

Henry E. Jackson came into this world with a whimper, just like every other human child born on this planet. His childhood was as unexceptional as hundreds of other rural Addison County juveniles in the 1800's. But there was a spark in Henry's character that made him unique among the methodically agrarian neighbors he grew up with in New Haven, Vermont that guaranteed his future held for him a singular notoriety unshared with his contemporaries. Henry had a restlessness in him that drove him to take risks all his life. He was a natural gambler, always hoping to hit it big by pushing the limits. He loved challenges and the last wager he made in March of 1900 cost him his life.

Henry E. was the son of Samuel Jackson, Jr. (about 1798-?) and Olive Stranahan (1805-?).<sup>[1]</sup> He was born March 11, 1835 in Chesterfield, New York.<sup>[2]</sup> He may have had as many as three other brothers and sisters. This research project was only able to find one confirmed sibling - Sadie (Sally) born about 1830 in either Peru or Chesterfield, New York.<sup>[3]</sup> The other possible siblings could not be traced.

Henry struck out on his own at the age of fifteen. There was nothing terribly unusual about that in the 1850's. Many young "men" were embracing independence at what today would be considered an inappropriately young age. But in the mid-nineteenth century, social norms were quite different and it was not out of the ordinary to see fifteen and sixteen year olds married and starting families of their own. So Henry had left the nest and was living with Allen (twenty-one) and Polly (twenty-three) Chare in Essex, New York. Allen was a farmer in Essex. While Henry attended school, Allen and his twenty-four year old hired man, an illiterate Canadian named John Lampey, did the necessary work on the farm.<sup>[4]</sup> Henry more than likely helped out when school was not in session in order to partly pay for his room and board. At least he was getting some formal education whatever the deal was concerning his residency. Since his father and his mother's deaths are not known, nothing for sure can be offered as to why Henry, at such a young age, was not living with his family. It could be that he was boarding with the Chares simply because their home was close to the only schoolhouse in the area. It was common practice for students in the nineteenth century to set up living arrangements with a host

family while they attended a school. Usually this happened with students who were attending institutions of higher learning, not elementary schools.

Prior to 1860, Henry had found interests other than farming. He had found girls. One in particular caught his fancy - Francis C. Sturdevant. She was the daughter of Alvin Sturdevant (1820-1901) and Abigail Cowles (1818-1912). She had been born and raised in New Haven. Her birth date was July, 1843. <sup>[5]</sup> Alvin, her father, was a farmer in Addison in 1850. He was a native Vermonter while Francis' mother, Abigail, hailed from Massachusetts. Francis was the oldest of three children in her family. <sup>[6]</sup> By the time she was a young woman of seventeen, she was living on her own as a servant in the household of Ira S. Wright of Weybridge, Vermont. Ira was a moderately successful farmer who had one hired man to help in the barn and fields. He was nineteen year old Edgar Grennell. Both he and Ira's son, Charles M., attended school when it was in session, leaving them to help Ira on a part time basis when they weren't learning their letters and numbers. Francis served at the pleasure of Ira's wife, Arlleta W. assisting her in the maintenance of the house and hearth. <sup>[7]</sup>

Somehow, Henry and Francis got together long enough and frequently enough to develop a close relationship that became intimate (officially) in 1861. The bride was eighteen and the groom was twenty-six. <sup>[8]</sup> Exactly when in 1861 Henry and Francis were married was not known as no record of the event could be found. However, it took place after the new year began and before Henry got his blood up and enlisted in the Union army in September of 1861. The newlyweds had barely had time to adjust to one another when Henry decided to take off for glory and adventure.

He should have known better than to desert his new bride. After all, he was twenty-six, a mature man by age. But he was also impulsive by nature. The mature farmer from New Haven chose to enlist in Rutland, Vermont. The new volunteer stood five feet eight and one half inches tall. He had brown eyes and black hair that went well with his light complexion. He swore to defend his nation for the next three years on September 20, 1861. <sup>[9]</sup> He was mustered-in as a member of Company H, First Vermont Cavalry at

Burlington, Vermont on November 19, 1861. <sup>[10]</sup> Henry may have been impetuous, but he was not a fool. He was old and wise enough to know that riding was always more preferable to walking. Besides, infantry was just cannon fodder. Cavalry was dashing and glamorous. Henry went for the flash and flair. And he was pushing thirty!

