

Edward C. Ball had a very simple, unadorned name that went well with his very down-to-earth life.

By all appearances, Edward was born in Orwell, Vermont sometime around 1812. ^[1] His parents were not named in any of the public records accessed. Neither Edward's marriage certificate nor his death records referenced who his parents were. However, he was married to Eleonor (sic) Rogers on April 11, 1831 in Orwell, Vermont. ^[2] He was about nineteen and she was thirty-one. ^[3] In 1840, he and his wife lived in Orwell. In addition to Edward and Eleanor, there were three free white persons living in the household at the time. One was a male between the ages of five and ten. The other two were white free females. One was between the ages of five and ten while the other was between the ages of fifteen and twenty. The relationship to the head of household was not revealed in the 1840 Federal Census. Edward was into agriculture, presumably as a farmer which was how he supported himself and his family. ^[4]

By 1850, thirty-eight year old Edward was still farming in Orwell. For the first time it was hinted in the Federal Census that his place of birth was New York. He and his wife had two young people named Fayette, aged eighteen and sixteen, living with them. The Fayette's might have been husband and wife. The Census labeled the eighteen year old male as a farmer, not farm worker or laborer which was the normal designation for someone who did not own the farm being worked. The Census also named him "La Fayette" as though his first name was "La" which made no sense at all. ^[5] The census takers quite often had enough trouble spelling simple Anglo-Saxon names accurately. Coming up against a French Canadian name was often far too much for them to handle reliably. An attempt was made to identify these two individuals, but without success.

On August 29, 1862, Edward decided to join the military service. Considering his age, close to fifty, and that he was chronologically outside the ideal enlistment age, it was a bit unusual thing for him to do. Edward, himself, must have had some doubts as to whether the army wanted a man of his age, because he lied to the recruiter about how old he was when he completed his enlistment papers. He said he was forty-two. It wasn't unusual for

minors to do such a thing, but not so common for someone who was over the eligible age to do so. Either Edward had a really sensitive ego around how old he was or he was very desperate to get into the service. The five feet ten inch tall recruit with a dark complexion, blue eyes and brown hair was signed up for Shoreham by E.G. Abell for nine months. Private Ball was assigned to Company D of the Fourteenth Vermont Infantry Regiment which was a company made up mostly of men from Shoreham. ^[6]

The Fourteenth Vermont only existed for a short time (they were "Ninety Day" men), but they saw hard service during their term of enlistment. At first, the Regiment was attached to those units making up the defenses around Washington, D.C. After December 11, 1862, the Fourteenth was placed on guard duty in and around Fairfax Court House where it was engaged in the repulse of Jeb Stuart's cavalry raid. From March to June, 1863, the Vermonters were stationed at Wolf Run Shoals along with other Vermont troops to guard the vital river ford on the Occoquan River. On the 25th of June, the Fourteenth was attached to the Third Division of the First Corps and began its march northward towards Gettysburg. It was a grueling march sometimes covering twenty miles a day for consecutive days at a time. Over two hundred of the Regiment were forced to drop out before every reaching Gettysburg because they could not keep up the pace. The Fourteenth arrived at Gettysburg too late to take part in the first day's action. It bivouacked in a wheat field to the left of Cemetery Ridge. Late on the second day, the Regiment was called into action to help the Thirteenth Vermont repel an attack by General A.P. Hill on the left center of the Union line. After the tremendous opening cannonade of July 3, during which several men of the Fourteenth were killed by an explosion of a battery caisson, the left flank of Pickett's long grey line could be seen advancing towards the concealed Vermonters. At less than one hundred yards distance from the enemy, the men of the Fourteenth rose at command and delivered a devastating volley into the Confederate columns. The Thirteenth and Sixteenth changed fronts and added their fire to that of the Fourteenth. The result was that Pickett's right wing was caught and crushed. After the main charge was halted and Pickett's divisions were streaming back towards Seminary Ridge, four companies of the Fourteenth, A, F, D, and I, captured most of Confederate General Wilcox's Brigade as prisoners. This independent

action taken by the Vermont troops, including Edward C. Ball, was credited by the Union high command as being crucial to the turning of Pickett's Charge. The Fourteenth was also part of the Union's pursuit of Lee's forces following the three day battle. It was during this pursuit that, on July 18, 1863, the Fourteenth was released and sent home. The Fourteenth was mustered-out on July 30, 1863.^[7]

Edward's service with the Fourteenth was pretty nondescript except as noted above. He went where the Fourteenth was ordered to go and did what the Regiment was ordered to do. After being discharged from the service, Edward went back to Orwell and his wife. He resumed his civilian life like so many other veterans had done before and after him. According to the 1870 Federal Census, a new member of the Ball family had arrived. Betsey Rogers, Edward's mother-in-law, eighty-eight, was living with them. ^[8]

Edward C. Ball was still living in Orwell when the 1880 Federal Census was taken. He was sixty-nine. This census was the first one to list his place of birth as Rhode Island. His wife's name was also changed to Ellen from Eleanor. She was now seventy-nine. Mother Rogers had left the family. ^[9]

Three years after the 1880 Census was taken, Edward, too, was gone. He died on November 3, 1883 in Orwell. Cause of death was listed as "lung fever" which today would be called pneumonia. His death certificate named Greenwich, New York as his place of birth. Edward was seventy-three years old. ^[10] One year before his death, Eleanor had died of typhoid fever. ^[11]

NOTES

1. Ancestry.com, Census under Edward C. Ball.
2. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Edward C. Ball.1850 U.S. Federal.
3. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Eleanor Ball.
4. Ibid., 1840 U.S. Federal Census under Edward C. Ball.
5. Ibid., 1850 U.S. Federal Census under Edward C. Ball.
6. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 2, image 312206276. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Records....

7. Ancestry.com, U.S., American Civil War Regiments, 1861-1866, 14th Infantry Regiment Vermont.
8. Ibid., 1870 U.S. Federal Census under Edward C. Ball.
9. Ibid., 1880 U.S. Federal Census under Edward C. Ball.
10. Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Edward C. Ball.
11. Ibid., for Eleanor Ball.