
A Hoosier Family Moves West, 1868–1895: Part I

*Edited by Rodney O. Davis**

For at least thirty years Samuel Myers (1809–1878) lived outside Fairbanks, Sullivan County, Indiana, where he was a tanner, miller, farmer, and something of a community pillar.¹ Why he chose to move to western Missouri with two of his sons after the Civil War is not known. He was sixty years old, and with the exception of a crippled youngest son his seven surviving children were grown and self-supporting. He was, to all appearances, financially secure, and a hard-working, careful conservatism was his most obvious personal attribute.

The extant Myers family correspondence reveals no particular reason for Samuel's move west so late in life, but a few surrounding circumstances provide some clues. The Civil War years brought great personal sadness to the family. Five of the seven Myers sons joined the 43rd Indiana Infantry during the conflict. William Nelson, Charles, Lewis, and George joined in 1861; Samuel Barnes in 1864.² Lewis died on October 28, 1863, while with the 43rd at Little Rock, Arkansas, leaving a wife and small daughter. John Levi, the only one of Samuel's grown sons who did not enlist, died five

* Rodney O. Davis is professor of history, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. Most of the letters reproduced below are in his possession, and he expresses his great debt to Mrs. Antoinette Davis, who saved many of the letters from destruction, to Mrs. Clella Kelley, who provided photographs and photocopies of the letters in her possession in Oklahoma, and to Ms. Kellie D. Smith, who also provided photographs. He also wishes to thank Mrs. Laura Busch, Mrs. Jean Loomer, and Mrs. Leona Schoenrock for genealogical information and Professor Douglas Wilson for graphics assistance.

¹ J. B. Johnson, ed., *History of Vernon County, Missouri* . . . (2 vols., Chicago, 1911), II, 935-36; Goodspeed Bros. & Co., pubs., *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties, State of Indiana* . . . (Chicago, 1884), 493, 510, 702.

² [William H. H. Terrell], *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1866–1869), V, 339-40, 349. This work is hereafter cited as *Report of the Adjutant General*.

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days later in Fairbanks of unknown causes. The remaining four men served until June, 1865.³

The Myers family may also have grown tired of the bickering, harassment, and resentment that developed in Sullivan County during the war. The county was particularly well known both for draft resistance and antiwar violence and for occasionally harsh civil and military crackdowns against Copperheads and Butter-nuts.⁴ If Samuel wanted to escape possible continued conflict with his neighbors, however, western Missouri, devastated by guerilla activity during the war, seems a strange location to start afresh. Bitter wartime memories must have been as strong among the remaining old citizens of Vernon County, Missouri, as in Sullivan County, but absolutely no mention is made of them in the surviving Myers family correspondence.

