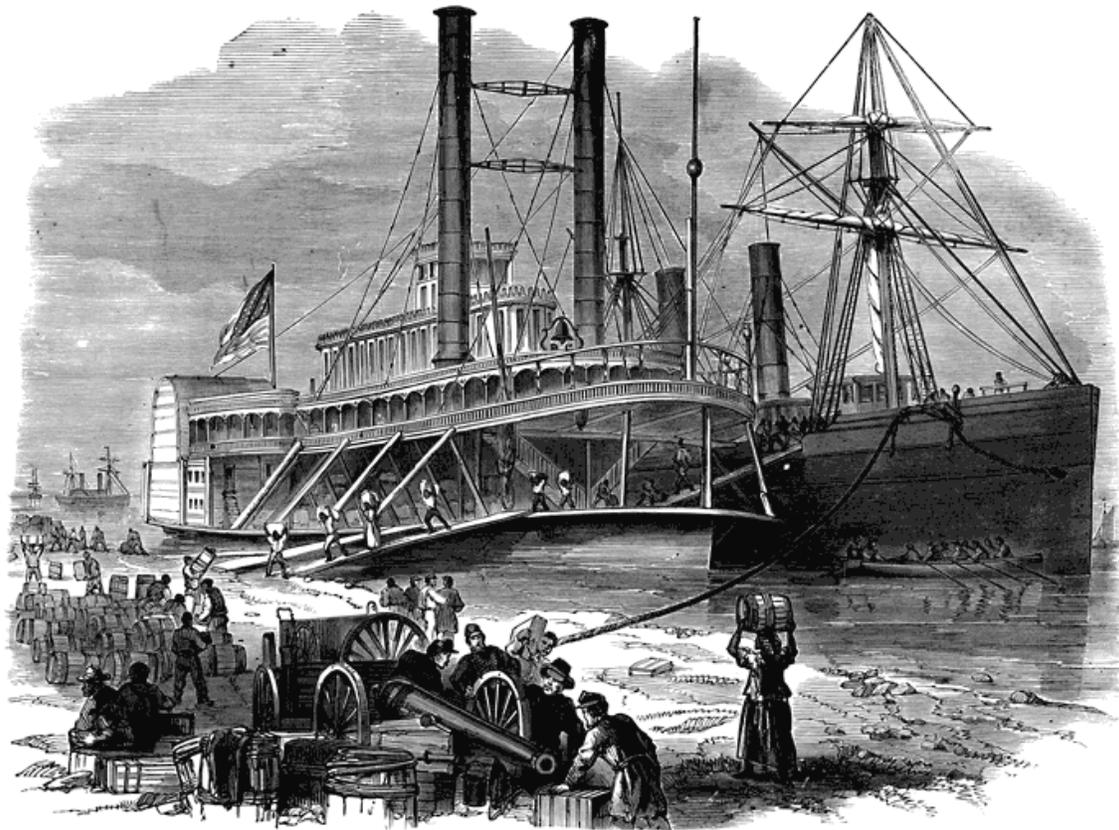


Figure 29 - Banks Expedition in Baton Rouge — Frank Leslie Weekly

Ira Resigns

Again from Oatman:

This was our first advent into the enemy's country and active duty began. Pickets were thrown out, surrounding the city, all the roads were protected by a reserve force and cavalry videttes posted in advance. This, with the usual camp-guard

Ira Ayer, Sr.

duty and with company, battalion and brigade drills gave us plenty of employment. The constant duty devolving upon a company commander and the great change of climate and mode of living were too much for a man over sixty years of age and we all realized that Captain Ayer was physically unfitted to endure the hardships when the heat of summer came.

I talked freely with him but he would say: " My boys enlisted to serve with me and I must stay."

After being quite unwell, and for several days unable to do duty, on the 24th of February he directed me to inform all the Sergeants that he desired to meet them at his tent that evening.

He then talked of his physical condition and of his fears for endurance of active service, and that he had concluded, if the " boys " did not object, to resign, believing it was best both for him and for the younger men of the company.

He, however, expressed the same idea as before, that we had enlisted under him and if we so wished he would remain and perform his part as long as his strength would permit.

We all advised him to resign and return home, assuring him that it would be satisfactory and that we did not consider it the duty of one so far advanced in years to encounter the exposure and hardships of active service.

Ira visited a doctor:

I certify that I have carefully examined Capt. Ira Ayer Co. A 116th N. Y. V. & that from such examination am of the opinion that his remaining longer in the service

Would endanger his life & that at his age & in his condition he is physically unable to discharge the duties of his office.

Camp Banks
Baton Rouge
Sep 20 1863
C. B. Hutchins
Surgeon 116th N. Y. V.

Ira tendered his resignation:

Head Quarters Co. "A" 116th Regt. N. Y. V.
Camp Banks Baton Rouge Feb 24, 62

To
Richard B Irwin
Lieut Col & Asst Adj Genl
Sir

Ira Ayer, Sr.

I do hereby tender my resignation as Captain Co. "A" 116th Regt. N. Y. Vols. to take effect on the 1st day of March, A. D. 1863, and assign for my action the following reasons. I am sixty years old and have been seven months in the service the effort has been to gradually impair my health and I find myself physically inadequate to the toils & hardships of a soldier's life having nearly recovered from a sickness of several weeks duration. I find myself able to travel to my home with a [forefeit] of future health during my remaining years, which remaining here in service, I am advised would be endangered and my probabilities of life much impaired.

I am sir very respectfully

Your Obt. Servant

Ira Ayer Capt. Co. A

On March 3rd he was on his way home. This must have been very hard for Ira. He so strongly associated himself with doing what he believed was his duty. We know he must have been thinking of resigning at least as early as December because Ira, Jr. talks of seeing that in a letter to Sarah that Sarah had forwarded to him right around the New Year. After Ira, Jr. heard about the resignations he wrote to his sister Sarah:

Last evening I read a letter from Pa informing me of his resignation; and of his expectation of meeting me in Washington about the 20th or 22nd of this month. I need not tell you that I have been happy ever since. I suppose you have been duly informed of his action by letter from him. Pa has certainly done all that his country could ask of him, and more; and he has done it nobly. I am proud of what he has done and think it more appropriate that he should now retire than that he should remain longer in the service. It is fitting that he should do so; and such, I think will be the verdict of all. I am anticipating a pleasant time in Washington with him.

Oatman goes on to say:

I was with him most of the day March 2nd and remember the anxiety he manifested for all, and the recalling of those who started with us six months previous.

Twelve of our number were left at Fortress Monroe. Of these, four, James Cook, Bethuel Fuller, Philip Mumbach and Arthur Redmond were dead. Of the condition of the other eight we knew but little.

Seven were then sick and unable for Duty, some of whom were in the hospital at Baton Rouge ; three had been transferred to other commands and in the organization of the Regimental Band five members had been taken from Company "A," while three others were on detached service. Of the ninety-five enlisted men when we left Buffalo, taking out the necessary details for cooking and other camp duties we had only sixty-one to carry muskets. He talked of the future, of the expected advance upon Port Hudson, of his faith in the courage and

Ira Ayer, Sr.

discipline of the Company, and seemed to have implicit confidence that they would obey orders in any emergency. While he expected that danger and death was before some of us his greatest regret seemed to be that he would not be permitted to share the danger with us. Could he have foreseen the future and known . . . that thirty-two—over one half of the active members of Company "A"—would be numbered among the killed and wounded, the parting would have been saddened many fold.

We went to the hospital and he took messages to the loved ones at home. I think he said a word of farewell to every comrade. The morning of March 3d I went upon picket and when I returned to camp he had gone and his active military life had ceased.

Ira didn't know it, but when he left Baton Rouge, that would be the last time he would see his little brother James alive.

A few days before we left Baton Rouge on the Port Hudson campaign, he was taken sick and much against his wish compelled to remain in his tent, not wishing to go to the hospital.

Comrade Elijah P. Smith of his Company was allowed to remain and care for him. Comrade John F. Wilcox of Company "A" was also compelled to remain in camp from inability to perform duty and they were with him attending to his wants and affording him all possible aid.

His symptoms, however, grew more alarming. He was taken with fever, followed by inflammation of the bowels and at 5 P. M. of May 22d he passed away.

As I was among the wounded at Plain's Store. La., on the 21st of May I have vivid recollections of the 23d of that month, when passing through the streets of Baton Rouge in an ambulance on my way to the hospital I met an army cart and marching by its side Comrades Smith and Wilcox.

I feared that the remains of one whom I had known so long and loved so dearly were being borne to a soldier's grave, and asking the driver to stop the ambulance I called one of the comrades and learned of Captain James Ayer's death, and that the rough coffin contained his body.

After the war had ceased his remains were removed from Southern soil and placed by the side of his beloved wife in the town where he was born.

James had been buried temporarily in Baton Rouge and on 10 February 1864, Ira arrived in Evans with the body of his deceased brother. I don't know where Ira met the body. James was buried in Forest Avenue Cemetery, Angola, New York, next to his wife.

But, the companies that Ira and James had worked so hard to create fought on.

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Let us now briefly recall the records of Company "A" and see how it fulfilled the expectations of our Captain.

Our first engagement was at Plains Store, Louisiana, May 21, 1863. This is an engagement unknown in the history of the war, merely referred to in official reports, and yet Plains Store is sacred to the memory of every member of our Regiment, and especially to Company "A." In the Mexican War the battle of Palo Alto was heralded all over the land as an important engagement. The entire losses of the American Army in that battle were nine killed and forty-seven wounded, while at Plains Store, our regiment had thirteen killed and forty-four wounded. The entire losses connected with the siege and capture of Vera Cruz were only sixty-four, while the losses of our brigade at Plains Store were eighty-five.

