

When we mortals pass on to whatever lies beyond the living, most of us hope we leave behind us something that will endure and remind others that we, too, once walked on this planet. For most of us, that legacy lies in our children's memories of us and whatever genealogical work on our family tree someone might do. Once our neighbors, friends and relatives are gone, so too are our proofs that we were here. Few of us are fortunate enough to have any permanent markers of our existence except for our granite headstones. Charles W. Rogers was one of the few individuals to leave reminders of his passing through this life that have endured for the last one hundred fifteen years and most likely will still be seen for another hundred years or more. There are buildings all over Addison County that bear the mark of one of the areas best known citizens.

Charles Ward Rogers was born on December 22, 1844 in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. ^[1] He was the oldest son of Jabez W. Rogers (1815-1900) and Helen Ward (1821-1898). He had three siblings - two sisters and one brother: Cornelia R. (1842-1896); Eugene A. (1847-1911); and Ella I. (1850-1918). ^[2] Six year old Charles lived in Ferrisburgh in 1850 with his family. Jabez was a stone mason who lived from paycheck to paycheck. His total net worth, according to the Federal Census for 1850, was a paltry \$800. He would have earned better than average day worker wages being a skilled tradesman. But he had a substantially large family to support, so what he earned would have been spent very quickly. Two of his four children, Cornelia and Charles, were of school age while the others, Eugene and Ella, were too young to attend school. ^[3]

A year before the Civil War erupted from a shouting match into a shooting war, fifteen year old Charles was still enrolled in school along with Eugene and Ella who had reached the proper ages to attend. Cornelia was eighteen now and still living at home. Jabez's fortunes had improved considerably since 1850. His estate value had risen to \$3,500 in the ten intervening years. ^[4] Charles' entry into the Civil War was delayed until it was almost over. At the outbreak in April of 1861, he was too young to join up. The minimum legal age was supposed to be eighteen. Of course, many over zealous young men lied about their age in order to enlist, but apparently war was not a high priority on Charles' to do list. He was twenty-one when he decided it was time to become personally involved in

the Rebellion. The fine looking recruit stood five feet eleven inches tall. For a farmer, he had a light complexion with brown hair and blue eyes. He went to Vergennes on January 18, 1865 to find the recruiting agent named B. Murray and to sign up for one year in Company H of the Seventh Vermont Infantry Regiment. ^[5] He was formally accepted into the military service on January 27, 1865 in Rutland, Vermont, promptly paid one third of his \$100 bounty money and shipped off immediately to New Haven, Connecticut where his processing was completed. ^[6] Private Rogers joined Company H of the Seventh at Mobile Point, Alabama on February 26, 1865 as a recruit (meaning he was replacing an original member of the regiment). ^[7]

The Seventh Vermont Regiment of volunteers was organized during the last part of 1861 and the early part of 1862. It was mustered into the Federal service on February 12, 1862 at Rutland, Vermont. Colonel George T. Roberts commanded the Regiment. It numbered nine hundred forty-three officers and enlisted men. It was a three years' infantry regiment which served in the Western Theater, mostly Louisiana and Florida, under General Butler with whom the Vermonters had a strained relationship from the start of their serving together. The Seventh was the longest serving Vermont regiment during the war. It was not mustered-out until March of 1866. The delay (between June 9, 1865 surrender of Lee and March, 1866) was in part at least due to General Butler's dislike of the Regiment.

On March 10, 1862, the Seventh left Rutland for New York City. There it boarded two old-fashioned sailing ships, the Premier and the Tammerlane, and sailed for Ship Island, Mississippi. The Premier arrived on April 5 and the Tammerlane on the tenth. The voyage on the crowded transports took upwards of three weeks and was very miserable for the men who were unaccustomed to bouncing around on rough seas churned up by the heavy March gales.

On May 3, Companies B, C and part of D were sent aboard the gunboats USS New London and the USS Calhoun to capture the Confederates at Fort Pike that guarded the entrance to Lake Ponchartrain. On arriving, they discovered the Fort abandoned. So they took possession and began repairing the damage caused by the Rebels when they

evacuated it. The rest of the Regiment was shipped off to Carrollton, a suburb of New Orleans. In a few days, the Seventh was moved to Baton Rouge.

On June 19, 1862, eight companies of the Seventh along with three other regiments and a light battery of artillery (about 3,500 men altogether) launched an ill conceived expedition against Vicksburg on General Butler's orders. Even though supported by Admiral Farragut's entire fleet of warships, the twenty-eight day siege of Vicksburg was a failure. The only accomplishment was the loss of many lives primarily from exposure and sickness. By July 26, 1862, the Federals had returned to Baton Rouge.