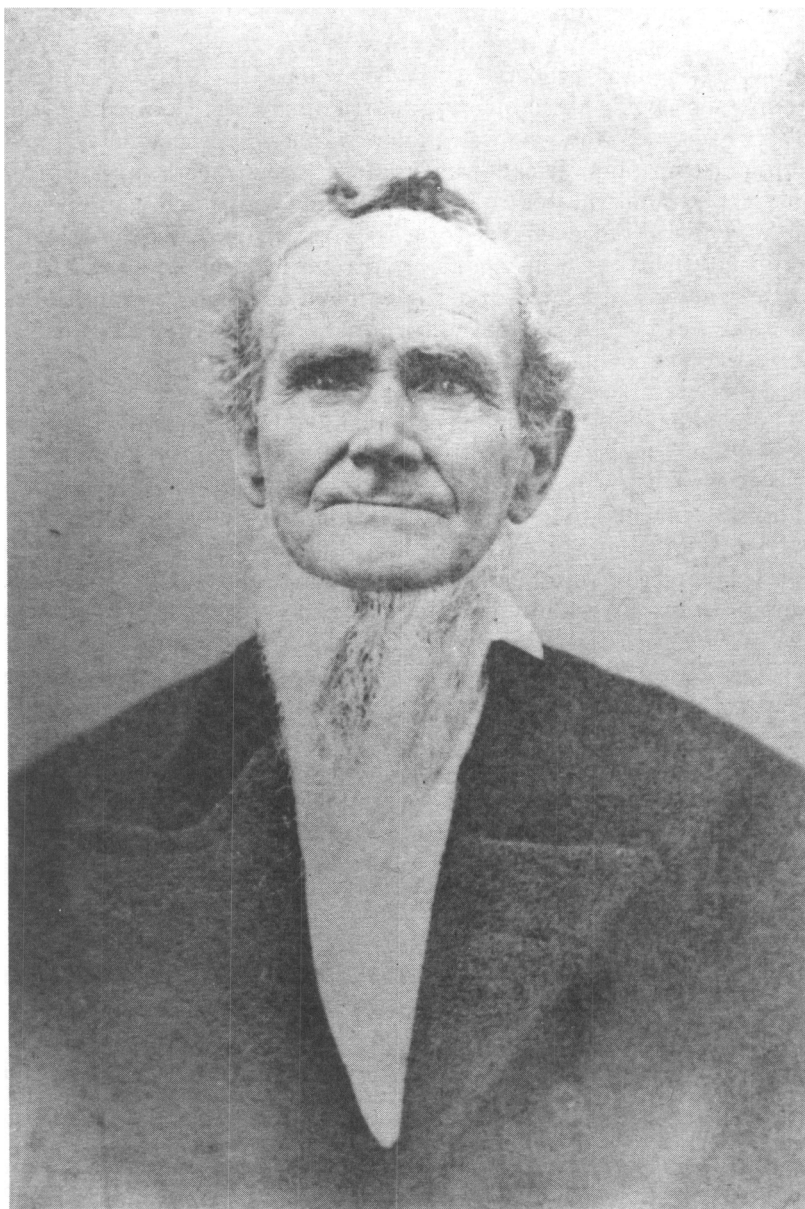
Economic self-betterment cannot have been a primary motive for Samuel's move from Sullivan County, but it probably was for his footloose war veteran sons who seem to have led the way out of Indiana. Nelson (1838–1927), for example, was buying land in Vernon County as early as February of 1868, and he was married there during the summer of that year.⁵ Charles (1844–1924) and Samuel himself were buying land there the next year, and in 1870 Samuel was in turn selling part of his Vernon County holding to his son Barnes (1848–1925). The relative cheapness of land in Missouri must have been attractive. Although Vernon County had been settled for thirty years, the Myers men were able to buy for \$7.50 to \$10.00 an acre. Comparable land in Sullivan County would have cost over twice as much and was already mostly occupied. Furthermore, several of the Vernon County sellers were absentee, and one of the purchases was at a sheriff's sale.⁶ Guerilla

³ *Ibid.*, VIII, 195; U. S., War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* . . . (128 vols., Washington, D. C., 1880–1901), ser. I, vol. XXII, part 1, pp. 468–544. This work is hereafter cited as *Official Records*. Frederick E. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, 1908), 1136; Leo E. Huff, "The Union Expedition Against Little Rock, August–September, 1863," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XXII (Autumn, 1963), 224–37; *Sullivan County Cemetery Records* (5 vols., Sullivan, Ind., 1983–1985), I, 19. Lewis and Levi are the only members of Samuel's immediate clan to be buried in Sullivan County. By 1883 all had moved further west.

⁴ *Report of the Adjutant General*, I, 284–90; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 134, 194, 201; Louise Booth, *Waiting for the Moment* (Villa Park, Calif., 1983), chaps. III, VII, esp. 41, 81.

⁵ Deed Record "K," Vernon County, Missouri, pp. 26–26, 497, Vernon County Courthouse, Nevada, Missouri; Nadine Hodges and Mrs. Howard A. Woodruff, comps., "Vernon County, Missouri, Marriage Book 'A,' 1855–1869," *Missouri Pioneers, County and Genealogical Records* (Kansas City, Mo., 1973), XX, 81.

⁶ Deed Record "L," Vernon County, Missouri, p. 91, Vernon County Courthouse, Nevada, Missouri; Deed Record "P," pp. 187, 194, *ibid.*; Deed Record "R," p. 89, *ibid.*; Deed Record "U," p. 136, *ibid.* The Myerses may also have purchased land in Missouri because they were somewhat familiar with it, the 43rd Indiana having served there during the war. *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 429–30.



SAMUEL MYERS
1873

Courtesy Rodney O. Davis.



MARGARET MYERS
1870s

Courtesy Clella Kelley.