I cannot, however, dwell upon the Brigade or the Regiment only by way of the above comparison, but must confine myself to the losses in Company "A."

As heretofore stated, our Regiment lost thirteen killed and forty-four wounded. Nearly one fourth of that number were from our company. We went into the battle with fifty-seven officers and men, three were killed and eleven wounded, one of whom afterwards died. May 27th was the first assault upon Port Hudson. Volunteers were called for to organize a storming party. Seventy-four officers and men from our Regiment responded to the Call, nine of whom were members of Company "A."

In the unsuccessful assault of that day the loss of the regiment was twenty-two killed and eighty-five wounded. Three of the killed and fifteen of the wounded, three of whom afterwards died, were from the membership of Company "A."

June 19th another call was made for volunteers to organize a storming party and of the twenty-four that volunteered from our regiment, five were members of Company "A."

With ten companies in the regiment you will notice that each of the above comparisons show that our company not only suffered much more than an average loss, but that the number of volunteers for hazardous service speaks well for the courage of its members.

Our loss in battle of the original members during our entire service was eleven killed or mortally wounded, thirty wounded and one prisoner; or about seventy per cent, of the actual fighting membership of the company.

Of this loss during the nearly three years' service, thirty-two of the forty-one killed and wounded received their injury in our first two engagements.

During our term of service fourteen died from disease, sixteen were discharged on account of disease or wounds, fifteen had been transferred or promoted from the company, and of the original number forty-two were mustered out June 8th, 1865, as members of Company "A." Of the members who enlisted from this town, three,

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Francis D. Ingersoll, George Herr and Ephraim Wooderson, were killed or mortally wounded.

And from Company K:

The record of casualties mentioned upon the muster out roll of Company " K " show that four were killed or mortally wounded, twenty-three wounded and one taken prisoner. Twelve died from sickness and ten were discharged on account of wounds received or disease contracted in the service. Over two-thirds of their loss in action occurred during the Port Hudson campaign. At the battle of Cane River, La., April 23d, 1864, the only member of the Regiment wounded was William Tromler of Company " K," whose limb was taken off by a cannon ball.

Post War

After he resigned from the army, Ira moved back to the farm. It doesn't seem that he slowed down. In a 25 November 1865 letter from Ira, Jr. to Vinnie's husband George, he says:

By a letter recd. from father a few days since I learn that he proposes building another Saw Mill down on Uncle James' place. It seems that he will not be happy unless involved in business. I suppose it is better to be reconciled to that condition of things. Indeed, I would rather Pa would be so than to be like most men of that age, and am thankful that his ambition and strength seem to hold out so remarkably.

We don't know if he ever built the new Saw Mill. His brother's farm, next door, was eventually taken over by his nephew James Ayer, III. James, III was only 12 when his father died. He was the only surviving son.

James and Marcy's children
James – 1842-1842
Sarah Relience – 1846-1849
Ann Augusta – 1848-1848
James Judson – 1851-1910
Clara – 1855-a1930

Ira still had two children at home, Sarah 20 and Julia 18. Within, eight months two more of his children would be married (Vinnie had married George Barr in 1858).

On 20 September 1863, Sarah married Simon Tiffit. Simon had been born in Eastern New York but the two lived in Angola, one town over from Evans.

On 21 December 1863, Ira, Jr. married Jennie James in Washington, DC. More on them later.

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Ira's last child, Julia married James Austen in Washington, DC on 21 August 1865. Again, more on them later.

The next wedding was a little of a surprise. On 14 October 1869 Ira, Sr. married Bessie Cronkite. Ira was 66 and Bessie was 38 years his junior (28 years old). In "Reminiscences" Ira say, "There is quite a comparative difference in our ages but this in our social relation is hardly ever mentioned or thought of, as I know she has ever manifested a great interest in all matters for the welfare of the family." I haven't been able to find any history of Bessie, where she came from or if this was her first marriage. But, they were happy and Ira's children seemed to accept her.

Some time before 1880, Ira decided to move for the first time since moving to Evans in 1811. He sold or transferred the farm to his nephew James, III and bought a farm on the lakeshore. Little Sister Creek ran through the middle of the farm. Ira's new farm was at the mouth of Little Sister Creek.



Figure 30 - Ayer Farm 1866

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 31 - Ayer Farms 1880

From Oatman:

Having removed to the home where his last years were passed, he seemed to enjoy the beauties of nature and the boundless expanse of lake upon the one hand, while in the opposite direction the rolling landscape and distant hills were seen.

The 1880 farm census shows Ira was still hard at work. He now had only 67 acres of which he was working 44. In the previous year he had paid \$150 for 30 weeks of labor and had collected 30 tons of hay. He had 22 head of cattle from which he had collect 2000 gallons of milk and 1000 lbs of butter, two horses, one pig, 70 chickens from which he had collected 300 lbs of eggs, 100 bushels of corn, 75 bushels of oat and 280 bushels of wheat.

On 17 March 1881 27 veterans of the Civil War including Ira created Post 202 of the GAR and named it the James Ayer Post in honor of Ira's brother. It was this same post of the GAR that got LeRoy Oatman to do his memorial after he died.

In January of 1884 Ira, who was 81 and Bessie adopted a baby girl. Her name was Lolah B. Cash. She was born in Evans on 7 March 1883. Her mother died two days after her berth. I guess that her father was not able to care for her and her six siblings. According to Ira, "Little Lolah is our darling. Sometimes she behaves like every thing but we like her all the same."

Ira Ayer, Sr.

In 1887, Ira's daughter Sarah Tifft was visiting from Titusville with two daughters and Iris Barr, Ira's granddaughter through Vinnie. They visited the old Ayer home, now belonging to James, III and Iris took a picture.



Figure 32 - Old Ira Ayer, Sr. home with Sarah Ayer Tifft and her daughters Julia and Gertrude, taken by Iris Barr, 1887

There is a drawing of the home from the 1880 county map.

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 33 - James Ayer home from 1880 county map

Ira's Granddaughter Iris believed that the home was built in the 1840s because Ira helped build the local church then using trees from his land and sawed at the Ayer Mill. I'm not sure there is any reason to believe that this is not the house he says he built shortly after getting married. However, I'm sure that Ira added onto the house during the time he lived there.

In 2007, Sam, Pam and I went looking for the house. I had compared the old maps with Google Maps and Satellite View. When we got there, at first we thought the house had been replaced, but then we felt that the addition on the side of the house could be the original house.

Ira Ayer, Sr.



Figure 34 - Possibly the old Ira Ayer home

Having found that house, we went on search for the house on the lake. That was not so fruitful. The mouth of Little Sister Creek was in the middle of the property. That whole property is now fully overgrown with trees. There is probably little evidence of the house left.

Ira Dies

From Oatman:

About a year ago, when more than eighty-five years of age, he took up three courses of reading—first and foremost of all was the Bible; second, a book of religious meditations, and third, a course of secular reading as he termed it. During the summer of 1888, he completed Warren's Astronomy, United States History, and Winchell's Walks and Talks in Geology. Sitting with his loved ones as twilight gathered he would talk of his day's reading. Nothing seemed too abstract or scientific for him to enjoy, and as he once remarked—explanatory of his eagerness to grasp the knowledge he sought — "I have been so busy all my life I must hurry up now in order to acquire an education." Above all, however, he read his Bible, and when at one time he feared his eyes would fail he seemed to cling to that more closely, saying, "If I should become blind I want to be very familiar with my Bible and remember all I can."

Ira Ayer, Sr.

At the last he had nearly completed a large volume devoted to the history of Methodism when he was taken sick, and his education, so far as earthly matters were concerned, ceased.

In June of 1889 Ira became very ill. By mid-July his son Ira, Jr. along with wife Jenny had come up from Brooklyn. Also, his daughter Sarah had come from Pennsylvania. I don't know how long Sarah had stayed, but Ira and Jenny were there for a couple of weeks or so before returning home.

On 28 July 1889, at age 86, Ira died. Again from Oatman:

All who visited him during his sickness testify to the marvelous sweetness of his death bed experiences. Heaven Deemed very real to him, and at one time conversing with his daughter, he said " If it would not seem presumptuous in me, I would say that I am now walking in Bunyan's Beulah Land " —as his wife came into the room he said in a faint voice, "Clusters of glory are around me, love; clusters of glory.." When at last, Sunday morning, July 28th, he heard the rustling of the wings of the " angel of death " he was ready to receive his discharge—ready to cross the river and be mustered into the ranks of that illustrious host—who from every battle field of the Union and every prison pen of the south have pitched their tents upon the celestial plains.

"The sword and cross arc both laid down,
Our comrade wears the victor's crown."

Ira had survived his parents, six of his seven siblings, his first wife, five of his seven children and five of his fifteen grand children. None of his nineteen great grandchildren were born yet.

The death of Ira's generation marked the end of an era. When Ira and his family had arrived in Evans, there were no roads. If you wanted to go to the village of Buffalo you had walk the 20 miles each way. Ira and his brother Gorman had walked all the way to Haverhill and back, 600 miles each way. The Erie Canal was finished when Ira was 22. When Ira was 40, the canal was replaced by a railroad. When he was 50 he could, for the first time, ride a train from his home to Buffalo.

