

Sometimes there just doesn't seem to be any rhyme nor reason for why the life a person takes the twists and turns it does. Such was the case for an unfortunate young man named Ira Mills. At the moment his future looked promising, his life was cut short by a physical defect - a disease of the heart. He was twenty-eight years old and had just become a father for the first time only two months previously. His new wife of only two years was left a widow with an infant who would grow up never knowing his father.

Ira Mills was born April 4, 1839 in New Haven, Vermont.^[1] He was the oldest son of Ralph Laurence (aka Lawrence) Mills (1810-1898) and Abigail "Abbie" Sumners (1804-1881).^[2] Both parents were native Vermonters. Ralph came from New Haven and Abbie was from Bristol. Abigail was the daughter of Henry George Sumner (1771-1856) and Sarah Hall (1779-1855). She came from a very large family consisting of her parents, five brothers and five sisters. Ralph's side of the extended family was almost as large, he having three brothers and four sisters. Ralph had a modest farm located in New Haven near the Munger Street Cemetery. His farm was valued at \$4,000 in the 1850 Federal Census. He had all four of his children living with him then, ranging in age from fourteen to one: Harriet Elizabeth (1836-1912); Ellen Victoria (1838-1893); Ira (1839-1867); and Oscar (1849-1893). In addition, Abigail's nephew, Edwin Sumner, also lived in their home. His father was Henry Barnes Sumner, Abigail's brother. The farm was prosperous enough to allow Ralph to have two hired men working for him, both from Canada: Mitchel Goodro, twenty-one, and Abram Tatro, seventeen.^[3]

Ten years later, in 1860, Ralph was the owner and operator of a \$5,000 business. He had managed to increase the value of his property with the help of his son, Ira, who was by then twenty-one. The farm was efficiently providing a comfortable living for the Mills family. Apparently, the work of running was being adequately handled by two men and an eleven year old boy. All of Ralph's daughters had been married off by 1860. Abigail was the only female left on the place.^[4] As part of his middle-class upbringing, Ira was introduced to the fine arts as well as to the business world. He learned to play a musical instrument. When the Civil War broke out in April of 1861, and the Union Army had tasted its first full battle at Bull Run in July, the Presidential call for more troops to put down the rebellion that followed that disastrous Union route resulted in young Ira's bolting from farmer's son to Uncle Sam's soldier.

He enlisted on September 10, 1861 in Middlebury, Vermont in Company B of the Fifth Vermont Regiment as a musician (fifer). The five feet ten inch bachelor with a light complexion, grey eyes and dark hair agreed to serve in the Fifth for the next three years.^[5] Essentially, Ira had volunteered for a non-combat role when he signed up as a musician. Musicians were not expected to carry a musket. Rather they were normally, when the band was not playing, used as litter bearers, picking up the wounded on the battlefield and placing them in ambulances waiting to take the injured to the nearest field hospital. Sometimes musicians were assigned duty at Regimental or Divisional Hospitals when the surgeon's there needed an extra pair of hands to administer to the sick, wounded and maimed soldiers in the wards.

The Fifth was organized in St. Albans, Vermont. Its companies were raised in various towns throughout the State. Company B, for example, was comprised of only men from Middlebury; Company E was from Manchester; Company H, from Brandon; Company F, from Cornwall; and so on. The Regiment was mustered-in on September 16, 1861 at St. Albans. It was immediately sent to Washington, D.C. and joined the other Vermont troops already at Camp Advance (Griffin) near the Chain Bridge in Virginia where it was assigned to the Vermont Brigade with which it served during the rest of the war. Throughout the fall of 1861, and the first few months of 1862, it was on duty in the defenses surrounding Washington.

March 10, 1862 the Fifth moved to Alexandria, Virginia. Two weeks later, the Regiment boarded transport ships for the Virginia Peninsula landing at Fort Monroe and moving to New Port News on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of March, 1862. By April 16, 1862, the Regiment was at Lee's Mills with the Vermont Brigade. On June 29, the Fifth brought four hundred men to the action at Savage's Station. In one half hour of fighting, it lost one hundred eighty-eight of them on the field. Company E of Manchester suffered the heaviest losses of any company from Vermont. Company E went into the engagement with fifty-nine muskets. In that one half hour of fierce conflict, it lost forty-four of the fifty-nine; twenty-five were killed and nineteen were wounded. Five Cummings brothers and one cousin from the company were among those killed or wounded. Only one of the six recovered from his wounds. The Regiment as a whole suffered the heaviest loss in killed and wounded at the Battle of Savage's Station, Virginia on June 29, 1862 of any Union regiment in a single action of the entire war. In the following few days, the Fifth along with the rest of the Vermont Brigade, went on to be involved in more fighting at White Oak Swamp and Malvern Hill as the Federals retreated from General Lee towards Harrison's Landing.