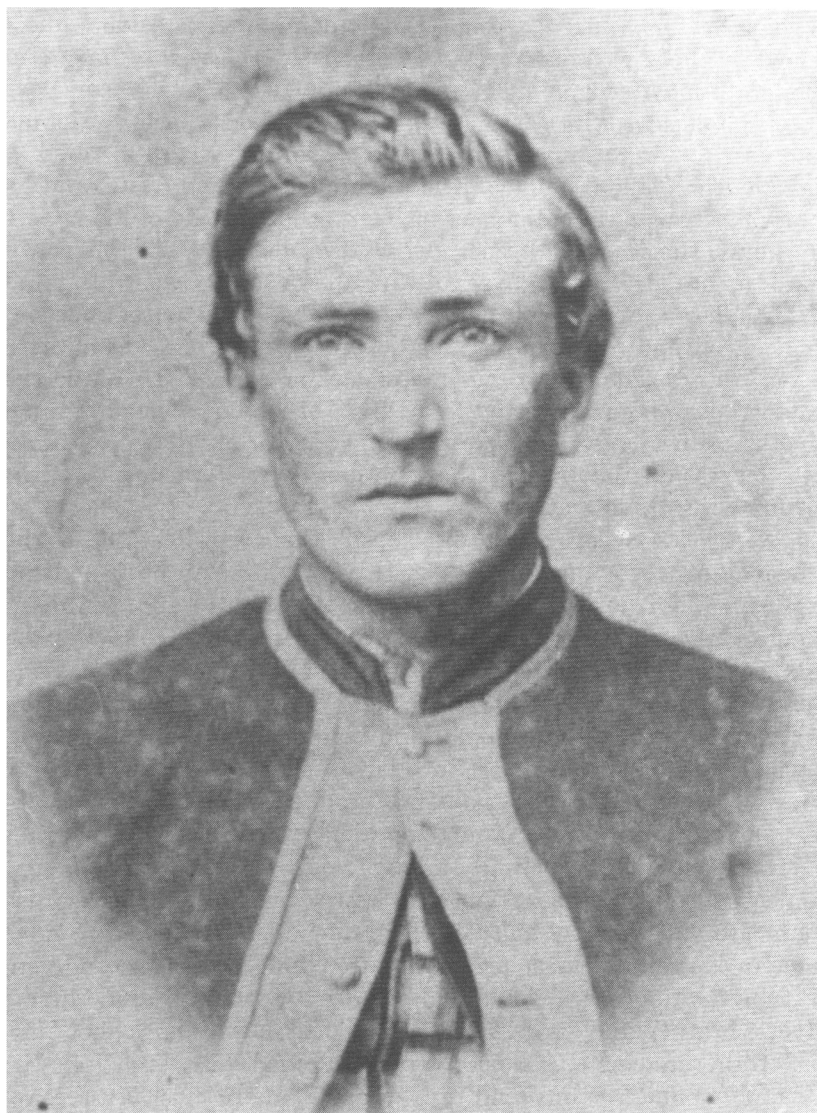
warfare had laid waste to much of the county during the war. Although most land had already been cleared or broken, farm buildings and fences had been ruined, and wide areas were simply depopulated. After the Civil War, Vernon County offered many of the advantages and fewer of the liabilities of new land further west, where the climate was also likely to be drier. Postwar recovery also proved to be quick. The county's first railroad was built into Nevada, the county seat, in the fall of 1870.⁷

Of the Myers land buyers, Samuel, his wife, Margaret (1816–1892), and their crippled son, Milton (1858–1877), apparently made the initial move to Vernon County along with Nelson and his wife, Lucy, and Barnes. Charles remained in Sullivan with his wife, Isabel (Bell), and their growing family, as did the Myers daughters, Margaret, or Maggie (1852–1943), who married Jacob Harris in the summer of 1869 while her family was preparing to depart, and Mary (1846–1932), who had married John Davis earlier. Of another son, George (1834–1908), much less is known, for no letters to or from him survive although he is occasionally mentioned in the correspondence.