When Ira was born, Thomas Jefferson was in office as our third president. He directly lived through the War of 1812, the Patriot War and the Civil War. When he died Benjamin Harrison had just taken office as our 23rd president.

Ira's generation seldom, if ever, traveled. I believe there were very few times Ira left his home county. The first was to move from Massachusetts to New York, then to walk to Massachusetts and back, to Crawford, Pennsylvania to pick up his son's things after his son had enlisted for the Civil War, and lastly to pick up the body of his younger brother. It is unlikely he left home many times other than that.

Ira Ayer, Sr.

His children, on the other hand, thought nothing of hopping on a train and traveling half way across the country.

For me, it's hard to imagine not only what life was like when Ira was young, but also to imagine what amazing changes in the world the he saw.

Afterword

Lolah stayed with Bessie. Bessie soon married again. On 9 October 1891 she married William Kneebone. William was born in England and was 11 years her junior. As of 1892 they were still living in Evans. In 1900 the three of them, Bessie, Lolah and William were living on a farm in Franklinville, New York.

William Kneebone must have died shortly after 1900 because Bessie applied for a widow's pension for the first time in 1907. She was of course denied because she had remarried. She appealed on the basis before she remarried she did not need the pension. Now she did. I don't know where she died, but she is buried next to Ira and his first wife Julia. Her name is listed as Bessie E Cronkite Ayer. There is no mention of the name Kneebone.

Ira had two children who survived him, Ira, Jr. and Sarah. The four children who lived past infancy and one adopted child are:

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Lavinia (Vinnie) Ayer (1834-1868)



Figure 35 - Lavinia Ayer Barr

Vinnie was the first to get married. On 16 December 1832 she married Dr. George Barr. Together they had three children but only the oldest Iris survived. She never married and lived to age 88. Vinnie and George were very close to her brother Ira. He was a surgeon during the war and after the war they moved to Titusville, Pennsylvania. Titusville was one of the Pennsylvania oil boom towns of the 19th century. Vinnie died in 1868 and George got remarried and had another daughter.

Ira Ayer, Jr. (1836-1903)

Ira fought in the Civil War and married Jennie James on 21 December 1863. We will have more on him in the next volume

Ira Ayer, Sr.

Sarah Cecilia Ayer (1842-1905)

Julia Maria Ayer (1845-1871)



Figure 36 - Juliaa Maria Ayer Austen

Julia married James Austen and had two children. We will have more on her in the third volume.

Lolah B Cash (Ayer) (1883-a1930)

Lolah married Nelia J Reynolds on 11 April 1901. They lived in New York City where they had several children. They were still alive as of 1930.

Reminiscences – The Voice of Wisdom to a Traveler



Halloo Traveller which way are you going? as I was looking from the window and see you were gazing at the Mansion as though you have some thoughts of calling. There are a great many thousand people traveling in the way you are every day and I call out to them as I have called to you and invite them in as I now invite you so you see all are invited. What is this for asked the Traveller? because said Wisdom God has no respect of persons and more than this said Wisdom God has prepared a new way called the mansion way of life, it cost a great price but God was so merciful and kind that He provided it for the whole human family that they might have life, perhaps I might as well tell you now Traveller as any time that you and all this crowd I have mentioned are in the [broad?] way that leads to death. You know Traveller how it was with the rich man and the beggar. The beggar died and went to Heaven. The rich man also died and lifted up his eyes being in Torment and asked Abraham if Lazarus might dip the tip of his finger in water and touch his tongue for he was tormented in this [flam?] Abraham told the rich man no. He told him once he had his good thing and Lazarus his evil but now ah what a change dear reader what an awful change but now Lazarus is blessed and thou art tormented then the rich man asked other favors of Abraham but the answer was a denial of the rich mans request in every case. It may be said that this dialogue between Abraham and the rich man was a parable it may be it was it maybe it was not it makes no difference. I don't care which way you have it if it was a fact it was made a matter of record for the benefit of man if it was a parable it was for the same purpose. Now reader let us come to this conclusion that we will sooner die beggars as Lazarus died if needs be and go to Heaven than to be rich and as consequence be lost forever.

Traveller you have been calling me Friend Wisdom you have said right. I am your Friend and friend to all. Now let us come to this conclusion That we will do all we can to [Turn?] what we can. Brother Traveller I believe in the letter as well do I believe in the Spirit. If we would get a [Sumer?] to Heaven [?????st] be ware that we are going there [ausdebienes?] before we can say [same?] and go with us Now Brother may God so help us that we can say at last we have fought a good fight hence path there is a [crowse?] Said [???] for us Eternal and in the Heavens Amen Ira Ayer

From the other version of “Remeniscences”:

The Voice of Wisdom to a Traveler

Halloo Traveller which way are you going? As I was looking from the window and see you were gazing at the Mansion as though you had some thoughts of calling There are a great many thousand People Traveling in the way you are every day and I call out to them as I have to you and invite them to go into the Mansion as I now invite you. So you see all are invited. (What is this asked the Traveller?) Because said Wisdom God has no respect of persons so you see Traveller all are invited all are invited to go into the Mansion as well as you. If you think of going Enquire for the King's High Way that will lead you right to the Mansion you must not turn to the right or left nor look back. If you wish to know Traveller how much is gained by going to the Mansion I will tell you in the use of a Parible.

There was a certain rich man who [faded Simutuously] every and there was a poor man named Lazarus that lay at the gate of the rich man to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table moreover the dogs come to lick his [sares] in prosses of time Lazarus died and went to Abraham's bosom I suppose the same as going to Heaven. The rich man also died and lifted up his eyes being in torment and seeing Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom asked Abraham to have Lazarus dip the tip of his finger in the water to cool his tongue for he was tormented in this [Home]

Abraham said to the rich man “no” he told him once he had his goods things and Lazarus his wit but now all what a change dear reader what an awful change “but now” Lazarus is comfortable and those art tormented. Then the rich man ask other favors of Abraham but his answer to the rich man was a denial of his request in every case.

It may be said that this dialogue between Abraham and the rich man was a Parable it may be it was it may be it was not it makes no difference I don't care which way you have it. If it was a fact it was made a mater record for the benefit of man. If it is a parable it was for the same purpose. Now reader to us come to this conclusion that we will sooner die beggars if needs be and go to Heaven then to be rich and as a consequence be lost forever.

Traveller you call me Friend Wisdom that is right. I am your friend and the Friend of every body. In my voice could be heard the world over I would say Repent and be converted “For all things are now ready.”

Now Brother Traveller we ar about to part.

Let us pray O Lord we thank the that in they providence we have had this opportunity to talk over what may be found on the above pages 96-97. May the

Reminiscences – The Voice of Wisdom to a Traveler

reader be benefited by the perusal these pages and the whole book in generations to come, Amen

Ira Ayer



Figure 37 - Ira Ayer, Sr. self portrait

James Ayer, Jr.

James Ayer, Jr. ****

James was the only one of his siblings born in New York. According to Oatman, he may have been the first white male born in that region of Erie County. James, like his older brother Ira, never moved out of Evans. James actually never moved off the farm. He ended up with the west side of the farm. Like his brother he served in the New York State Militia where in 1838 he rose to the rank of colonel, taking over from his brother the head of the Forty-eighth Regiment, Forty-seventh Brigade, Twenty-fourth Division of N. Y. State Militia⁸.

Also, like Ira, James was the town supervisor. He served from 1860-2. Unlike his brother, James never lived anywhere other than the farm where he was born. According to Oatman:

As a citizen he was honored and beloved by all. In a long acquaintance with him and with those among whom he resided I never heard other than words of esteem spoken of him as a neighbor, a friend and earnest and exemplary Christian citizen.

In 1839 he married Marcy Hathaway Terry. While James may have been the first white man born in that region of the county, Marcy was born three years before him in Evans Center. Together they had five children.

The first was James (1842 – 28 July 1842) who died as an infant and buried at Evans Center Cemetery.

Then came Sarah Reliance (28 February 1846 – 26 February 1849) and Ann Augusta (29 February 1848 – 29 May 1849). They likely died in the 1849 Erie County Cholera Epidemic⁹. There were over 3000 cases and almost 900 people died. A local artist made a sculpture that is believed to have been dedicated to Sarah and Ann. The sculpture is 29 1/4 × 12 1/4 × 12" and is painted on yellow poplar. It's dated April 1850 and belongs to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut.

James Ayer, Jr.



Figure 38 - Sculpture by Asa Ames as a memorial to Sarah Reliance and Ann Augusta Ayer - photo copyright Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The sculpture was part of a 2008 exhibit at the American Folk Art Museum^{xvii} in New York. According to the brochure^{xviii}:

The imagery of a child and lamb was popular in the heyday of the rural cemetery movement. Three-dimensional marble carvings of scantily clad children sleeping next to a lamb intimated the transparent innocence of childhood and a state of

^{xvii} “Asa Ames Occupation Sculpturing”, American Folk Art Museum, April 15 through September 14, 2008, Stacy C. Hollander, Senior Curator

^{xviii} Also from the brochure: Asa Ames is a mysterious and tragic figure. The young sculptor died from consumption when he was 27 years, 7 months, and 7 days old. Though his own life was short, he immortalized family members and neighbors in the vicinity of Evans, Erie County, New York, in a legacy of twelve three-dimensional portraits carved between 1847 and his death in 1851. Included in the artist’s small oeuvre are portraits of young men and women, but the images that linger are soulful carvings of children that seem to embody a state of childhood innocence.