The Government gave Henry two stripes to wear on his sleeves as soon as he enlisted. They must have thought his advanced age made him automatic leadership material. The Government also gave him a horse and equipment worth \$143.63. <sup>[11]</sup> Uncle Sam's faith as a leader in Corporal Jackson may have been prematurely placed, however. One month after being given his stripes, Jackson lost them. He was demoted for some minor infraction of the military code of conduct and sent back to the ranks as a Private on December 16, 1861. <sup>[12]</sup> No explanation for the reduction in rank appeared in Private Jackson's service recorded. Whatever the nature of the offense, it must have been of a minor level or else the punishment would have been much more severe than just being busted down to Private. It was punishment enough though since it resulted not only in loss of face, but also a reduction in pay for the Private. Altogether, it was not a nice Christmas present for the volunteer. Two months later, in the new year, Private Jackson suffered another minor setback when he was docked \$.48 pay for a lost haversack. <sup>[13]</sup> That doesn't sound like much of a loss to us today, but remember Private's in Mr. Lincoln's army only earned \$13 each month (less than \$.50 a day). Things were going from bad to worse for the Private.

The First Cavalry was not active until the spring of 1862, when, with the forces of General Banks, it was engaged at Middletown, Winchester, and in the campaign which terminated in the second battle of Bull Run August 30, 1862. The loss in the summer campaigns was heavy, but the command was reinforced in the autumn by the addition of two new companies and many recruits. The Regiment was stationed in the vicinity of Washington on various details during the winter of 1862-63 and frequent skirmishes with Mosby's guerrillas prevented any monotony.

June 28, 1863, the First was assigned to the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac with which it served from that time on. In the Battle of Gettysburg, the Regiment won its laurels; was active in the subsequent pursuit of General Lee by harassing his rear guard. Finally, the unit halted for the winter at Stevensburg, Virginia.

The First Vermont shared in the raid on Richmond in 1864 under General Kilpatrick. Then the spring campaign opened in 1864. In the Battle of the Wilderness, the First lost many brave officers and men. It was active in the battles which followed at Yellow Tavern and Meadow Bridge, during Sheridan's Raid on Richmond, and was also at Hanover Court House, Ashland, Haw's Shop, Bottom's Ridge, White Oak Swamp, Riddle's Shop and Malvern Hill. The Regiment was ordered to join the expedition of destruction of the Weldon and South Side Railroads, in which skirmishes and engagements resulted at Ream's Station, Nottoway Court House, Roanoke Station and Stony Creek. In August it was ordered to join Sheridan who was confronting General Early in the Shenandoah Valley and arrived at Winchester on August 17 in time to participate in the engagements at Winchester, Charlestown, Summit Point, Kearneysville, the Opequan, New Market and Cedar Creek. The original members, who had not reenlisted, were mustered-out on November 18, 1864.

On February 27, 1865, Sheridan's cavalry commenced the return to Petersburg where it arrived after a journey of three weeks. In the cavalry fight at Five Forks, the First Vermont had a share and continued in the advance of the column through several minor affairs until the corps reached Appomattox Court House where General Lee surrendered. The Regiment participated in the Grand Review of the armies at Washington and returned to Vermont early in June. The men whose term of service would expire prior to October 1 were mustered-out at Burlington. The remainder were consolidated into a battalion of six companies which served in Vermont and upper New York until August 9, 1865 as border guards following the St Albans Raid by Confederates.

The First Vermont was mentioned by Colonel Fox as one of the "three hundred fighting regiments" and also listed it fifth in an enumeration of nine regiments who lost over one

hundred nineteen men. It was, however, second to none in the number of captures it made. At the Battle of Cedar Creek, it won three of the eight medals awarded to the army for colors captured. The First Vermont Cavalry fought in seventy-six separate engagements with the enemy over its three year existence. The total aggregate strength of the Regiment was 2,304 officers and enlisted men. One hundred twelve of those were killed or died of their wounds. One hundred fourteen died of diseases and seven of accidents. One hundred fifty-nine died as prisoners in Confederate prisons.