The Myers family letters were discovered in 1984 in Newton, Kansas, in a family trunk that had belonged to Mary Myers Davis. They were augmented in the spring of 1986 by copies of other letters in the possession of Mrs. Clella Kelley of Ralston, Oklahoma, a granddaughter of Margaret Myers Harris. The letters were written back and forth between the Myers parents and their children—all of whom eventually left Sullivan County for such destinations as Missouri, central and western Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma Territory—and among the children. The women of the extended family were especially sensitive to the loss of physical proximity, and they were very concerned about staying in touch, however frustrated they were about the limits of the written, as opposed to the spoken, word. Twenty-four years are covered by the letters, by the end of which time the family's dispersal was complete.

In addition to detailing the mundane activities of late nineteenth-century midwestern farm life, the Myers correspondence records instances of rather poignant domestic drama. Almost half the letters are by women and touch on such classic rural and frontier women's concerns as isolation, illness, excessive work, bereavement, and exasperation with spouses. Margaret, Samuel Myers's wife, was especially plagued with homesickness; a move late in life

⁷ *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXII, part 2, pp. 78–82; *History of Vernon County, Missouri* . . . (St. Louis, 1887), 213–361; Richard S. Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy: Guerilla Warfare in the West, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge, 1958), 126, 147, *passim*; Albert Castel, "Order No. 11 and the Civil War on the Border," *Missouri Historical Review*, LVII (July, 1963), 357–68.



CHARLES MYERS
COMPANY D, 43RD INDIANA INFANTRY

Courtesy Kellie D. Smith

and what amounted to pioneering afterward were obviously very disturbing to her. Her daughter Maggie, however, spoke out even more bitterly about moving, not realizing how much more of it was to come for her. Indeed, although male dominance is seldom questioned by these women, Maggie in this case professed to have had enough of moving; her husband would have to go by himself next time, she declared. Milton Myers, Samuel and Margaret's crippled youngest son, is author of a dozen of the letters. Before he died at the age of nineteen, he had little to do but read and write, and he sometimes was an amanuensis for his parents. Some of his letters are gems, the ruefully humorous observations of a shrewd youth matured by adversity. Physically hampered as he was, his mind nevertheless ranged much farther than those of his parents or siblings. Environmental and economic problems impinged on these letter writers. The hard times following the Panic of 1873 and the grasshopper plague the next year, both of which affected Samuel Myers, seem to have been repeated by the drought, crop failure, and depression that drove Charlie Myers out of western Kansas seventeen years later.

A striking aspect of these letters is their reaffirmation of the tendency of westering families to travel in kinship or friendship groups,⁸ and frontier mobility is also a general and dominant theme. Jake and Maggie Harris relocated four times during the course of these letters, as did Nelson and Lucy Myers. Charles and Bell Myers moved at least three times. When Samuel Myers went west, he moved with two grown and able-bodied sons, and the letters also suggest that other Sullivan County residents made the trip to Vernon County at the same time. One of Samuel's daughters and her family were to come on to Missouri from Indiana after Samuel's death. John and Mary Davis migrated to Harvey County, Kansas, through a connection with a brother of Jacob Harris, also from Sullivan County, and Charles and Bell Myers seem to have come to the same Kansas area soon after. Indeed these second-generation families were doubly intermarried; Charles and Maggie Myers, brother and sister, were married to Jacob and Isabel Harris, brother and sister. Charles Myers and his family later followed a daughter and her husband to Nebraska, where most of them remained. The importance of these family ties is revealed not only in efforts to remain in physical contact by moving together but also by rather frequent visits, much exchanging of gifts—even of orchard produce—and correspondence among family members even into the third generation. Though separated by great distance, Samuel Myers's grandchildren were writing to one another very early.

⁸ See John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), 150-55.

The Myers correspondence contains little in the way of speculation or self-examination on the part of the writers; the letters, in fact, seldom rise above the level of narrative. Rather infrequently is even an opinion ventured. Family health, making a living, and nurturing children were dominant considerations in these Hoosier migrants' lives. Not even spiritual concerns seem to have been terribly important to them. For instance, even as the cancer that was to kill him advanced and as the pain became increasingly difficult to bear, Samuel Myers repeatedly evinced a sadly stoic preoccupation with the everyday world rather than with such things as the inevitability of divine rewards and punishments. Churchgoing was obviously of considerable, albeit occasional, significance, especially to Maggie and Florence Harris, but there is much less evidence that religious faith served as an ongoing influence on life. What is perhaps as important as the content of the correspondence, however, is the distinctive and even delightful voice that is common to several of the writers; their letters provide an expression of Hoosier discourse often perfectly conveyed by the writers' phonetic misspellings. Furthermore, most of the letters are utterly uninhibited; their writers seem to take for granted the existence of like-minded readers. A frankness and directness characterize them all.⁹

⁹ For many insights into private nineteenth century letters, see Elizabeth Hampsten, *Read This Only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880-1910* (Bloomington, 1982).