Shortly after, on August 5, 1862, the Confederates reciprocated with their own offensive push. The Battle of Baton Rouge took place on a very foggy day. In the confusion created by the attack, several Federal units accidentally fired on each other. Following orders, the Seventh Vermont was one of those. They unwittingly fired a volley into the Twenty-first Indiana during the battle. Although this tragedy, along with the mortal wounding of the Seventh's commander, Colonel Roberts, was devastating to the Vermonters, the Confederate attack was repulsed. Immediately after the engagement, General Butler was quick to blame the Seventh for poor performance on the field citing the mistaken identity incident during the battle and further accusing the Vermont regiment of "withdrawing" in the face of the enemy. The so called "withdrawal" from the enemy was the evacuation of the hospital containing a large number of the Seventh to a safe place near the river bank. General Butler's accusations were based upon hearsay reports made to him by subordinates after the battle. General Butler, himself, was no where near the action at Baton Rouge. The officers of the Seventh, who were well aware of General Butler's political ambition to run for President, felt that his allegations were his way of diverting attention away from his lack of strategic planning before the engagement. The Vermonter's felt that General Butler used the Vermonter's as a scapegoat because the small state had no great representatives with powerful influence in Washington. General Butler further rubbed salt into the Seventh's wounds by forbidding the Regiment permission to put the battle honor "Baton Rouge" on their battle flag and prohibited the Regiment from carrying their colors. Permission to carry was later restored. Baton Rouge

was evacuated on August 20, 1862. The Seventh returned to Carrollton. There it manned the forts south of Pensacola, Florida. The Vermonters performed garrison duty at Fort Barrancas and Fort Pickens from November, 1862 to August, 1864.

During the Vicksburg campaign, the mortality rate of the Regiment reached its peak. At the close of its first year of service, it had lost over three hundred by death and upwards of one hundred discharged for disability. Many went back home with permanently shattered health from diseases contracted in the line of duty while serving in an unhealthy environment. The original members of the Regiment had the opportunity to re-enlist as veteran volunteers. All but fifty-eight did so. This entitled them to a thirty day veteran's furlough to Vermont and to redesignate the Regiment as the Seventh Veteran Volunteers. The Seventh performed vital service in Florida as artillerists, mounted and dismounted infantry, scouts and garrisoning various fortifications protecting Pensacola Harbor where vast naval stores had been stockpiled for the use of Farragut's West Gulf squadron. It survived two seasons of yellow fever and several severe combat engagements. It became part of the Thirteenth Corps, commanded by General Gordon Granger, after February, 1865. The Seventh took part in the siege of Mobile and Spanish Fort, the battle at Whistler, Alabama, and the surrender of the Confederate Army of Mobile at Citronelle, Alabama.

On May 30, 1865, the Regiment was put on the steamer "General Sedgwick" and shipped to Texas to become part of the "Army of Observation" along the Rio Grande which kept an eye on Maximilian's French Army there. Some authorities of history claim that General Butler had a great deal to do with the Seventh being sent on protracted duty to Texas. It was implied by some that it was his last job at the Vermonter's for their substandard performance at Baton Rouge. The Seventh was eventually mustered-out on March 14, 1866 at Brownsville, Texas. During its term of service, the Vermonters lost eleven men killed; fifteen died of accidents; six died in Confederate prisons; three hundred seventy-nine died from disease plus another two hundred forty-two were discharged for disability, primarily from disease. Total losses were six hundred forty-nine.^[8]

Three months into his term of service, Private Rogers was reported absent from Company H due to his being sick. Yellow fever and malaria were running rampant in the Seventh's ranks. On June 21, 1865, six months from the day of his enlistment, Private Rogers was mustered-out of the service at White Hall General Hospital near Bristol, Pennsylvania. ^[9] Charles' military career was over after six months and three days in uniform. His length of service was so short that he was a civilian again before he ever got paid a dime for being a soldier. He was not only owed six months back pay, but he was also due \$8.75 for clothing and he had the last third of his original \$100 bounty due to him as well. However, he was "accountable" for "...Knapsack. Haversack. Canteen. Half shelter tent...." ^[11] Before he could receive his release from the service, he had to either return all these items to the company Quartermaster or pay for them. He had been ordered discharged "...in compliance with directions from War Dept...." dated May 3, 1865, but was not formally dismissed until June 21. ^[12]

Charles returned to Ferrisburgh and his parents' farm where he had been helping his father build up a successful and prosperous business before he enlisted. Four years after he returned from his short stint in the army, Charles found love. She came in the form of Sarah Eliza Wicker, a nineteen year old native of Ferrisburgh, Vermont. She was living in New Haven at the time she and Charles were married on January 1, 1869 at New Haven. ^[13] Sarah (aka Eliza) was born on August 28, 1849 to Charles Haskell Wicker (1816-1888) and Mary Champlin (1824-1886). ^[14] In 1869, her father was a struggling farmer in New Haven, barely keeping his good sized family fed and housed. ^[15]

