

Hiram David Ayers came into this life with little fan fare, lived his life with little fan fare, and left this life with little fan fare.

Hiram was born on May 28, 1843 (or 1842) in Goshen, Vermont. ^[1]His father's name was David Ayers and his mother was Tobatha (Tabathia) Allen Ayers. ^[2]In 1850, Hiram had three sisters and one brother: Betsey, 18; Electa, 16; Laura, 11; and Edwin, 14. ^[3]Before Hiram entered the service, he was living in Goshen with his family. ^[4]He belonged to a farming family. In fact, there was an additional family member living right next door to David and Tobatha in 1850. That year's census recorded an Arnold, age twenty-one, and Aboda (Rhoda), age eighteen, Ayers as neighbors who operated a separate farm in Goshen. Arnold was Hiram's older brother (born circa 1829). ^[5]Hiram was living with his parents at age seventeen and working on the farm as a laborer in 1860. ^[6]A year later, the war fervor swept through Vermont. Hiram was almost of legal age to join without parental consent. However, and for whatever reasons he may have had, Hiram did not enter into active service until the year 1863.

By then, the five feet ten inch tall, blue eyed, brown haired young farmer with the dark complexion from Goshen was twenty-one and didn't need anyone's permission to don a uniform. Hiram enlisted on December 29, 1863 for three years. He was signed up by the Selectmen of Goshen. ^[7] Hiram was mustered-in on January 5, 1864 at Brattleboro, Vermont. He was credited to Goshen and received \$25 in bounty immediately and was owed an additional \$242. Private Ayers was assigned to the Second Battery, Vermont Light Artillery. ^[8]

The Second Vermont Battery Light Artillery's combat history was, like Hiram's service, very short and relatively uneventful. The unit was raised in Brandon, Vermont December 13, 1861. Captain L. R. Sayles was chosen to command. When completed, the Second Battery amounted to 128 officers and men. The battery was immediately sent to the Gulf coast of Mississippi on March 12, 1862. It debarked on Ship's Island where it unloaded its rifled cannon that shot Sawyer shells. ^[9]Ship Island (actually two barrier islands off the Gulf Coast of Mississippi) had the only deep-water harbor between Mobile Bay and

the Mississippi River. In 1858, the State of Mississippi gave jurisdiction of the islands to the Federal Government. Construction of a fort began in 1859. It was incomplete in 1861 when the Civil War erupted. The Confederates were quick to seize the unfinished fort. They named it Fort Twiggs after the Confederate General, David E. Twiggs. On July 9, 1861, after a twenty minute exchange of cannon shots with the USS Massachusetts, the Rebels abandoned Fort Twiggs and the Federals garrisoned it, renaming it Fort Massachusetts, in 1862. The advanced guard of Federal General Butler's expedition arrived at Ship's Island on December 3, 1861. On January 4, 1862, the Harper's Weekly reported that the Federal troops had landed "...without molestation...." By March 12, the Second Vermont Light Artillery, along with the First Maine and the Fourth Massachusetts Batteries, joined them on Ship's Island. Not only was this post important for launching land attacks on New Orleans and other strategic Mississippi River ports, it was also vital for controlling the coast and enforcing the blockade of Southern ports in the Gulf area. ^[10]

By May 2, the Second Battery had landed at New Orleans. Towards the end of May, they were ordered seven miles up the Mississippi to Fort Parapet. There it skirmished with Confederates during a raid in which it destroyed a railroad bridge. During the five months the Second was stationed at Fort Parapet, they lost sixteen men from disease, twenty-two discharged for disability, two officers dismissed from the service after being court-martialed and one officer who resigned.

On October 31, the Second Light Artillery again moved back to New Orleans. December 29, 1862 found the Battery on the move to Galveston, Texas. It stayed there only a few days. On January 1, 1863, after finding out that the Confederates had captured the city, the Second Battery left for New Orleans. At the end of January, the battery was ordered to Donaldsonville, seventy-five miles up the Mississippi. A month later, they were ordered to Baton Rouge. They took part in the siege of Port Hudson May-June of 1863. After the surrender of Port Hudson, the battery stayed, doing garrison duty until July 7, 1865. It then marched to Baton Rouge on the ninth of July, 1865, took a steamer to Cairo,

Illinois and then headed towards Burlington, Vermont. The last of the Battery was mustered-out on July 31, 1865. ^[11]

Hiram didn't join the Battery until after the siege and surrender of Port Hudson. Therefore, his time in the service was spent mostly doing garrison duty in Mississippi. That must have been very boring and monotonous duty. At least Hiram did not have to worry about catching a piece of hot lead or iron. He just had to keep from getting sick and being sent to the hospital.