James Ayer, Jr.

purity and closeness to nature. This figure, which is more actively engaged, has an ecclesiastical appearance and is unlikely to have been used as an outdoor memorial. Usually identified as female, the child may instead be John the Baptist. When depicted as a child, the Baptist is often shown with attributes of a banner or scroll, the Lamb of God, and a shell for baptizing; the loincloth recalls the swaddling cloths of the baby Jesus. Erie County is in the area of western New York State that was known as the "Burned-Over District" because of the susceptibility of its residents to religious revivalism in the nineteenth century. The Ayer family had converted to Methodism, and their religious beliefs may have contributed to the representation in this carving.

It wasn't until 1851 that James and Marcy had another child, James Judson. It was common in those days to re-use the name of a deceased sibling, however, this time they added a middle name to distinguish him from his brother. Their fifth and final child Clara was born around 1855. Unlike their siblings, James Judson and Clara lived well into adulthood.

Six years after Clara was born the Civil War broke out. A year on the 4 January Marcy was dead. A couple months later after a new call for more troops, like his older brother, James answered that call. The thing is that the farm was run basically by Ira and James and they both had two young children at home. Ira's daughters were 17 and 19 so they could reasonably take care of themselves, but James' children were 7 and 11. I don't think Ira's daughters took care of them because their brother, Ira, Jr., arranged for them to go to school during the last few months their father was away. And I don't know who took care of the farm. According to Oatman:

He, however, did not falter in his convictions of duty and receiving authority to recruit a company he soon found' himself mustered into the service as Captain of Company " K," One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry. He was an efficient officer and had he lived would undoubtedly have gained promotion, as he had the entire confidence of his superior officers,

In the service he exhibited the same spirit of kindness and solicitude for others welfare that had ever been a prominent trait in his life and character and the more intimately the members of his company came to know him the stronger was their attachment to him as a friend and their admiration of him as an officer,

Ira and James both went through essentially the same experiences during the war so for the for James' time in the service, see the chapter on Ira's.

James was almost 50 years old. While he was one of the oldest in the regiment, he was still more than 10 years younger than Ira. The war took its toll on Ira and by the end of February, less than seven months after marching into camp, Ira resigned, heading for home on 3 March 1863. That was the last time the brothers saw each other.

James Ayer, Jr.

The regiment was stationed in Baton Rouge just about to see their first combat. They were part of the Bank Expedition, a force of between 30,000 and 40,000 men. They had been going through months of preparation for the siege of Port Hudson, about 20 miles upriver. Most of their time had been spent drilling over and over and over again. The regiment, the 116th New York Volunteers took pride in their readiness with two of the ten companies having been trained by the Ayer brothers. According to the "History of the 116th":

Thus far we had seen no real service. Our time had been well occupied in preparation for efficient service whenever we should be called upon; and rumors were now floating about to the effect that Gen'l Banks was soon to advance on Port Hudson with his entire army. One very sure indication of the truth of this rumor was the reception of an order for a thorough inspection of the troops. This inspection was a very searching one, conducted by the Inspector General on Gen'l Augur's staff, who made a report of our Division to Gen'l Banks. Not long after an order was issued from the head-quarters of the Department of the Gulf, which commented very severely on the condition in which most of the troops were found, and closed as follows:

" The General Commanding cannot close this order without first contrasting the condition of these regiments with that of the One Hundred and Sixteenth N. Y. Vols. and Thirty-eighth Mass. Vols., the zeal of whose officers, as well as men, to perfect themselves in their profession, places them far in advance, and makes them an object of emulation to all the troops in this department.

" By command of MAJOR GENERAL BANKS,
"RICHARD B. IRWIN,
"A. A. Gen'l."

On 6 March, orders came to get ready to break camp. But James was not to go with them. According to Oatman, "he was taken sick and much against his wish compelled to remain in his tent, not wishing to go to the hospital." James remained in the hospital for over a month and a half:

Comrade Elijah P. Smith of his Company was allowed to remain and care for him. Comrade John F. Wilcox of Company "A" was also compelled to remain in camp from inability to perform duty and they were with him attending to his wants and affording him all possible aid.

His symptoms, however, grew more alarming. He was taken with fever, followed by inflammation of the bowels and at 5 P. M. of May 22d he passed away.

As I was among the wounded at Plain's Store. La., on the 21st of May I have vivid recollections of the 23d of that month, when passing through the streets of Baton Rouge in an ambulance on my way to the hospital I met an army cart and marching by its side Comrades Smith and Wilcox.

James Ayer, Jr.

I feared that the remains of one whom I had known so long and loved so dearly were being borne to a soldier's grave, and asking the driver to stop the ambulance I called one of the comrades and learned of Captain James Ayer's death, and that the rough coffin contained his body.

James was buried in the South and the next February his body was transferred to Evans. Ira escorted the body for at least part of the way. James' two young children lost both parents in just over a year. His son, James Judson, eventually took over the family farm.

In 1881 the veterans in the area formed a Post 202 of the GAR and named it the James Ayer Post in honor of their fallen comrade.

For the full biography by LeRoy Oatman and another from "The History of the 116th Regiment" see the appendix.

The Other Siblings

The Other Siblings

Low Bradley Ayer

We have no mention of Low after the family left Massachusetts. He never married and died on 18 September 1844.

Martha Ayer

Around 1820 Martha married Moses Dart. They lived in Hamburg, a couple towns over where they had seven children

Gorham Parsons Ayer

Gorham married Frances Abell. We don't know anything about her. All we know is that they lived in Mississippi and Louisiana. For most of that time they lived in Plaquemines which is delta at the mouth of the Mississippi. When Ira, Sr. and James, Jr. were heading to New Orleans during the Civil War, they identified Gorham's farm while their ship went up the river. We don't know what Gorham and Frances did during the Civil War, but they were still there in 1870. They died 1870 and 1874 respectively without having any children and were both buried in Anglo at the family plot.

Mary Low Ayer

Mary married Nicholas Beal around 1828. They had five children and died in 1853 and 1843 respectively. At least one of their children moved to California.

Sarah Bradley Ayer Black

The Other Siblings



Figure 39 - Sarah Bradley Ayer Black

Sarah was the last of the siblings to die. She married Joe (James) Black. Joe, unlike most others was not a farmer. He was a shoemaker and Sarah was a “Tayloress” according to the census. They had no children. Joe died in 1865 at the age of 63 and Sarah died in 1895 at 95 years of age. I don’t know how much money she had, but since she had no children she named 21 nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews in her will.

The Other Siblings

Henrietta Ayer

Henrietta married Darius Atwood. We don't know if they had any children, but Henrietta died in 1832 at age 22. Darius died 2 years later.

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Appendix

Grand Jury Report

Erie County Grand Jury report 6 March 1828, published in the Rochester Album, Rochester, New York, 18 March 1828.

PRESENTMENT;

The Grand Jurors, in and for the Body of the county of Erie, convened at the March Term of the Courts of Common Pleas, and General Sessions of the Peace ; from their own observance, and from evidence before them, feel it their bounden duty, by the oaths they have taken, and their attachment to. morality, and regard for the vital interests of the several communities of which they are members, to denounce and present to this Court and the People of the County, as NUISANCES, and vices of the highest order in the catalogue of crimes—DISSIPATION, or habitual drunkenness—GAMBLING, or privileged plundering ; HOUSES of ILL-FAME,-where so many of the rising generation, are stripped of their property and their character.—These vices we consider the sorest evils which burthen the people of this Community, and others in the county; we denounce these vices to the honest indignation of the Ministers of Justice : we denounce them to the withering contempt of the wise and good : we denounce them as subversive of the morals, and infracting the laws of the land : we denounce them as opposed to the religion of Christ, and as defying the vengeance of Heaven.

Inebriation stalks like an armed myrmidon over the fairest portions of our country. It enters but too successfully, the porches of the great—it palsies the hand of the labourer and the artisan—it disturbs the peace of the hamlet—it rushes upon the sacred quiet of the cottage—it sits itself down in the misery of the "hovel—and it is the evil genius of the wretched inendicants of the street—it withers the buds of genius— it causes the downfall of the popular —it blights the bloom of beauty—it enervates the mind—it prostrates the manly form, and renders him the " image of his Maker," of baser passions, and of less reason, than the brutes which perish: in describing the extent of this evil, within the limits which this grand Jury has prescribed to itself, our powers fail. Were we to attempt this, we would go to the bright palaces of the wealthy, where the talented, the powerful, and " hail fellows," hold their nightly levees and their midnight revels : we would "wind thro' the mazy labyrinth of pleasure : " we would visit those haunts, where the poor mechanick squanders in drinks the fruits of his daily labour : we would tell this court, how many women and children, are sent, " supperless to bed," because of this damnable evil! But, we will refrain : we will barely attempt to illustrate to this Honourable court, what has been directly in evidence before us.

We ask you, to go with us, and we will show a scene in the country. We will draw your attention to a cottage—a lovely cottage : its inmates virtuous: the Sire, brown with the toils of the field, and proud of her meekly sitting by his side, With " lispng prattlers playing at their feet:" what affection guards the precincts of that hearth : what rest, what joy, what peace is *there* / and days, and months and years pass away; and with them fly

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the cares and troubles of life ! But Oh! *the destroyer* comes! The inebriating flask appears on the hospitable board: and months and years pass, and leave accumulating misery as they wing their flight: and he, who erst bad stood, " blushing at the altar ; " who promised to " *cherish*, " to " *protect* " become now, terrible as the tiger in his lair ; the whetted knife is rudely drawn, the weapon of death is raised to stride her, *the companion* of his *bosom*, the *mother* of his *children*, to the earth! These scenes are repeated, as the fits of *intoxication* and madness succeed, until affection and duty, property and happiness, are all gone forever; If there is a dram-drinker or drunkard within the sound of our voice, we beg him to take heed !