Many believe that cavalymen enjoyed a cushier and more glamorous duty of the fighting units employed during the War of the Rebellion. Not true. Men and horses were repeatedly subject to enormous and often prolonged stresses. Challenged beyond normal endurance, many troopers and their mounts fell victim not only to battle injuries but also non-combatant assaults on their health and well being. For example, on the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid, one trooper reported: "...rode all day and all of the night in the rain pouring all the time....and we hadn't had a wink of sleep, only what we got on our horses in that time.... (Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p.215)". Another member of the First commented - "...three days frequently pass without unsaddling the horses, and the backs of the poor emaciated brutes are first sore, then burst rotten.... (Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p. 87)". A third trooper of the First noted "...sadly the route of march became easy to follow by the trail of expired horses by the roadside....(Collea, *The First Vermont Cavalry*, p. 156)." At Gettysburg it was estimated that between three and four thousand horses were killed in that one, three day battle.

One heartwarming story about the horses of the First Vermont Cavalry appeared in Joseph D. Collea, Jr's book *The First Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War*: "...Abe, aka 'The First Vermont Straggler'....Shot in the neck. the horse had to be left behind by his rider, Bugler Joe Allen, because he (the horse) could not rise from weakness due to loss of blood at 4 am when soldiers began their march. From that day on, soldiers could be heard cheering and shouting when Abe (now Old Abe) would straggle into their latest camp a day late as he made his way alone to rejoin his comrades. Ultimately, when stronger, he and Bugler Allen rode together again until the end of the war in 1865....

(p.180)" I hope that when Bugler Allen was discharged from the service that he was able to take Old Abe with him.

In the three years that the First Vermont Cavalry was in the service of the United States Army, it took part in seventy-six engagements from Mount Jackson on April 16, 1862 to Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, including the 1862 and 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaigns, the Gettysburg Campaign, the Overland Campaign and the Siege of Petersburg. The Regiment's most notable action was the cavalry charge led by Brigadier General Elon Farnsworth with Major William Wells by his side against the Confederate's right flank on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The First's heritage continued to be celebrated to this day with a state legislative decree naming the Corps of Cadets at Norwich University as members of the Regiment who wear the crossed sabers on all of their uniforms and their insignia. <sup>[14]</sup>

The winds of his fortunes changed course in May of 1862. Private Jackson had the good luck to be detailed for duty in the Quarter Master's Department as of May 27, 1862. <sup>[15]</sup> This meant he was off the horse and on a wagon. His new duty assignment was a lot safer, if not less arduous, than his old one. At least he was out of the line of direct fire most of the time. But being a Regimental teamster or wagoner was not without its own inherent risks. The role of a wagoner was to transport the supplies needed by the army. He was responsible for driving the wagon (pulled by as many as six mules, depending on the amount of the load which could be as much as 3,000 pounds) and maintaining it, feeding and caring for the mule team that pulled it, ensuring that it was loaded properly, and seeing that its cargo reached its destination safely as he, personally, was responsible for the wagon's contents. The cargo could be anything that an army of the time required; food, medicines, weapons, ammunition, clothing, shelter tents, tools, the soldiers' knapsacks, officers' luggage, and anything else the Quartermaster Corps felt was needed. Sometimes the supply wagons were even used as ambulances to carry the wounded. Horses were not used by wagoners because the artillery siphoned them off to pull cannon. Besides, mules did not like the loud noises created by artillery pieces firing or shells bursting. Mules would not stand still like horses did when exposed to such jarring sounds.

Oxen were not used because they were too slow even though they could pull a larger load than mules. Mostly wagoners were non-combatants and civilians. Many of them were freed slaves hired by the Army. Any service man assigned as a wagoner was on "detached duty", meaning he was not a member of any particular military unit other than the Quartermasters Corps. <sup>[16]</sup>

Private Jackson held this job as teamster from May, 1862 until September, 1863. During those months, he bought his cavalry mount and equipment from the Government. It took him eleven months (May, 1862-April, 1863) to save enough money to buy the animal and equipment, but he eventually did. Troopers were known to get quite attached to the animals they rode day in and day out. So it's not surprising that Private Jackson would want to keep his old companion next to him. But there was another reason for him to want to own the horse. The government would now have to pay him for the use of the animal every month - a sort of rental fee that was commonly done in the cavalry if the trooper supplied his own horse and equipment. <sup>[17]</sup> Henry E. Jackson, the rural farm boy from the backwoods State of Vermont, had a pretty good business head on his shoulders.