On August 16 - 24, 1862, the Regiment returned to Fort Monroe and reached the Bull Run battlefield by August 30, just missing the fighting there. During the Maryland Campaign of 1862, the Fifth took part in Crampton's Gap (South Mountain) and Antietam. It ended 1862 engaged in the Battle of Fredericksburg. In January (23-24) of 1863, it joined Burnside's "Mud March" on its way to Marye's Heights and Salem Church. It celebrated the Fourth of July at Gettysburg. The Fifth took a break August 14 through September 16, 1863 and relaxed in New York during the draft riots there. The Regiment rejoined the Army of the Potomac at Culpeper Court House in Virginia on September 23. It went into winter quarters at Brandy Station where the veterans of the Regiment re-enlisted on December 15, 1863 and was the first Regiment granted a veteran's furlough for a month's duration.

On its return from furlough in Vermont, the Fifth continued as a veteran organization and participated in the bloody month with the Army of the Potomac from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor, and took an active part in the siege of Petersburg. The Regiment began the campaign with five hundred men. In one month, it lost three hundred forty-nine killed, wounded and missing, including thirteen officers. September 15, 1864, the term of service for original members who had not re-enlisted expired. They were mustered-out leaving present for duty one assistant surgeon, a quartermaster, three first lieutenants and

three hundred enlisted personnel. After the October 19 Battle of Cedar Creek, the Fifth moved to the Siege of Petersburg again and went into winter camp at Squirrel Level Road in December, 1864.

When Petersburg finally fell in April of 1865, the Fifth Vermont was the first Regiment to plant its colors on the Confederate defensive works. The unit was present at Appomattox Court House for the surrender of Robert E. Lee and his army. June 8, 1865 the Fifth marched in the Corps Review held at Washington, D.C. On June 29, the veterans were mustered-out. At its discharge, there were only twenty-four officers and two hundred eighty-eight men on its rolls - three hundred twelve total out of an original strength of 1,618 . For the last ten months of its service, the highest ranking officer in the Fifth present for duty was a captain; for more than three months of those last ten, the highest ranking officer present for duty was a lieutenant. Every officer present for the Grand Review went out as a private. ^[6]

Musician Mills performed his duties with Company B flawlessly from his enlistment in September, 1861 until August of 1862. He was assigned to extra duty in the Regimental Hospital as a nurse at that time.^[7] This was the beginning of a long stretch of hospital duty for Mills. It would last from August, 1862 to August, 1863.^[8] On the fourth of August, 1863, a month after Gettysburg, he was returned to duty with Company B of the Fifth Vermont.^[9] There he remained when the Fifth went into winter camp at Brandy Station, Virginia. On December 15, 1863, a majority of the original members of the Fifth took advantage of the Government's generous terms of re-enlistment and were discharged from the service so that, on the next day, December 16, they could re-enlist for the bonus money offered each man and a thirty day furlough back to Vermont for each volunteer veteran. Mills was among those who chose to re-up for another three year hitch and the furlough.^[10] Mills was back in Virginia by February of 1864 ready to resume his duties, whatever those might be.^[11] He remained with his Company as one of its musicians until October, 1864. Mills was once again assigned to nurse duty at the Division Hospital beginning October 31, 1864.^[12] He would stay in the Sixth Corps Division Hospital as an attendant until the end of his term of service in June of 1865.^[13] At muster-out on June 29, 1865, musician Miller was owed money by the Government. Due the soldier from his clothing account was \$32.52. He also had some bounty money coming to him. He had received \$210 prior to his discharge, but still had \$190 owed him.^[14] Mr. Miller returned home with a substantial amount of money in his pockets.

The single twenty-four year old Ira Mills turned his face to the north and headed towards home in the Green Mountains that June of 1865. Since he had been discharged in Washington, D.C., it would not take him but a few days to reach New Haven by rail. It was assumed he returned to the family farm on Munger Street owned by his father, Ralph L. Mills. As was true with many veterans surviving the Civil War, Ira wasted no time in finding a wife once he had returned home. He had not been back but five months when he married a local girl by the name of Adelaide Roxana "Addie" Gulley (1840-1873).^[15] Addie had been born in Orwell, Vermont about 1840 to Erasmus A. Gulley (1802-1893) and Roxanna "Roxanny" Carpenter (1804-1872). She had eleven siblings: six sisters and

five brothers.^[16] Her father, Erasmus, was a successful Addison town farmer originally from Massachusetts.^[17] Adelaide's mother, Roxanny, hailed from Vermont. Hector, Erasmus' eldest son, was twenty-two in 1850 and, after helping his father on the farm in his earlier years, was gone from the household. The only source of familial labor old enough to share the workload with Erasmus was his eighteen and seventeen year old sons, Argalus and Paris. Erasmus must have been somewhat of a learned man himself if you could judge his knowledge of ancient Greece from the names he gave to his sons. And he valued education which seemed a priority to him since all the children in the household, including the two teenage boys mentioned, attended school regularly.^[18]