What shall we—what can we say of this besetting evil ? Where, shall we strike to destroy its root, and prevent its future growth ? We must, tear away the curtain and exhibit to the better part of society, the practices of some of its reputed members : Reform must begin where it will be felt. Publick opinion must stamp with infamy, fashionable vices, as well as abandoned practices—and then, and not till then. Will the blessings of reform appear and exhibit the happiest effects.

The prevalence of the enormous practice of GAMBLING, has been brought especially under our notice. Where this vice is popular, the most baneful effects follow in its train. Whether it be in billiard or card rooms ; at the shuffle board or in the ball alley ; it is alike dangerous and demoralizing : it blunts the finer feelings of our natures : it will strip, without remorse, the unskilful : and in the hands of some, it is little more than the sure means of plunder, privileged by the arbitrary code of honour; The fortunes of a single night have ruined thousands. It will take without one feeling of compunction, the garment from the almost naked back : it snatches with a demon's pleasure, the last shilling from the pocket of the needy ; The voice of pleasure, blended with the baser one of avarice, calls aloud : and old and young bond and free, are: drawn imperceptibly, within its fangs. It is the open gate to ruin—it is the road to death. We appeal to every father—how would you feel to know your songathered round the gaming table at each returning night? And if there should be such fathers attached to such practices, make good your retreat from those -haunts, and you will retreat with honour ! We ask the youth of honour nice and jealous of his character, if he was sure his aged father mingled with those desperate spirits who assemble in those orgies ; would you not arise and with tears of persuasion pluck that father, as a brand from the furnace ? Youth; " touch not ! —taste not ! —handle not ! "

Feelings of disgust, certainly would have induced us to close our lips on the subject of the numerous brothels, with which the suburbs of our principal town teem, did not our official duty impel us to the task. Of all the curses,, which ever afflicted villages and cities, these are the greatest. It *is* in those rank pest-houses, that young men, including merchants' clerks. and apprentices *to* the various trades, are first corrupted—their virtuous principles destroyed—their character for integrity weakened ; and their neglect of truth proverbial: they plunder their employers, for the means to ply the avarice of their guilty paramours—they become dissipated—and disease and, arid remorse, crowd the last scenes of life ! They remain anatomical beacons, to point others from that fatal shore, on which their fortunes were wrecked !

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The Grand Jury further respectfully beg leave to represent, that the conduct of the last Theatrical Company, who played in Buffalo village, was, in the opinion of this Grand Jury, immoral and disgraceful; it is in evidence that a quarrel and fight was had on the stage behind the scenes ; that from the disorderly conduct of those who attended the performances, the necessity of a strong police, was apparent. We condemn, in the most pointed manner, such disorderly proceedings, and present them, as publick nuisances !

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Grand Jury Room, March.6, 1828.

JOSEPH STOCKING, FOREMAN.

Edward Root,
Nath. Vosburgh,
Ira Hall,
Gooden Pierson,
Joseph Thorn,
William Jackson,
James Mason,
Smith H. Salisbury,

Samuel Abbott,
William Northup,
Jesse Teats,
Chancy Hastings,
Philip Peckham,
Harry Thompson,
Ira Ayer,
Jared Stebbin.

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The Patriot War

From "Our County and Its People – A descriptive Work on Erie County" by Truman C. White, 1898

With the approach of the winter of 1837-8, when the inhabitants of Erie county had partially recovered from the shock of financial ruin, an ominous cloud arose on the horizon bringing new cause for anxiety. During several previous years a spirit of discontent with the home government had been growing in the Canadian provinces, and particularly among the French population in Lower Canada, which finally developed into armed rebellion. It will be correctly inferred that a movement of this character, when it reached the upper provinces and came near the American boundary, would find ready sympathizers among certain classes on this side of the lakes and rivers. The two struggles in which Americans had been engaged with England, although crowned with success to the former, were not forgotten by them, and a slumbering feeling of enmity towards everything British still existed. This so called Patriot War awakened it. The sympathizers with the patriots formed secret lodges of " Hunters," so called, and a few armed men crossed the line into Canada. William Lyon Mackenzie, an ex member of the provincial parliament, was the leader of the rebellion in Upper Canada, and after an unsuccessful outbreak north of Toronto, fled to Buffalo early in December, 1837. Public meetings were held in the city, at which Mackenzie, a certain Gen. T. J. Sutherland, and a few Buffalonians spoke in favor of the patriot cause. In the same month excitement rose to a high pitch when it was learned that the main force of patriots had established themselves on Navy Island, to the number of between 300 and 400 men, many of whom were Americans. On this side of the border eagerness and enthusiasm increased with the passing days to aid the patriots. In this emergency the United States marshal appointed thirty deputies from the prominent citizens of Buffalo, to aid, in preventing violations of neutrality, should the occasion arise. The body of Americans on the island were under nominal command of Gen. Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, a son of the gallant old soldier, Col. Solomon Van Rensselaer, who was wounded at the battle of Queenston Heights.

The winter was unusually mild and vessels were navigated until midwinter. On the 29th of December a little steamboat called the Caroline, the property of William Wells, of Buffalo, went down to Navy Island for the purpose of running back and forth between the camp and Schlosser wharf with supplies and men. After making two or three trips on that day she tied up at the Schlosser wharf. Early on the following morning the exciting news reached Buffalo that a body of British soldiers had crossed the river, cut out the steamer, killed fifteen or twenty men, set the boat on fire and sent her over the falls. The main part of this story proved true. A man named Durfee was found dead on the wharf on the morning after the attack; he was shot through the head. His body was brought to Buffalo, where his funeral was attended by a large and excited crowd, after which Henry K. Smith delivered a speech of brilliant eloquence. After several days and upon thorough investigation, it was found that Durfee was the only person killed, while three or four were wounded. It was learned presently that the expedition was sent over by Sir Allan McNab, commanding the British forces on the frontier, with full endorsement of the governor general of Canada, and it was, therefore, an unwarranted invasion of American territory ; its only palliation was the fact that many of the insurgents were Americans. A long diplomatic contest followed, but no redress was ever obtained. The two Buffalo daily newspapers filled their columns with

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editorials on the subject, the Star accusing the Commercial of acting in the interest of the British, and the latter insisting that the Star was endeavoring to stir up discord that might lead to war.

In the mean time the American authorities adopted prompt measures to prevent armed expeditions from leaving these shores and to repel possible invasion from the other side. The 47th Brigade of militia, wholly constituted of Erie county men, under command of Col. Orange T. Brown, was called out under orders of Governor Marcy, by Gen. David Burt and made its headquarters in Buffalo. Randall's Brigade of artillery, the companies of which were drawn from a larger district, was also ordered out and made its rendezvous in the city. On the 5th of January the president issued a proclamation and sent General Scott to the frontier, accompanied by Col. William J. Worth, chief of staff. Soon after their arrival the regulars and militia were ordered out to repel a rumored attack on Schlosser; but the invasion was not attempted and the troops returned.

At that time the steamer Barcelona was running between Buffalo and Navy Island, and report was made that three armed English schooners lying opposite Black Rock were about to fire on her. The troops were marched to Lower Black Rock, where the schooners were seen, one of them in American waters. Scott formed his infantry near the river and posted the artillery on the high ground in rear; he then rode down to the water's edge, hailed the nearest schooner, ordered her out of American waters and to not molest the Barcelona, which was then coming up close in to the American shore. The schooner reluctantly withdrew. The patriot cause was now approaching its hopeless conclusion. British regulars and Canadian militia early in January concentrated opposite Navy Island, cannonaded the forest which covered it and made preparations to cross the channel. Van Rensselaer saw that resistance would be useless; his command was small, his finances low and Scott's arrival had cut off hope of reinforcements. On January 15 his little army fled to the American shore and scattered in every direction. A few cannon that had been stolen by them were abandoned to the State authorities; five of them were placed in charge of Col. Harry B. Ransom and a body of militia at Tonawanda. A squad of men came to him and presented an order for the delivery of the guns, the order bearing the signature of General Scott. Ransom hesitated, but when a prominent citizen stepped up and declared that he knew Scott's writing and that the signature was genuine, the guns were given up, and on a forged order. But these remaining patriots, who were thus endeavoring to obtain artillery, were forced to abandon their operations for fear of the United States marshal and the guns went into possession of the State.

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Oatman's Account of the Civil War

It is useless, however, in the time allotted me to attempt to mention even the important events in the life of one, who for more than three-quarters of a century, was a resident of Evans", and who was for some years, without doubt, its oldest settler.

The services of Captain Ira Ayer during the War of the Rebellion are familiar to many comrades before me, whom I recognize as members of the same regiment and some who, with me, served in his company. Few men of his age considered it their duty to encounter the hardships and dangers of a soldier's life.

Mrs. Aver was an invalid when the war commenced and died in August, 1861.

His only son, Ira Jr, was already winning honorable distinction in the service. A brief allusion to his record will not be irrelevant to this memorial. He was attending the Alleghany College at Meadville, Pennsylvania, when Sumter was fired upon ; a Company was at once organized, mostly composed of students, he was elected Captain and they entered the service as Company "I" of the Tenth Pennsylvania Reserves.