All was well with Private Jackson until September 28, 1863 when he was sick enough to be admitted to the hospital at Culpepper, Virginia. <sup>[18]</sup> By October 5, 1863 he was transferred to Filney General Hospital in the District of Columbia and on the 10th was sent on to the military hospital in Brattleboro, Vermont. <sup>[19]</sup> After a month's stay there, Private Jackson was declared disabled with a double hernia and was transferred to the Veterans Reserve Corp, 2 Batt., Co G, 13th Regiment. <sup>[20]</sup> Private Jackson served out the remaining year of his enlistment in the Invalid Corp, being mustered-out November 19, 1864 at the expiration of his term of service. <sup>[21]</sup>

Henry returned home after an absence of three long years. He came back not to a bride, but to a mother and a two year old son. Charles Henry had been born in 1862 while his father was chasing Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley. <sup>[22]</sup>

Henry had little time to assimilate himself back into civilian life. He returned as a father and a husband so had to find work immediately to support his family. There was small

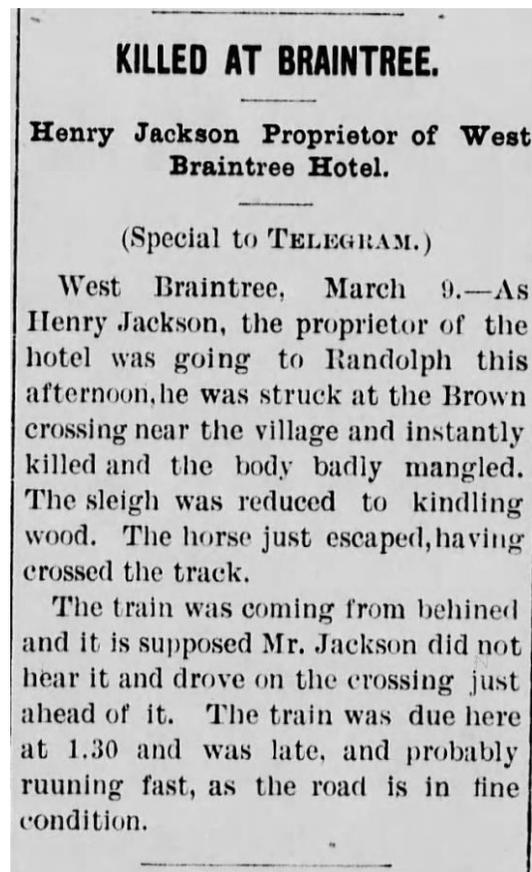
prospects in going back to being a farm hand on someone else's operation. In 1864, Henry was granted a pension for his military service. <sup>[23]</sup> By 1866, another child was added to the expanding Jackson clan. Sarah (1866-1925), Henry's only daughter, became the newest member of the clique. <sup>[24]</sup>

Henry had turned thirty-five or so in 1870. His family was increasing and so was his economic status. He had found himself a Government job outside of the military. He had become New Haven's Post Master. He had amassed a small nest egg worth almost \$2,000. <sup>[25]</sup> His opportunities were looking better. In a short time Henry had accrued a degree of solvency. He no longer did manual labor for wages. Even in the nineteenth century, a government employee enjoyed stability and longevity as well as certain perks that came with the position. It was a firm and reliable foundation upon which the young man could anchor his future plans. And Henry was going to need that solid base from which to operate because the 1870's saw a substantial increase in the extent of his paternal responsibilities. On February 23, 1877 a second son was born to Henry and Francis. His given name was Edward (Edmond) R. (1877-?). To his family and friends, he was known as "Eddie". Eddie was born in Ripton, Vermont rather than in New Haven, indicating that his father, Henry, was once again on the move in search of ways to support his family. When Eddie was born, his dad was farming in the Ripton community according to the birth certificate. <sup>[26]</sup> Two years later, on November 23, 1879, Willie (William) came bouncing into the midst of the Jackson tribe. His hometown was Salisbury, Vermont where Henry, his father, was making another attempt at being a tiller of the soil. <sup>[27]</sup> Death dates are not known for either Eddie or Willie. It was discovered that Willie (William Clarence Jackson) was still alive and doing well at sixty-two, working for the N.Y. & N.H. & Hartford Railroad in Providence, Rhode Island. He actually lived in Pawtucket, R.I. as of April, 1942. <sup>[28]</sup>

The 1880 Federal Census reported Henry and family all living in Middlebury, Vermont. Henry was still working at being a farmer. Charles was seventeen that year, old enough to be working alongside his father helping make the farm capable of supporting a family of

six. Sarah was thirteen and at home also, more than likely assisting her mother in tending the house and caring for the two infant siblings she had. [29]