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Mo. May 28th 1871¹

Dear Daughter

We received your letter of the 25 to day and was glad to hear from you that you are all well we are all about but not verry well nor verry sick you wanted to know how I got along a making soap I have not made any yet nor do not know that I shall you say that every thing looks so well at home that I would want to stay but I have not got homesick yet I am verry well satisfied yet althow we are not situated verry well yet thing look verry well you want know about my chickens I have 10 hens and 3 chickens they do not doo well at all We havent got any cow yet nor do not know as we will get one or not they are verry scarce and verry dear we have one pig and had hard work to get it I want you to wright as soon as you get this and let me know how you all are and how Charles and Bell is and Maggy is and tell them to right to me and I would like to hear from all of my old neighbors are how Marry Wear is and what has become of Frank Fordice and doctor Harper

.....

Ma[rgaret] Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada city nov the 15th 1871

Dear Sister Mary

I set down to anser that leter you wrote me Sum 3 month ago wich I neglected to anser it was not lost as you Suposed we got

¹ In order to allow the correspondents to speak for themselves, the Myers family letters that follow have been minimally edited. Spelling, grammar, and syntax have been transcribed exactly as written. Although an attempt was made to determine the punctuation intended by each writer, it was virtually impossible to distinguish among commas, periods, pen rests, and blots. In addition, various family members used seemingly indiscriminate dashes, ditto marks, and lines of dots both within and at the end of sentences. Frequently there was no punctuation at all. In order to facilitate reading and avoid confusion, double spaces have been inserted at what seemed appropriate places throughout the letters whether or not any kind of punctuation appeared, and incomprehensible commas, equal signs, ditto marks, etc., have for the most part been ignored. Decisions concerning capitalization were also at times necessarily arbitrary, as were decisions regarding "i's" and "e's," "o's," "u's," and "a's." Spacing of headings, salutations, and closings and of paragraphs has been standardized. Obviously unintentional repetitions have been omitted. A three- or four-dot ellipsis indicates omission of a few words or sentences; a line of dots indicates omission of one or more paragraphs. What few lengthy omissions there are have been of seemingly marginal material. Information crowded in at the top or sides of the letters has usually been inserted as a postscript. Illegible words or phrases have been so indicated in brackets, and questionable transcriptions are followed by a bracketed question mark. An attempt has been made to identify all family members—and as many other individuals as possible—to whom there is reference in the letters. Birth and death dates were taken from family Bibles and cemetery records or inferred from federal census manuscript records.

your letter of the 9 yesterday and was very glad to here from you wee are all well Ma and Maggie² has gon a viston up to Mises Clicks and Pa and the boys is up to the stable abilden barn and I am by my Self so I thot I wold write you a leter well Mary hav you a cow you never said that you had & I wold lik to no our cow has gon nerley dry [five lines are obscured by a tear] gather corn well Mary Ma Says that She wants you to when you write to tel her how Ant Annie McKee is and all So Mary Ann Wear Jane Earnest & Carie Drak is and Rachel & Sary.³ I got a leter from Emma last weak pa wants to wrte Som So no more at preasant.

Milton Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada April the 19 72

Dear Daughter

It is with much pleasure that I sit down to right you a few lines to let you know how we all are at this time

Your Father is well and verry busy now seting out his shrub-ery

Milton is well at this time he had a fall that hurt him som but has got over it

Now for my Self I haint verry well I have too much work to do I hav got my soap made but have not got the house cleand yet and do not know when I will

Mary I want you to rite and let me know how you all are and all of the old neighbors are that is left of them