When it came time to leave the service, Hiram lucked out again. He had back pay coming to him since February 28, 1865. The Government owed him \$14.50 from the clothing account. He had already been paid \$180 in bounty money, but was still owed \$120. He did, however, owe the Government \$1.22 for lost and destroyed equipment. ^[12]

Hiram apparently went back to farming but not with his father or his brother, Arnold. In the 1870 Federal Census, he was listed as living with a farmer and his wife, Donald T Holden and Lucy A. Holden, in Pittsford, Vermont. ^[13] In 1872, Hiram married for the first time. His bride was Rosannah Hendee. They were married on November 13, 1872 in Goshen, Vermont. Hiram was twenty-nine years old. Addie was the first child born to Hiram and Rosannah. She came along on June 30, 1874. Their second child was an infant girl baby, born 1881 and died 1881. The first boy to be born to the couple was Clayton H. who arrived on June 15, 1882. Hiram and Rosannah's final child was also a boy - Ernest A. born on January 2, 1885. Rosannah died June 13, 1885 of consumption, only six months after the birth of her last son. ^[14] All this time, Hiram supported his family by farming in Goshen. ^[15]

Hiram remained a widow for only three years. More than likely, he remarried in order to have a woman around to help raise the children. His next wife was Louisa Sophia Fenton. She was forty-five years old when she married Hiram on March 24, 1888 in Goshen. ^[16] Louisa was a spinster who, in 1880, had been single and living with Calvin and Abbie Brown in Leicester. She hired out as a servant. ^[17] After their marriage, Hiram and Louisa

and two of Hiram's boys - Clayton and Ernest - moved to Brandon where they ran a farm well into the 1900's. By 1910, the boys were gone but Hiram still farmed the land. ^[18]

In 1890, Hiram filed for a disability pension which he was granted. His declaration for cause stated that he suffered "Chronic Diarrhea". The affliction must not have been too severe as he continued farming even after he began receiving his Government payments. He lived twenty-six more years until October 19, 1916. Cause of his death was given as "Rhumotism" and "sub acute myolitis" which is an inflammation of the tissue in the spinal cord. Hiram died in Brandon but went "home" to be buried. ^[19]

NOTES

1. Vermont in the Civil War/Cemeteries/Vermont/Goshen/Goshen Cemetery/Ayers, Hiram D./Vitals and Ancestry.com, Vermont, Vital Records, 1909-2008. The most common date given is May 28, 1843.
2. Ancestry.com, Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 and Ancestry.com, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908.
3. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census under Hiram Ayers.
4. Ibid., 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Census under Hiram Ayers.
5. Op cit., 1850 U. S. Federal Census under Arnold Ayers.
6. Op cit., 1860 U.S. Federal Census under Hiram Ayers.
7. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 16-17, images 310731198 and 310731204. Herein after referred to as Compiled Service Records...
8. Ibid., Compiled Service Records..., p. 3, image 310731158.
9. [www.wikipedia.org/Ship Island \(Mississippi\)](http://www.wikipedia.org/Ship_Island_(Mississippi)).
10. Ibid., and Vermont in the Civil War/units/artillery units/2nd Battery Light Artillery.
11. Vermont in the Civil War/units/artillery units/2nd Battery Light Artillery. Article by John W. Chase, Captain.
12. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 13, image 310731185.
13. Ancestry.com, 1870 U. S. Federal Census under David T. Holden.
14. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 under: Hiram David Ayer; Adelia Viola Ayer; Clayton Ayer; Ernest Arnold Ayer; and Rosannah Hendee.
15. Op cit., 1880 U.S. Federal Census under Hiram D. Ayers.
16. Op cit., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908; www.findagrave.com for Louisa Sophia Fenton Ayer; and Ancestry.com, Shook Field Family Tree.
17. Op cit., 1880 U.S. Federal Census under Louisa S. Fenton.
18. Op cit., 1900 and 1910 U.S. Federal Census under Heran D. Ayer and Hiram D. Ryer.
19. Op cit., Vermont, Death Records, 1909-2008 and www.wikipedia.org under "myolitis"