There were no Federal Census records for 1890 since they were destroyed in a vault fire where they were being stored. But, luckily, the Government conducted a special survey of veterans that year which did survive. It placed Henry and his family in Granville, Vermont. Whether he was still in agriculture or not the special schedule did not reveal. However, it did confirm his military service in the First Cavalry and that his disability was from a double hernia. [30] Whatever he did for a living in Granville in 1890, was exchanged for a new venture in Braintree, Vermont around 1897. That's about the time that Henry relocated himself and his brood for the final time. In the process, he undertook another change in careers. He became the owner and operator of a hotel - the West Braintree Hotel. This was the business he was in when, in 1900, Henry took his last, fatal gamble.



A request for a public investigation of the cause of the accident was made by the attorneys of the deceased. Present at the hearing was: the full Board of Railroad Commissioners; the Honorable J.K. Darling, acting for the State's Attorney of Orange County; Joseph D. Denison, Esq. representing the administrator and the widow of the deceased; and the Honorable Chester W. Witters representing Central Vermont Railway. Testimony produced the following facts:

"That on March 9, 1900, the Boston & Chicago Express Train, No. 2 bound south, consisting of engine and five cars,...being about twenty-five minutes late by schedule time, was running...about forty miles an hour...the engine struck the team of Henry Jackson of Braintree on the highway grade crossing...smashing the sleigh and killing Mr. Jackson...instantly...the engine whistle was blown for the crossing in question at the usual point, eighty rods (1380 feet) therefrom, and the automatic bell was kept ringing, and that a long whistle was sounded when the driver was seen approaching the crossing...that the highway runs parallel with the railroad at this point...and the railroad is in full view of a traveler on the highway for at least eighty rods...Mr. Jackson was about forty rods (660 feet)...from the crossing when the engine whistle was blown...as required by law...and that he continued driving along the highway, and that his horses were on the run when struck on the crossing...the engineer applied the emergency brake just as soon as he discovered that the driver of the team was going to attempt to cross the crossing ahead of the train, and that he stopped the train after running a distance of about 100 rods (1650 feet)...."

The conclusion of the committee holding the hearing was that all proper regulations had been followed by the railroad and that the crew of the train had observed all reasonable safety measures. Its determination was that "...the victim of this accident failed to exercise due caution, and, as a consequence of his own carelessness, lost his life." [32]

The Chelsea Herald reported on the "sad accident" as well: "...He had started to drive to Randolph in his cutter, drawn by a pair of horses. At one of the Brown crossings, half a mile south of this station, he was struck by the south-bound express train and hurled a distance of 75 feet...Death was instantaneous. The body was not bruised a particle. The

crossing is a open one and the train could be seen for a distance of 1,200 feet. Mr. Jackson must have miscalculated. He had nearly got across, the engine striking the rear of the sleigh and demolishing it, but the horses escaped...." <sup>[33]</sup>

The ground was still frozen that March in 1900, so Henry's remains were placed in a tomb at Randolph until the Spring of 1900. Later, he was laid to rest in Evergreen at New Haven. He left his wife, Francis, of Braintree and four children: Charles, Sarah, Edmund and William. Charles came from Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Sarah (Westinghouse) from Lansingburgh, New York; Eddie R. lived in Roxbury, Vermont and Willie came from Londonderry, Vermont to attend their father's funeral in Randolph. <sup>[34]</sup>

After Henry's death, Francis applied for her widow's pension and continued to live in Braintree. Her son, Edmond, moved in with her. She apparently kept the hotel going as she was listed as a "land lady" in the 1900 Federal Census which was completed three months after Henry passed away. Her son, Edmond, was a telegrapher, probably for the same railroad that had killed his father. Francis lost her own father, Alvin, January 10, 1901. He was residing in New Haven when he died. That might be what brought Francis back to New Haven where she passed away on February 17, 1902. <sup>[35]</sup> She was interred next to Henry in Evergreen.

## NOTES

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6. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Alvin Sturdevant.
7. Ibid., 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Francis Sturdevant.
8. Ibid., Carrie Alford Family Tree for Henry Eugene Jackson.
9. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 3, image 308851083. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Record.

10. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 4, image 308851085.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 5, image 308851087.
13. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 6, image 308851089.
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15. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Record, p. 8, image 308851093.
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17. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Record, pp. 14 & 29, images 308851104 &  
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27. Ibid., for Willie Jackson.
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