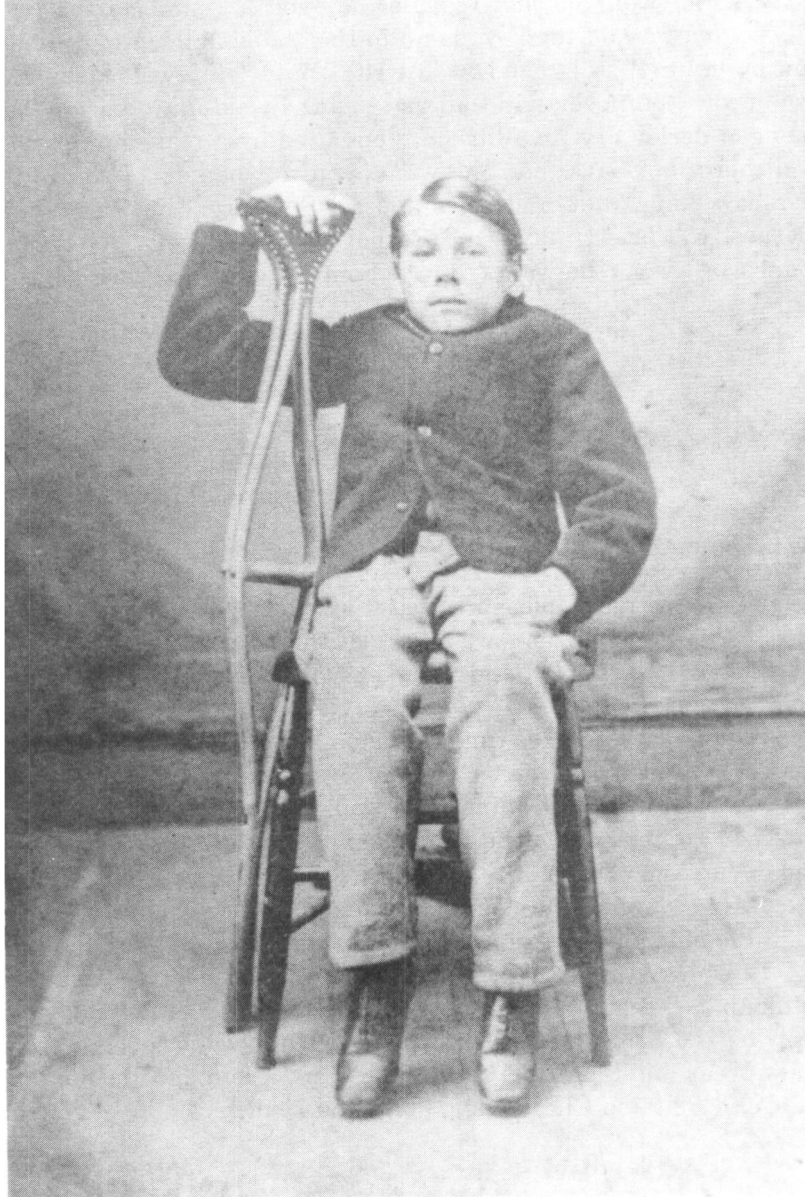
Tell Mrs Earnest that I would like to see her very much I think that she might come out and see us she has not much to keep her at home it would not cost much I want to hear from Mary Wear and Susy and Carry Drake and Clem and Rachel and Sady and Bell and Charley and John and Homer⁴ . . .

Margaret Myers

² Maggie and Jake Harris had a small daughter, Alice, who died in October, 1871, at the age of two. She is buried in Nevada, apparently having died at the time of this visit of the Harrises to Missouri.

³ Drake is a common surname in Fairbanks Township, Sullivan County, Indiana. Rachel and "Sady" or "Sary" were the widow and daughter of Lewis Myers, who died at Little Rock with the 43rd Indiana Infantry.

⁴ "Clem" is probably Martha Clementine Reynolds, who married Barnes Myers in 1876. Homer Davis was the older son of John and Mary Myers Davis. Frequently mentioned, he was about five years of age when this letter was written.



MILTON MYERS
1873

Courtesy Rodney O. Davis.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

[1872?]

Dear Children

I sit down to rite you a few lines in anser to your letter we are all well at this time we have all had a bad cold this winter I heard of Mary Wears death and was verry sorry that I will never see her again and aunt Irma [?] too has died and left us it looks like all of our old friends are dying of and leaveing us behin.