From the records I think their first engagement was at Drainsville, Virginia, December 20, 1861, and from there with the Army of the Potomac at Mechanicsville, Glendale, Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Bristol Station, Manassas Junction, The Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna and other battles they shared the dangers of the Fifth Corps, until the last engagement I find them mentioned as participating in was at Bethesda Church, in June, 1864.

The regiment lost one hundred and sixty men, killed, and of that number twenty-three were from his company. The casualties as to wounded I have no records to show. After the battle at Fredericksburg, in December, 1862, the regiment was sent to Washington to rest and recruit its thinned ranks. When, however, they learned of Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania they asked to be ordered to the front to aid in driving him out of their own State and reached Gettysburg in time to take part in a portion of the battle. Captain Ira Aver, Jr., was wounded four times— twice severely. He was promoted until he was in command of his regiment, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, it having become so decimated from continued active service that it was riot entitled to muster a Colonel. He commanded his Regiment during the Battle of the Wilderness, receiving at that time a gunshot wound, fracturing his leg and was made Colonel by brevet for " gallant and meritorious conduct " in that engagement. Looking at this brief statement we, as comrades, can take pride in his record, showing as it does, that he was a " worthy son of an honored sire."

Our deceased comrade could not remain inactive when the life of the nation was in danger.

Though not possessing the same vigor as when he rode at the head of a Regiment, the same spirit inspired him and he believed that the young men would respond to his call for volunteers. More than a year had elapsed since Fort Sumter had fallen.

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In the south, Port Royal, Fort Picket, New Orleans and many other places had become noted in the history of the war. In the West we had read of Fort Donelson, Pittsburg Landing, Shiloh, Chattanooga and many other sharply-contested battles.

While these had attracted our attention it was to the Army of the Potomac that the eyes of the whole nation turned, and hardly a school child but could recall Bull Run, Cold Harbor, Hanover Court House, Seven Pines, Fair Oaks and scores of other hard-fought battles, while the great encounter between the Monitor and the Merrimac had rendered Hampton Roads and Fortress Monroe familiar as household words.

The Army of the Potomac, under McClellan, had advanced and the seven days' battles in the Valley of Chickahominy had ended July 1st, 1862, with the repulse of the Confederates at Malvern Hill.

Men were needed to take the places of those who had fallen, and to reinforce the armies both of the east and the west. July 2d President Lincoln issued his call for three hundred thousand volunteers. Governor Morgan issued general order number four, apportioning the quota to each Senatorial District and appointing in each a military committee. The thirty-first military district comprised the County of Erie and the committee organized July 10th.

Among those who applied for authority to recruit a company was our late comrade, Ira Ayer. His expectations were fully realized, as when it was known that one of his military experience and high social position was to command, the young men responded quickly and on the 11th day of August he marched into Fort Porter—then know as Camp Morgan— at the head of nearly a full company and reported to Colonel H. K. Viele, who was in command.

As ours was the first organization that had been perfected we were mustered into the service as Company "A," of what was afterwards known as the One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry. As the record of Company " A " was largely due to him as its recruiting officer and first Captain, I shall consider it my privilege upon this occasion to give some statistical information regarding his " boys " as he loved to call us.

Comrade Josiah L. Claghorn was appointed Regimental Commissary Sergeant and Company " A," as mustered into the service of the United States, September 3d, 1862, consisted of ninety-eight officers and men.

Of the ninety-seven under Captain Ayer's command, thirty-seven were boys from eighteen to twenty years of age and of the others only eleven were over twenty-eight. The average age of the members was a little less than twenty-three, while our Captain was nearly sixty.

Comrade Jacob Gottschalk was eighteen the day we were mustered into the service and I think with that exception I was the youngest member. September 5th we left Buffalo and proceeding to Baltimore, Maryland, went into camp at Druid Hill Park, where the work of discipline—drill, target practice, &c., began.

In the matter of discipline Captain Ayer excelled. Always carefully obeying the orders of his superior officers, he exacted the same obedience from those under his command. Upon parade,

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and in all the duties of camp life his neatness as to uniform and equipments was an example to his men.

As to mastering the manual of arms and the new tactics and commands it was not an easy matter for him and very much of that duty devolved upon the Lieutenants and the non-commissioned officers.

October 11th, about midnight, an orderly from General Emory's headquarters galloped into the camp. We were immediately aroused, ordered to cook three days' rations and be ready to move early in the morning. It was reported that General Stuart with a large force of Confederate Cavalry had started upon a raid into Pennsylvania. On the 13th we reached Gettysburg. Marching out of the village on the Chambersburg Road, or as it is sometimes called, the Cashtown Pike, leaving the Seminary upon our left we descended the incline towards Willoughby Run, passing within a few rods of the spot where General Reynolds was killed, and crossing the little stream whose waters were afterwards reddened with the life-blood of both the Blue and the Gray, we were soon on the ground occupied by our Cavalry when the battle of Gettysburg opened. Proceeding along the Pike we passed the house which, during a portion of the battle, was General Lee's headquarters and bivouacked in the field where A. P. Hill's Corps was massed on the morning of July 1st, 1863, and from which position they advanced, crowding our army back, over Willoughby Run and up the slope until after having contested every foot of the ground over which we had marched, night closed upon the first day's battle with the Confederate line upon Seminary Ridge. How little we then knew of the future.

A few months later we were nearly a thousand miles from there, more than a third of our number dead or wounded, the survivors crowding the lines closer and closer around Port Hudson, while the greatest battle of the war was being fought where we then were, the rattle of musketry, the roar of cannon and the shriek of shell reverberating from hill to hill, as the messengers of death did their deadly work, until nearly every foot of the ground upon which we had trod was hallowed by the blood of those who fell.

After remaining over night, the general commanding having ascertained that the reported raid had been abandoned we retraced our steps, and on the 16th were again in camp at Druid Hill Park. November 5th we embarked upon boats and proceeding to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, found a large fleet assembling, destined for some distant service. Nearly a month in close quarters upon the boat was disastrous to the health of the regiment and one hundred and fifty—twelve of whom were from Company " A " were left in the hospital at Fortress Monroe, when " Banks' Expedition," of which we were a part, sailed December 4th. We had a very rough voyage and many vessels of the fleet were disabled in the storm, which we encountered. I shall never forget the kindness of both Captain Ira and Captain James Aver upon the voyage. I was very low with typhoid fever. Once or twice daily each of them would visit me, bringing some little delicacy from the officers' table to tempt my appetite.

To them and other comrades who cared for me and protected me from the storm I consider myself under obligations that I can never repay.

On the 13th we arrived at " Ship Island " where we temporarily went into camp, as our vessel was too large to cross the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

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I referred to Captain Ayer's exactness in obeying orders. A little incident will illustrate this: Christmas, 1862, Colonel Chapin allowed the enlisted men to elect their company officers from among their number, and they in turn to elect field officers, and, for that day, the officers so elected were to be absolutely in command of the regiment.

It was considered a good opportunity to show the officers how well we could discipline the regiment, and to that end many of them were arrested and ordered to perform some of the duties of a private soldier. Captain Ayer was found by the guard outside of camp, was brought before the proper company officer and as a penalty was ordered to do police duty; or to make it plain to you who are civilians, was ordered to clean the company streets. This was a matter in which he had always been very exacting, insisting that the streets and ground around the tents should be kept scrupulously clean. .

Arrayed in the blouse of a private, armed with the necessary implements and escorted by the guard he proceeded to obey orders, and though the following day was the sixtieth anniversary of his birth I will venture to assert that the streets of Company " A " were never better cleaned than when he reported his task completed and was released from arrest.

The morning of the 30th we entered the mouth of the river and passed Forts Jackson and St. Philip, of whose capture by Farragut's fleet we had read when at home.

We now had our first glimpse of real Southern scenery. Magnolia trees in full bloom and orange trees laden with fruit in mid-winter. Gorham Ayer, the older brother of our comrade, lived near the banks of the Mississippi, and I remember with what interest Captains Ira and James scanned the various plantations until they located their brother's home. We soon reached New Orleans, Louisiana, and passing on landed at Carrollton, five miles above the city. After about one month of the routine of camp duty we again embarked on steamer, and February 4th were at Baton Rouge, the capitol of the State.

This was our first advent into the enemy's country and active duty began. Pickets were thrown out, surrounding the city, all the roads were protected by a reserve force and cavalry videttes posted in advance. This, with the usual camp-guard duty and with company, battalion and brigade drills gave us plenty of employment. The constant duty devolving upon a company commander and the great change of climate and mode of living were too much for a man over sixty years of age and we all realized that Captain Ayer was physically unfitted to endure the hardships when the heat of summer came.

I talked freely with him but he would say: " My boys enlisted to serve with me and I must stay."

After being quite unwell, and for several days unable to do duty, on the 24th of February he directed me to inform all the Sergeants that he desired to meet them at his tent that evening.

He then talked of his physical condition and of his fears for endurance of active service, and that he had concluded, if the " boys " did not object, to resign, believing it was best both for him and for the younger men of the company.

He, however, expressed the same idea as before, that we had enlisted under him and if we so wished he would remain and perform his part as long as his strength would permit.

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We all advised him to resign and return home, assuring him that it would be satisfactory and that we did not consider it the duty of one so far advanced in years to encounter the exposure and hardships of active service.

He soon resigned, and on the 3d of March left Baton Rouge for home.

