

John Allen may or may not have been related to the famous Allens of the American Revolutionary War and early colonial Vermont fame. Whether they really were or not, it was obvious from the family names of the males in John's family that those infamous Allens were much admired by his relatives. Ethan and Ira crop up numerous times in given and middle names of males in John's family tree. John, himself, never gained notoriety of any kind. His life story reflects the epitome of the civilian soldier in the Civil War . He was a common farmer who joined a cause he believed in, did his duty as ordered and went back to the civilian life he knew before he donned on a uniform, and survived the best he could until he quietly passed away in a small agrarian town. Nothing was spectacular, stupendous or extraordinary about the man or his accomplishments. He was just like thousands of others. But, even if he did not realize it, he was a part of a colossal event that shaped a nation in new and unimaginable ways.

John Allen was born on November 13, 1837 in Rochester, New York. <sup>[1]</sup> He was the son of Hiram Allen (1800-1876) and Clarissa Swan (1812-1898). Both of his parents were also born in New York state. <sup>[2]</sup> During Hiram's lifetime, he was a shingle maker, a sawyer and a modest farmer. He and his family spent a great deal of their time living in Moriah, Elizabethtown, Lewis or North Elba, New York. <sup>[3]</sup> Hiram's children were born in two different states - either New York for some or Vermont for others. Moving around the Champlain Valley area on both sides of the Lake seemed to have been the hallmark of the Allen family. The number and identities of John's siblings listed here were not all confirmed. Four of them were included based on being found in two or more of the sources used in this biographical sketch of John Allen. John was the oldest of at least five children known for sure: George, 1841; Jane, 1846; Henry, 1849; and Eugene, 1856. Unconfirmed siblings were: David, 1836; Celeste (Jane C.), 1847; and Ethan, 1854. <sup>[4]</sup> John never had a spouse, remaining single his entire life. Therefore, there were no children as well.

When John was eleven in 1850, he and his family were living in Lewis, New York. Hiram was a shingle maker. Clarissa cared for the children under school age (there were two) and the other children (David, John, George and Jane) went to school during the day.

[5] Five years later, the Allens were living in Elizabethtown, New York. David (nineteen), George (fourteen) and Celeste (thirteen) were gone from the household list of family members. A new child had been born since 1850. His name was Ethan and he was a year old in 1855. John and his father, Hiram, were working the farm they all lived on. [6]

By the 1860 Federal Census, Hiram and family, including twenty-two year old John, were still living in Elizabethtown. About 1857, another boy had joined the household. His name was Eugene. Jane, Henry and Ethan were also still living at home. Hiram had given up on farming for the time being and had turned to working in a sawmill as a "sawyer". He was now sixty years old. Clarissa, age forty-seven, was in charge of the younger children in the family. John lived at home and must have been employed in some capacity, but the Census failed to note what that was. [7]

By the time the War of the Rebellion began in April of 1861, John had removed himself to the Middlebury, Vermont area. The twenty-three year old, who stood a lofty six feet in height, enlisted in the army at Middlebury on December 20, 1861. The blue eyed, brown haired young man with his light complexion claimed he was a machinist and had been born in Lincoln, Vermont. H.M. Porter helped John sign up for the military in Company C of the Seventh Vermont Infantry for three years. [8] It wasn't until February 12, 1862 at Camp Phelps in Rutland, Vermont that John was formally accepted into the U.S. service along with the other members of the Seventh Vermont. [9]

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. [10] Colonel George T. Roberts commanded the Regiment. It numbered nine hundred forty-three officers and enlisted men. [11] 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.<sup>[12]</sup>

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.<sup>[13]</sup> 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.<sup>[14]</sup>

On May 3, Company 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.<sup>[15]</sup> 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.<sup>[16]</sup>

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 including Alonzo, 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.<sup>[17]</sup> 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.<sup>[18]</sup>

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. <sup>[19]</sup> 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.<sup>[20]</sup> 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.<sup>[21]</sup>

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.<sup>[22]</sup> 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 jab at the Vermonter's for their substandard performance at Baton Rouge. The Seventh was eventually mustered-out on March 14, 1866 at Brownsville, Texas.<sup>[23]</sup> 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.<sup>[24]</sup>