How the two young people met was not revealed by any of the public records. Whether their relationship began before Ira enlisted in the Army or after he came home from the war was also not revealed. However they became acquainted, they were married on November 4, 1865 in Addison town, Vermont. Ira was twenty-six and Addie was twenty-five. It was the first marriage for both of them.^[19] Equally unclear was whether after the wedding, they took up residence in their own home in Addison or lived with one set of parents or the other. But, as circumstances would shortly prove, the question was not relevant anyway. It was assumed that Ira went back to being a farmer, the only occupation he had ever had, on his father's farm. Within two years of their nuptials, the newly weds had their first, and only, child. On June 7, 1867, a son was born to Ira and Addie in New Haven. They named him Ira Erasmus Mills (1867-1953).^[20] Two months later, Ira, the father, was dead of heart disease. He passed suddenly on August 12, 1867. Ira was only twenty-eight years old.^[21] Addie, after being married for only two years and giving birth to her first child only two months earlier, found herself a widowed mother.

What she and her new born did immediately after Ira's death was unclear. By 1870, she was living with her mother, Roxanny Carpenter Gulley and her father, Erasmus A. Gulley, in Addison town, Vermont. Her three year old son, Ira E., lived with her and his grandparents as well. Addie was not destitute of funds to support herself and her child. Ira must have left them something for assets as she was reported to have had \$1,000 worth of personal property in her possession as of 1870.^[22] Just as the family was adjusting to their loss, another fatal tragedy struck. Addie and Ira E. had barely returned to some degree of normalcy when Addie, age thirty-three, died from causes unknown in 1873.^[23] This left Ira Erasmus an orphan - the sole survivor of the Ira Mills' family.

More than likely, Ira E. remained living with his grandparents on his mother's side for a while after her passing. But the two of them were getting on in years - each being in their late sixties. They would have found caring full time for a toddler very challenging. Therefore, Ira E. was transferred to another, younger, family member to be raised. The 1880 Federal Census had twelve year old Ira Mills living with Addie's sister, Eleanor M. Gorham, and her husband, Edward, in Addison town, Vermont. He attended school there when it was in session and helped with the farm chores when he could. He worked along side of Edward and his son-in-law, George Roscoe, to run the farm.^[24] Eventually, Ira E. grew up and worked his way off the farm in Vermont. He ended up moving all the way across the country to California. There he became an orchardist, growing oranges. The 1940 Federal Census put the seventy-two year old citrus fruit grower in Redlands, San

Bernardino, California at 220 Brookside Avenue. He was labeled a "rancher" and owned his own home valued at \$6,000. He had finished high school but had not gone on to college.^[25] He had married Jennie Johnson (1874-1957) with whom he had sired four children. He died in 1953 and was buried in Hillside Memorial Park, Redlands, California.^[26]

NOTES

1. www.ancestry.com, Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Ira Mills.
2. Ibid., Mills Family Tree for Ira Mills.
3. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Ralph L. Mills; Ibid., Family Tree for Edwin Lawrence Sumner; Ibid., Miller Family Tree for Abigail "Abbie" Sumner.
4. Ibid., 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Ralph S. Mills.
5. Ibid., U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865 for Ira Mills; www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Vermont, p. 2, image 311620942. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Record.
6. www.ancestry.com, U.S., American Civil War Regiments, 1861-1866; Vermont in the Civil War/Units/1st Brigade/Fifth Vermont Infantry; http://civilwarintheeast.com/us_regiments_batteries/Vermont/5th_vermont.
7. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Record, Returns, p. 33, image 311620995.
8. Ibid., Compiled Service Records and Company Muster Rolls.
9. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 16, image 311620974.
10. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 33, Returns, image 311620995.
11. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 23 image 311620985.
12. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 27, image 311620989.
13. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, Company Muster Roll and Returns, images 311620991. ...992, ..994 and ...996; pp. 29, 30, 32 and 34.
14. Ibid., Compiled Service Record, p. 35, image 311620997.
15. www.ancestry.com, Mills Family Tree for Ira Mills.
16. Ibid., Miller Family Tree for Adelaide Roxana "Addie" Gulley.
17. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census for Adelaide Gulley.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908, Marriage for Ira Mills and Addie Tulley.
20. Ibid., Mills Family Tree for Ira Mills.
21. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Ira Mills.
22. Ibid., 1870 U.S. Federal Census for Ada C. Mills.
23. Ibid., Mills Family Tree for Adelaide Roxana "Addie" Gulley.
24. Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Edward Gorham.
25. Ibid., 1940 U.S. Federal Census for Ira E. Mills.
26. www.findagrave.com, Memorial #25087523.