Well Mary I want to know how you and family are and Charles and family and Mag is and if you are coming out to see us ever again I tooock [look] every time the cars come in if any one has come but are disapointed I would like verry mutch to see sone of you again I would like to hear from George and his children wonce more I send my love to you all and to my friends also

Good by Mary for this time I hope to see you sometime again . . .

Your Mother Margaret Myers

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada Dec 22d 1872 M.O.

Dear Daughter

We received your letter of the 13th inst in due time and was glad to hear from you all we had come to the conclution that you all had concluded to quit writing to us we are all in good helth at present my helth is better this winter then it has been for many years Milton can go a little on his Croches when the wether will admit of it Nelson is Still Complaing Som but has not had a Chill for Some days. The wither is quiet Cold for the last few days and the snow is about six inches deep. The Bible that you Spoke of was our family Bible and I left it with George I wish Mr. Drake would let you have it, as it has our family Record in it. Times is very hard hear money scarce and produce low in price. . . .

We would like you would write as soon as you git this and let us know how Mrs McKee is gitting and how the people are jenerlee If you have any Chance to Send by Some purson Coming out hear Send the catalpha Seed and also I want Some grafts from the Father Abraham apple tree in the McKee orched and Some of the Fall apple in the North part of the old garden at Mrs. Drakes & the Hoop apple if you dont recolect wher the apples git Mary or John they will know they Should not be cutted you was redy to Send then Cut them and rap them up in a damp wollen cloth with paper round out side if you dont have a Chance of Send-

ing by Some purson, I will let you know in time and have you Send them by Express

I have not collect your plow money but as Soon as I do I will Send it Inclosed you will find a money order for \$53.00 payable at Terre Haute which is for your wagon you will have to Identify your Self to Mr. Bennett unless he is acquainted with you

I remain yours Truly

Saml. Myers

(The fall apple I speak of was called Grand mother apples)

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Missouri jan the 19th 1873

Dear Sister Mary

you Said Mother and me had not answered your leter and I thot I wold write to you we are all well at preasant but we have all had the epizootic very bad or a very bad coald we have very coald weather at preasant and have had for three weeks and lots of snow and rain the horses all have the epizootic Nelsons and ourn has it very bad but we think it will not hurt them much⁵ Well Mary how do you get along theas long evenings dont you get lonsum out in the wods I get lonsum Siting in the hous and wold like to see you and have a big talk with you Mary I saw in the paper that the folks in Fairbanks has bin cuting each other up with brickbats and carven knives and one thing and another

how did this hapen and who is this monk that got carved and is he much hurt and what have they don with Millard Sharples and have you burried Mrs Sharples if not I suppose you will soon well Mary did you rais some sweet potatoes from the seed Jake got out here we have had plenty all winter I tel you they are likon I wish you was out here to get Some Mary how does Jake and Magie get along theas hard tims and what does Jake do I wold like to see Mags baby⁶ tel Magy I will write to her next well Mary how did you like my picture I mus now Stop Mother wants to write Some

from your nocount Brother, Milton Myers to his Sister,
Mary Davis . . .

⁵ "Epizootic" is a word used rather widely throughout southern Indiana to mean a general ailment or misery. In fact, during the winter of 1872-1873 horses in southern Indiana and apparently in Missouri suffered from an epidemic of what was called "the epizootic." See *Terre Haute Evening Gazette*, November-December, 1872, January, 1873.

⁶ Mary Florence ("Foncie" or "Ponnie") Harris was Jake's and Maggie's first child to live.

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada M.O. March 29th 1873.