The 1870 Federal Census listed Charles and his new bride, Eliza, living with Charles' parents, Jabez and Helen. Charles, twenty-five, was still assisting his father on the Ferrisburgh farm. Eliza helped her mother-in-law with the household chores. Charles' brother, Eugene, also lived at home even though he worked as a stone mason off the farm. Jabez had done well for himself, building up the farm and his personal value to \$6,200. ^[16] Before the decade was over, Charles shifted trades from agriculturist to masonry. He and another contractor named Charles Stone "...have taken a contract to do the mason work

on the new block about to be erected by Ex-Gov. Stewart, at Middlebury...." [17] Part of that construction project involved doing the stone work on the new shade roller factory. Both masons were touted as "...experienced and capable workmen...." [18]

Having established his residence in New Haven by 1880, Charles, the stone mason, and family were living quite comfortably. Charles' contracting jobs were augmented by a Government pension he had applied for in 1879 based on his very brief military career. [19]

Lillie Steady, nineteen and from Vermont, was a house servant in the home. The Rogers also had a daughter, Edith (1874-1961) who was five in 1880. [20] By early 1883, Eliza began suffering from a disease called "erysipelas". [21] This was a bacterial infection in the upper layer of skin caused by the streptococcus bacterium, the same bacterium that causes strep throat. It can enter the body through a cut, abrasion or some other type of puncture wound. It can also spread to the nasal passages following an infection of the nose and throat. Today, it is treated commonly with antibiotics like penicillin.

Complications of having it if left untreated can be blood clots, blood poisoning, gangrene and infected heart valves. If it is near the eyes, it can spread to the brain. [22] It was about this time (February, 1883) that Eliza became pregnant with her second daughter, Grace Helen who was born December 24, 1883, [23] Throughout 1884, Charles had his hands full as he was employed doing stone work on the Bristol Town Hall, the new pulp mill near "Huntington place" and at private residences around the area. He had built a fine reputation for doing outstanding quality work executed with "neatness and dispatch". [24]

In 1886, Charles found himself, apparently through no fault of his own, caught in the middle of a town dispute over who was going to supervise the macadamizing of the highway between Bristol and New Haven Junction where the railroad station was located. The project required the towns to raise \$2,500 for the work. The State of Vermont would then contribute the remaining \$5,000 to complete the improvements. Some local citizens objected to the appointment of Charles as the supervisor of the project. There were several town meetings to discuss Charles' selection and the issue was even taken to the county court for adjudication. The court refused to remove Charles from the position of commissioner due to inadequate cause. [25] According to the local press, everyone was relieved to have the problem resolved and the funds secured to improve the highway

between the two communities. While all this turmoil was going on, Eliza became critically ill towards the end of May and the first of June, 1888. The Middlebury Register reported her "critically ill" on June 1, and predicted that her recovery was doubtful. Indeed her condition was fatal, for she died the same day the newspaper reported her in very poor health. ^[26] Her funeral was held the following Sunday which was "largely attended". ^[27]

Not quite a year and a half later, Charles remarried. His second wife was the younger sister of his first wife. Her name was Abigail "Abbie" Wicker and she was born July 24, 1857 in Middlebury, Vermont. The couple were married October 1, 1889 "...at the residence of Silas Dowd on Town Hill by the Rev. Mr. Hague. The couple started on their honeymoon trip by the morning mail train." ^[28] When they returned from their honeymoon, the newly weds took up their residence in Middlebury. ^[29]

When the 1890 Special Schedule for surviving soldiers, sailors, and Marines, and Widows was completed, Charles W. Rogers, member of Company H, Seventh Vermont Infantry, was found living in Waterbury, Vermont. He was noted as having no disabilities. ^[30] Two years later, he was back in Bristol and he and E.H. Daniels were building the Methodist Church in town. ^[31] Later, while working on a job in Lincoln, Vermont, Charles "...had his right hand caught in a tackle-block...The third finger was crushed so that it had to be amputated at the first joint." ^[32]

Charles' work load was becoming lighter by 1900. The Federal Census for that year noted that he was employed for only six months the previous year. He and Abbie were back living in Bristol. Their daughter, Grace, lived with them. She was sweet sixteen and still attended school. ^[33] Charles' health was failing him and he was ill for weeks at a time which explained why he was unemployed for half of the year in 1899. Due to his excellent reputation as a mason, he would have been fully employed without question if he had been physically up to it. The winter of 1903 brought on Charles' last extended bout with illness. He had been ill for several weeks when he finally succumbed at his home at five o'clock in the afternoon of February 25, 1903. His obituary appropriately

noted that he left behind many "monuments" all over the area "...that would stand for years." It was lamented that the "...good and enterprising citizen...a pleasant and agreeable man...will be missed from this community." ^[34] A strange coincidence occurred at Charles' funeral ceremony. Charles was the supervisor of the building of the Congregational Church in which his funeral services were held, and his were the first remains to be brought into that church for funeral services. ^[35]