From February 1862 through October 1862, Private Allen had no particular incidents in his life worthy of noting. He had seen some combat, but had remained healthy and had managed to avoid receiving any fatal blows from the enemy. About one year into his three year hitch, around November or December of 1862, he became sick while on garrison duty at Fort Rickens and was sent to the Regimental Hospital for treatment.<sup>[25]</sup> He probably had contracted malaria or yellow fever like so many of his comrades had. By January of 1863, Private Allen was back in the ranks of the Seventh and on active duty. During April of 1863, he was assigned duty as a wagoner, perhaps because his health wasn't as good as it should have been.<sup>[26]</sup> From June of 1863 to April of 1864, Private Allen served on extra duty as a boatman in the Quarter Masters Department in the Gulf of Mexico region as part of the Union blockade of Confederate seaports.<sup>[27]</sup> He was present for duty through May and June of 1864, and, by all indications, was well and back on regular duty in the ranks of Company C. At the beginning of August, 1864, Private Allen was absent from the Seventh on detached service at Brattleboro, Vermont awaiting muster-out.<sup>[28]</sup> He received his discharge from the Seventh on August 30, 1864 at Brattleboro.<sup>[29]</sup> John was still owed \$100 of bounty money by the Government at the time of his discharge.<sup>[30]</sup>

Now that John was a civilian again, he headed for home a little older and a little wiser. The first place he landed was back with his parents. He found that his father's family had swollen in numbers. Not only had he come back home, but two of his brothers had also come home to roost. David, not twenty-nine, and George, twenty-four, both were living in their parent's home in Lewis, New York in 1865. It was not determined if David and George had served in the military during the recent war or not, but, since they had disappeared from their parent's home before the war and suddenly reappeared immediately afterwards, would strongly suggest that they had been in uniform. So, Hiram and Clarissa, now sixty-five and fifty-one respectively, had seven of their children living with them in 1865. Only Celeste, if she really was one of their offspring, was missing. Hiram's home was a frame house only worth \$100. It could not have been very large. He was farming, so the extra help provided by three strong boys being around must have been appreciated by him. <sup>[31]</sup>

The family reunion did not last long. Within five years, four of the family members present in 1865 were gone again: David, John, George and Jane. Even with the loss of his three older sons, Hiram had enough help left. Henry, who had married, Eugene and Ethan were around to work the farm. With their father, they had built the agricultural business up to be worth \$1,000. Hiram had personal property appraised at another \$1,600. <sup>[32]</sup> When John left his parent's home, he returned to Elizabethtown, New York to live with a family named Barnes. Edgar Barnes, the head of the household, was a mechanic. John boarded at his house and was listed as a laborer. He was thirty-five and still single. <sup>[33]</sup> John had applied for a pension on December 29, 1873 so he had that income to live on plus whatever he could earn as wages hiring himself out. <sup>[34]</sup>

When the 1880 Federal Census was done, it showed that John had moved in with his brother, Henry, and his wife, Sarah, in North Elba, New York. John was approaching forty years old and still single. His brother, Henry, was into the hospitality industry. He owned and operated a hotel in North Elba. He had four servants plus his wife helping him run the hotel which housed a dozen boarders besides John. John worked on a local farm

in North Elba. <sup>[35]</sup> By 1892, Henry had moved on to Lake Placid, New York where he bought into a bigger and better hotel business. He built a new, large one between Grand View Hotel and Main Street, but it was destroyed by a fire. <sup>[36]</sup> Meanwhile, John had gone back to Elizabethtown to live and work. He was fifty-two in 1892 and single. <sup>[37]</sup>

In 1905, John was located in Lewis again. The sixty-seven year old was boarding with a family named Jenner there. The head of the household, Levi A. Jenner, was a carpenter. He lived with his eighty-one year old mother, Ruth. John apparently had no occupation at this time according to the State Census. <sup>[38]</sup> He was probably living off his military pension he had been receiving since 1873. 1915 found John back living with his now widowed brother, Henry, in North Elba. Henry was sixty-eight and John was seventy-six. Henry was head of house on the State Census form. The two brothers lived on South Main Street in North Elba. Both of them were "retired". <sup>[39]</sup>

Suddenly the paper trail for John ended abruptly with his name on a headstone that he shared with two strangers in a cemetery located in New Haven, Vermont, across Lake Champlain from his last known location in North Elba, New York. How did he end up dying in Vermont? Why was his name on the same stone as two Davis', Eva and Roger E. who obviously were husband and wife? What was the story?! It took some time, but finally an answer to the question was found.