I was with him most of the day March 2nd and remember the anxiety he manifested for all, and the recalling of those who started with us six months previous.

Twelve of our number were left at Fortress Monroe. Of these, four, James Cook, Bethuel Fuller, Philip Mumbach and Arthur Redmond were dead. Of the condition of the other eight we knew but little.

Seven were then sick and unable for Duty, some of whom were in the hospital at Baton Rouge ; three had been transferred to other commands and in the organization of the Regimental Band five members had been taken from Company "A," while three others were on detached service. Of the ninety-five enlisted men when we left Buffalo, taking out the necessary details for cooking and other camp duties we had only sixty-one to carry muskets. He talked of the future, of the expected advance upon Port Hudson, of his faith in the courage and discipline of the Company, and seemed to have implicit confidence that they would obey orders in any emergency. While he expected that danger and death was before some of us his greatest regret seemed to be that he would not be permitted to share the danger with us. Could he have foreseen the future and known that in less than three months his brother, Captain James Ayer, would be laid to rest in southern soil, and that thirty-two—over one half of the active members of Company "A"—would be numbered among the killed and wounded, the parting would have been saddened many fold.

We went to the hospital and he took messages to the loved ones at home. I think he said a word of farewell to every comrade. The morning of March 3d I went upon picket and when I returned to camp he had gone and his active military life had ceased.

Let us now briefly recall the records of Company "A" and see how it fulfilled the expectations of our Captain.

Our first engagement was at Plains Store, Louisiana, May 21, 1863. This is an engagement unknown in the history of the war, merely referred to in official reports, and yet Plains Store is sacred to the memory of every member of our Regiment, and especially to Company "A." In the Mexican War the battle of Palo Alto was heralded all over the land as an important engagement. The entire losses of the American Army in that battle were nine killed and forty-seven wounded, while at Plains Store, our regiment had thirteen killed and forty-four wounded. The entire losses connected with the siege and capture of Vera Cruz were only sixty-four, while the losses of our brigade at Plains Store were eighty-five.

I cannot, however, dwell upon the Brigade or the Regiment only by way of the above comparison, but must confine myself to the losses in Company "A."

As heretofore stated, our Regiment lost thirteen killed and forty-four wounded. Nearly one fourth of that number were from our company. We went into the battle with fifty-seven officers and

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men, three were killed and eleven wounded, one of whom afterwards died. May 27th was the first assault upon Port Hudson. Volunteers were called for to organize a storming party. Seventy-four officers and men from our Regiment responded to the Call, nine of whom were members of Company " A."

In the unsuccessful assault of that day the loss of the regiment was twenty-two killed and eighty-five wounded. Three of the killed and fifteen of the wounded, three of whom afterwards died, were from the membership of Company " A."

June 19th another call was made for volunteers to organize a storming party and of the twenty-four that volunteered from our regiment, five were members of Company "A."

With ten companies in the regiment you will notice that each of the above comparisons show that our company not only suffered much more than an average loss, but that the number of volunteers for hazardous service speaks well for the courage of its members.

Our loss in battle of the original members during our entire service was eleven killed or mortally wounded, thirty wounded and one prisoner; or about seventy per cent, of the actual fighting membership of the company.

Of this loss during the nearly three years' service, thirty-two of the forty.-one killed and wounded received their injury in our first two engagements.

During our term of service fourteen died from disease, sixteen were discharged on account of disease or wounds, fifteen had been transferred or promoted from the company, and of the original number forty-two were mustered out June 8th, 1865, as members of Company "A." Of the members who enlisted from this town, three, Francis D. Ingersoll, George Herr and Ephraim Wooderson, were killed or mortally wounded.

Henry W. Raymond was discharged on account of sickness and died at Cairo, Illinois, on his way home. Charles Stan ton was discharged for the same cause, reached home and soon died. Among the wounded, eight, John H. Dingman, Frank Bently, Jefferson White, Edward Barry, Eron V. Carr, Norman Carr, Thomas Hussey and myself were from the town of Evans.

I mention these names, not for the purpose of giving them any prominence over equally deserving comrades who enlisted from adjoining towns, but for the reason that they will be familiar to many of my audience to whom the names of others of the Company would be unknown.

Neither have I referred to the statistics by way of comparison with any other company of the regiment or of any other organization, but simply to show the service rendered by the men who rallied at the call of the comrade whom we this day seek to honor.

I believe that Captain Ira Ayer's exemplary Christian life as a man and an officer had much to do in the formation of character among the members of his command.

As I have stated they were mostly young, and impressions received were liable to be lasting. Sixty-one of the original ninety-nine are supposed to be living. They are scattered through

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twelve states, some living near the Pacific coast. I have endeavored to keep track of them and have never heard of a member of Company "A" who has not proven himself a good citizen in the place he has chosen for his home.

None of their names are found upon the records of the penal institutions of our country, while on the contrary many have held civil positions of honor and distinction, and one is an ordained minister of the gospel.

What better Memorial to him whom these services commemorate than to point to those whom he took from their homes as boys, and after having referred to their services as soldiers, look upon them in nearly twenty-five years of honorable civil life.

Standing, as I do, to speak for the comrades of the Company of which it is the proudest thing in my personal history to say I was a member, looking back along the chain of memory for more than a quarter of a century and re-calling all the honored names, speaking for every comrade whose name was borne on the rolls of Company "A," I feel that I am authorized to thank this large assemblage of citizens who, by their presence, and these comrades of the Grand Army of the Republic who, by these memorial services, have sought to honor the memory of Ira Aver.

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Oatman's Biography of James Ayer, Jr.

I am glad of this opportunity to allude briefly to the life and services of one whom I knew so well.

Captain James Ayer was the youngest brother of Captain Ira Ayer. He was born in what is now the town of Evans, August 14th, 1813, and died in camp at Baton Rouge, La., May 22, 1863.

I have heard it stated at various times, though I am not prepared to substantiate the fact from any records, that James Ayer was the first white male child born within the present limits of the town of Evans. His early life, like that of his older brother, developed military ability.

When a young man he was Captain and afterwards, by successive promotions, Major, Lieutenant-Colonel and Colonel of a Regiment of New York State Militia.

He resided all his life in the town and upon the same farm where he was born.

As a citizen he was honored and beloved by all. In a long acquaintance with him and with those among whom he resided I never heard other than words of esteem spoken of him as a neighbor, a friend and earnest and exemplary Christian citizen.

Like his brother he had been called to pass through great affliction.

A short time before he offered his services to his country he buried his wife and was left with two motherless children of tender age to care for.

He, however, did not falter in his convictions of duty and receiving authority to recruit a company he soon found himself mustered into the service as Captain of Company "K," One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry. He was an efficient officer and had he lived would undoubtedly have gained promotion, as he had the entire confidence of his superior officers,

In the service he exhibited the same spirit of kindness and solicitude for others welfare that had ever been a prominent trait in his life and character and the more intimately the members of his company came to know him the stronger was their attachment to him as a friend and their admiration of him as an officer,

A few days before we left Baton Rouge on the Port Hudson campaign, he was taken sick and much against his wish compelled to remain in his tent, not wishing to go to the hospital.

Comrade Elijah P. Smith of his Company was allowed to remain and care for him. Comrade John F. Wilcox of Company "A" was also compelled to remain in camp from inability to perform duty and they were with him attending to his wants and affording him all possible aid.

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His symptoms, however, grew more alarming. He was taken with fever, followed by inflammation of the bowels and at 5 P. M. of May 22d he passed away.

As I was among the wounded at Plain's Store. La., on the 21st of May I have vivid recollections of the 23d of that month, when passing through the streets of Baton Rouge in an ambulance on my way to the hospital I met an army cart and marching by its side Comrades Smith and Wilcox.

I feared that the remains of one whom I had known so long and loved so dearly were being borne to a soldier's grave, and asking the driver to stop the ambulance I called one of the comrades and learned of Captain James Ayer's death, and that the rough coffin contained his body.

After the war had ceased his remains were removed from Southern soil and placed by the side of his beloved wife in the town where he was born.

The influence of his life is not lost and of Captain James Ayer it can be truly said, " He being dead yet speaketh."

"Ne'er to the chambers where the mighty rest
Since their foundation came a nobler guest."

The Post which honored themselves by honoring his name was organized March 17th, 1881, with twenty-seven charter members.

Nine of the members had served in his Company, and Captain Ira Ayer, with three of Company "A" were among the charter members.

There were many bonds which united Companies "A" and "K:" aside from the fact that they served with the same Regiment in the same campaigns and battles.

They were recruited from the same towns ; the Captains were brothers George W. Carr, Horace P. Ingersoll and Ira White were members of Company "K," while others of their immediate family were in Company "A." There was also an interchange of officers. Warren T. Ferris who left Buffalo as Second Lieutenant of Company "A " was promoted to First Lieutenant and then to Captain of Company " K," while George H. Shepard, who left home as Orderly Sergeant of Company "K" returned as Captain of Company ,"A " and John H. Dingman, who enlisted in Company " A" was mustered out as First Lieutenant of Company " K."

The record of casualties mentioned upon the muster out roll of Company " K " show that four were killed or mortally wounded, twenty-three wounded and one taken prisoner. Twelve died from sickness and ten were discharged on account of wounds received or disease contracted in the service. Over two-thirds of their loss in action occurred during the Port Hudson campaign. At the battle of Cane River, La., April 23d, 1864, the only member of the Regiment wounded was William Tromler of Company " K," whose limb was taken off by a cannon ball.