After Charles was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in the family plot, his widow, Abbie, age forty-five, continued to live in Bristol for a while. In March of 1903, Abbie applied for her widow's benefits from the Government under Charles' very short military service. ^[36] When the 1910 Federal Census was done, she had moved to Burlington, Vermont where she was a boarder in the home of William H. and Agnes P. Ridley on South Union Street. ^[37] After losing her brother, Charles Sumner Wicker, in 1914 and her sister, Alva Ann Wicker within the next year, she moved back to Bristol. ^[38] She lived on East Street with another woman named Alice M. Smith. ^[39] Abbie was now sixty-two and living completely off whatever her widow's pension income was at the time. Before the 1930 Federal Census was taken, she had purchased her own house in Bristol and was living on her own with no companions. The home was modest, being valued at \$3,000 in 1930. ^[40] It was a bit odd that Abbie was recorded as passing away on May 26, 1937 in Newbury, Massachusetts at the age of seventy-nine of heart disease. ^[41] Her remains were returned to New Haven so she could be buried along side of her husband, Charles and her sister, Eliza.

NOTES

1. www.findagrave.com, Memorial #40679182 for Charles Ward Rogers; www.newspapers.com, Bristol Herald, Thu., Feb. 26, 1903.
2. Ancestry.com, Storke Taylor Family Tree for Cornelia Ruth Rogers; Charles Ward Rogers; Eugene A. Rogers; and Ella Irene Rogers.
3. *Ibid.*, 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Charles Rogers.
4. *Ibid.*, 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Charles Rogers.
5. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records Of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served In Organizations From the State of Vermont, p. 3, image 311536399. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Record.
6. *Ibid.*, Compiled Service Record, p. 4, image 311536401.

7. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 12, image 311536416.
8. Vermont in the Civil War/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry; en.wikipedia.org, 7th Vermont Infantry.
9. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Record, p. 8, image 311536407.
10. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 9, image 311536410.
11. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 10, image 311536412.
12. Ibid.
13. Ancestry.com, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Sarah Eliza Wicker.
14. Ibid., Storke Taylor Family Tree for Eliza Sarah Wicker.
15. Ibid., 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Charles H. Wicker.
16. Ibid., 1870 U.S. Federal Census for Charles Rogers.
17. www.newspapers.com, Argus and Patriot, Wed., Mar. 26, 1879.
18. Ibid., The Burlington Free Press, Fri., May 9, 1879.
19. Ancestry.com, U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index To Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Charles W. Rogers.
20. Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Charles Rogers; Ibid., Storke Taylor Family Tree for Eliza Sarah Wicker.
21. www.newspapers.com, Middlebury Register, Fri., Feb. 16, 1883.
22. www.healthline.com/health/erysipelas.
23. Ancestry.com, Storke Taylor Family Tree for Eliza Sarah Wicker.
24. www.newspapers.com, Middlebury Register, Fri., Apr. 25, 1884 and Fri., June 6, 1884.
25. Ibid., Middlebury Register, Fri., Dec. 24, 1886 and Burlington Clipper, Thu., Jan.13, 1887.
26. Ibid., Middlebury Register, Fri., Jun. 1, 1888.
27. Ibid., The Burlington Independent, Fri., Jun 8, 1888.
28. Ibid., The Burlington Free Press, Fri., Oct. 4, 1889.
29. Ibid., Middlebury Register, Fri., Oct. 18, 1889.
30. Ancestry.com, 1890 Veterans Schedules for Charles W. Rogers.
31. www.newspapers.com, Argus and Patriot, Wed., Mar. 9, 1892.
32. Ibid., The Burlington Independent, Sat., Nov. 9, 1895.
33. Ancestry.com, 1900 U.S. Federal Census for Charles W. Rogers.
34. www.newspapers.com, Bristol Herald, Thu., Feb. 26, 1903.
35. Ibid., Middlebury Register, Fri., Mar. 6, 1903.
36. Ancestry.com, U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index To Pension Files, 1861-1934 for Abbie D. Rogers.
37. Ibid., 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Abbie D. Rogers.
38. Ibid., Storke Taylor Family Tree for Abigail "Abbie" Delia Wicker.
39. Ibid., 1920 U.S. Federal Census for Abbey D. Roger.
40. Ibid., 1930 U.S. Federal Census for Abbie W. Rogers.
41. Ibid., Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Abbie W. Rogers.