Remember that John had had a sister named Jane C. Allen. Well, she had grown up and married. Her husband was James Davis. She and James had had four children by 1900, only one of whom had survived. <sup>[40]</sup> That was a male child by the name of Hassan Davis. Hassan grew up and married. By 1910, he and his family, including four year old Roger E. Davis, were residents of New Haven, Vermont where they operated a farm. That farm was located on Bolduc Road (now called Daniel's Road). It was house #15 on a map of District Twelve on page 267 in A History of New Haven in Vermont by Harold Farnsworth and Robert Rogers. Jane, a widow by 1910, lived with her son, Hassan, and his family on that farm. She worked as a cook for another family nearby in the community. <sup>[41]</sup> John was then living in North Elba with his brother, Henry. But Henry

died in 1916. <sup>[42]</sup> That meant that John was now alone, looking for a new place to live. He settled on jumping across the pond to go live with his sister and her son in Vermont. So that explained how John came to be in New Haven. But what about the three names on the headstone. Why would Eva and Roger want to share their final resting place with someone who wasn't a Davis? That question can only be answered with an educated guess. John only spent three years living in the Davis household before he died. During those three years, he must have made quite an impression on young Roger. He endeared himself to the boy enough for him to share his headstone with him in death. John passed away of pneumonia and general debility at the age of eighty-two on June 2, 1919. <sup>[43]</sup>

## NOTES

1. Ancestry.com, Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 for John Allen.
2. Ibid.; www.findagrave.com, Memorial #80722406; Ancestry.com, Allen Family Tree for John Allen.
3. Ibid., 1850 1860 1870 U.S. Federal Census for John Allen and Hiram Allen; Ibid., 1855, 1865, 1875 New York State Census for Hiram Allen.
4. Ibid., 1850, 1860, 1870 U.S. Federal Census for John Allen and Hiram Allen; Ibid., 1855 and 1865 New York State Census for Hiram Allen; Ibid., Family Tree for John Allen.
5. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census for John Allen.
6. Ibid., 1855 New York State Census for John Allen.
7. Ibid., 1860 U.S. Federal Census for John Allen.
8. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 3, image 311556332. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Records.
9. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 4, image 311556335.
10. Vermont in the Civil War.org/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry.
11. Ibid.
12. www.en.wikipedia.org/7th Vermont Infantry.
13. Ibid.
14. Vermont in the Civil War.org/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry.
15. www.en.wikipedia.org/7th Vermont Infantry.
16. Vermont in the Civil War.org/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry.
17. www.en.wikipedia.org/7th Vermont Infantry.
18. Ibid.
19. Vermont in the Civil War.org/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry.
20. Ibid.
21. www.en.wikipedia.org/7th Vermont Infantry.
22. Ibid.
23. Vermont in the Civil War.org/Units/Seventh Vermont Infantry.



24. [www.en.wikipedia.org/7th Vermont Infantry](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/7th_Vermont_Infantry).
25. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), Compiled Service Records, p. 10, image 311556348.
26. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 24, image 311556375.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 23, image 311556373.
30. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 25, image 311556377.
31. Ancestry.com, 1865 New York State Census for John Allen.
32. Ibid., 1870 U.S. Federal Census for Hiram Allen.
33. Ibid., 1875 New York State Census for John Allen.
34. [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), General Index: Pension Files for John Allen.
35. Ancestry.com, 1880 U.S. Federal Census for John Allen.
36. Ibid., Lake Placid, its early history and development: from the time of the civil war to the present, Chap. V.
37. Ibid., 1892 New York State Census for John Allen.
38. Ibid., 1905 New York State Census for John Allen.
39. Ibid., 1915 New York State Census for John Allen.
40. Ibid., 1900 U.S. Federal Census for Jane C. Davis.
41. Ibid., 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Jane C. Davis; A History of New Haven in Vermont, 1761-1983 by Harold Farnsworth and Robert Rogers, 1984, pp. 267-268.
42. Ibid., Allen Family Tree for John Allen.
43. Ibid., Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 for John Allen.