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As the names will be familiar to many members of the Post and others whom this volume will reach, I will mention the casualties as they appear upon the muster out roll.

Killed or mortally wounded— Corporal Frank M. Judson ; Privates Charles Bramiller, Milton H. Hill and Andrew Wnest.

Wounded— Orderly Sergeants Daniel C. Conger and Charles H. Ballard ; Sergeants Job B. Sherman and Henry W. Eno ; Corporals Horace W. Paxon. Harvey M. Crawford, William Naigel and David Weissenger; Privates Ashael E. Ames, John Black, Daniel Crawford, Joseph A. Ewers, George A. Freeman. Frank E. Griffith. John A. Haggerty, Charles Iback, Alonzo F. Killom, Lewis Ludlow, Charles H. Mills, Peter Reifel, Theodore Slater, William Tromler and Wendell Tice.

Prisoner—Charles E. Craig.

Died from disease—Captain James Ayer, First Lieutenant Elisha B. Cottier; Privates Bela Crawford, Ariel Evans, James H. Fails, Lyman M. Frary, George H. Hawks, Charles E, Kingsley, George N. Ostrom, Theodore Slater, Franklin Sooy and John A. Thornason.

I cannot speak with the same minuteness regarding the living as I have of the Company with which I served. About forty are residents of Erie County and nearly half that number reside in the town of Evans.

Eighteen are members of James Ayer Post, No. 202, and their names with six other comrades of the One Hundred and Sixteenth New York will be found upon the following roster.

They seek to perpetuate the memory and emulate the virtues of him whose name they bear by a practical exemplification of the principles of

FRATERNITY, CHARITY AND LOYALTY.

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The following is from "The One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers", 1868 by Orton S. Clark:

CAPTIAN JAMES AYER.

BY REV. H. M. DANFORTH.

Among the brightest ornaments of the One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, was Capt. James Ayer, of Evans, Erie Co., who died in camp at Baton Rouge, May 22d, 1863. He was born in the town of Evans on the 14th day of August, 1813. His parents removed from Haverhill, Mass., in the fall of 1811, and were among the earliest settlers of this section. His whole life was spent in this his native town, and no man was so universally loved and respected. His love for his country was second only to that for his God, and when traitorous hands were lifted against the flag, he felt it his duty to offer himself to defend it. Accordingly he received authorization papers from the committee having in charge the raising of the One Hundred and Sixteenth N. Y. S. Vols., and immediately set about the raising of a company.

His military ability was very highly appreciated years before the war commenced. From the office of captain he was promoted to that of major, then to lieutenant colonel, and finally, in 1838, to that of colonel, in the Forty-eighth Regiment, Forty-seventh Brigade, Twenty-fourth Division of N. Y. State Militia. In all these positions he was beloved and admired.

As a man in every day life, it is no exaggeration to say that a better model of Christian excellence cannot be found in any community. His life without any shade of coloring would make a volume so richly ornamented with noble deeds as to awaken the admiration of all, and especially of those who appreciate goodness and know the worth of those examples which lead to virtue, to moral purity and to God. We can but regard Capt. Ayer as emphatically a benefactor of his race, one who delighted in acts of usefulness, and laid himself out to do good. But very little of his precious life will ever be written except in the Book of Records, for it is made up to a great extent of little acts of kindness and usefulness which memory cannot collect, and some of which were known to very few beyond those immediately concerned, for to do good was always a greater pleasure to him than to publish it; he never sounded a trumpet before him, but did good for pleasure rather than show.

He was a liberal soul, always ready to lend a helping hand to every good cause. His large benevolence was often much relief to the poor and needy, and a great help to those institutions which have for their object the moral elevation and salvation of our race. The wide fame of his generosity drew around him a large number of those who sought aid for the destitute, for the institutions of the gospel, or for the sufferers in the service of their country; and few, if any, will say they were ever sent empty away. Having for a long series of years acted the part

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of a Christian, a patriot and a philanthropist, in giving bountifully of his property, for the good of his fellow men, he crowned the whole by giving himself for his country a willing sacrifice.

Many have realized his tender sympathy, and will long remember his acts of kindness to them and their families, in sickness, sorrow and death his business was never too urgent to be set aside by the calls of the afflicted and bereaved.

Though he was naturally retiring, yet easy in his manners, and regarded by all who knew him as a model of true politeness. His kind words, like apples of gold, in pictures of silver, were always ready for the aged and the young: not a little child was passed unnoticed, and no infant was ever more tenderly cared for than his venerable mother Terry. His respect for the aged, his personal modesty and kind attention to all around him, we would commend to the rising generation as worthy of their imitation. If they would cultivate personal refinement and secure the love and good-will of all around them, they should copy the example of James Ayer.

Among the excellencies of this noble specimen of humanity, we would not forget to mention his tender regard for every man's reputation and character. He cared for it as for his own. I say it boldly, for those to read who knew him best, he never was heard to speak ill of any man, and when others did it in his presence, and in a way to call for some response, they received nothing but a gentle reproof for themselves or a handsome apology for the injured. He was anxious to think that everybody meant well, and manifestly had a disposition to be pleased with the conduct of others lying back of all external action, and constituting a part of his character or habit of feeling. This propensity to be satisfied rather than dissatisfied, to look on the favorable rather than the unfavorable side in the conduct of others, -rather to attribute to them good motives than bad ones, -stands opposed to a spirit of faultfinding and complaining which nothing satisfies. A man possessed of such a character, such a heart, such a fountain, out of which are the issues of life, is a great blessing to any community. But he was not only possessed of a good heart, but of a good mind. He was decidedly a man of talent, and one who used his talents for the best of purposes. Though very unassuming, yet wise in counsel and a man of much forecast and prudence.

A short time before the war commenced he became the subject of many deep afflictions, being called to bury his wife, and having previously buried two children. Hence when he heard the call of his country, he had a large farm upon his hands and two motherless children, one eleven and the other eight years of age. But few could have been placed in more trying and difficult circumstances to heed such a call. Considering his time of life, his impaired constitution, the situation of his little, dependent family, and his estate, we may safely say it was a sacrifice which not one in a thousand would have made. The motives which led to this great undertaking, this sacrifice of all that was dear on earth, were as pure as the crystal fountain. It was not to gratify combativeness or any feeling of party strife, but to do his duty, save his country, and bless the world; to do all in his

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power to save government by the people from a dreadful overthrow; to help it in its last struggle for existence among the nations of the earth. In deciding to do this there must have been a painful struggle with the tender affections of his heart. To leave the old homestead, sacred to the memory of all that was interesting and solemn in his whole life, together with his little dependent motherless children, endeared by successive bereavements and deep afflictions, and with such strong probabilities that he might never return, required greater fortitude than to meet the enemy in open conflict. No wounds are so painful as those which make the heart bleed. Having made arrangements for a stone to mark the spot where his beloved companion is sleeping the long sleep of mortals, he stepped upon the stage to respond to the ladies who presented him with a sword, was able to read the most of his production with composure; but when he came to his sainted wife, and spoke of the mother and the babes, utterance failed, and a pause was necessary to suppress the deep emotions of his heart. When he thought of loved ones he was to leave in the grave, and of others he was to leave in a world of dangers and uncertainties, language was powerless —tears must tell the rest. Having at the family altar commended his little ones to God for the last time, they followed him to the train which was to bear him away, where he gave them a parting kiss as the last expression of a father's love, stepped upon the cars and was out of sight for ever.

The company who enlisted on condition that he should be their captain, found him to be all they had anticipated; the longer they proved him the stronger were their attachments. In the army he manifested the same spirit of kindness, and exhibited the same good sense as in every other position. Having been in the service eight months, disease began to prey upon his system; old pulmonary difficulties were hurried on by the exposure of camp life; but finally he was taken with fever, followed by inflammation of the bowels, which ended all hope of his recovery. On Wednesday morning, May 20th, Mr. John F. Wilcox was released from his march with the army, and went to see him. He seized his hand with an expression of great joy, "O, I am so glad you did not go," and repeated it three times. But still he was not conscious of being very near his end. On Friday noon, the day of his death, when a hope was expressed that he might recover so as to go home to his children, he replied, "I am confident I shall recover from this in a few days." He spoke of the preciousness of Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, but was too weak to talk much. "I will rest," said he, "a little while, and then I should like to have you come in again and read and pray with me." In a short time he went in again and found Mr. Elijah Smith, of Brant, trying to rouse him to take his medicine; but, alas! it was too late. He took him, by the hand and asked him if he knew that he was going, but he showed no signs of consciousness; he was never to hear the chapter read or the prayer offered, but breathed shorter and shorter for about fifteen minutes, and expired about 5 o'clock, May 22d, 1863, aged 50 years.

In his absence from the world he has done so much to enlighten and save-from the country for which he gave his life-from the town and the church he has so abundantly blessed-there is one consolation for all: "He being dead yet

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speakeh." "The echoes of his words are to be reflected along the ages." It has been truly said, "A man has two immortalities-one he carries with him to a loftier sphere, and the other he leaves behind, and it walks the earth and still represents him; what he said sounds along the years like voices amidst the mountain gorges, and what he did is repeated after him in ever multiplying and never-ceasing reverberations."

The influence of James Ayer is not dead. Those who have been blessed by his godly example are scattered to the four winds, and will live to bless others in geometrical ratio till the end of time. "The lessons he taught, the grand sentiments he uttered, the noble deeds of generosity by which he was characterized, the moral lineaments and likeness of the man, still survive to bless the world forever."

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