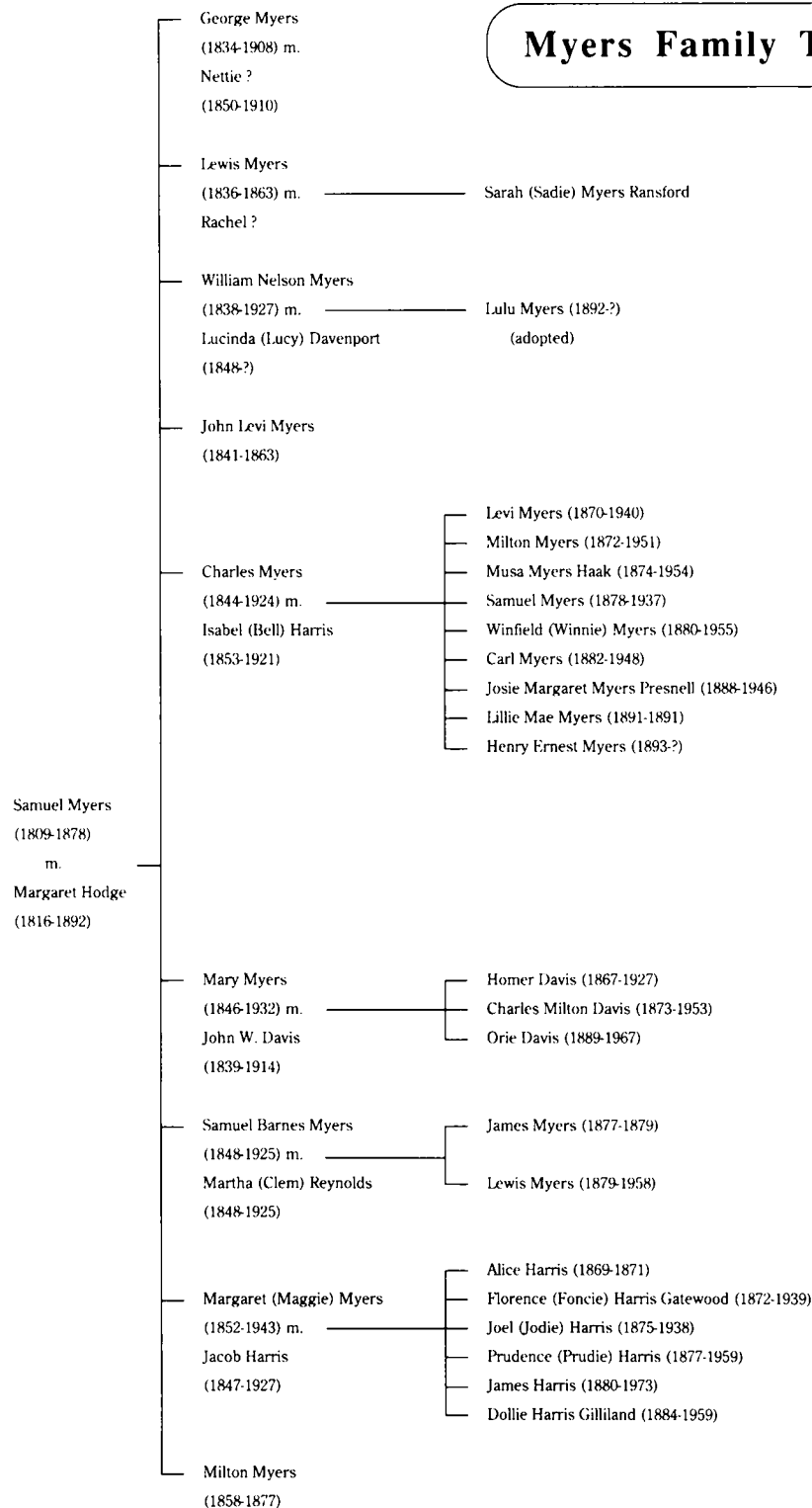
Dear daughter

We have not heard from you for some time I thought I would write to you this morning and let you know how we are getting along. I have been sick but am now about recovered your mother is just getting over a bad spell of sick head ache Barns has been cooking yesterday and will have to get breakfast this morning Milton has been chiling a little but is well again Nelson and Lucy are well Nelson has been sick all winter has not been able to do the feeding until lately. Scott Carr is still living with him and will likely stay there this summer we have a Mr. Shumaker from near Middletown formerly, but from Northern Kansas here he lives in the Larell [?] house on the Logan farm has a wife and two children his wife was a Thompson his father used to live East of Fairbanks Shumaker is a son of H. A. Shoemaker an old acquaintance of ours. We have had a very cold spell this week and has spoiled some things in the garden your acquaintances are all well as far as I know. Our wheat looks well at present we have twenty two acres in. times is very hard and money can not be had for anything scarcely Well Jacob I expect you need your money for your plows but I have not been able to pay it myself or I would have sent it to you and waited on Nelson I sold the plow to Shepley and Nelson was to pay for it and the one he got of you but he has been sick all winter his sickness was caused by an over heat fighting the fire in the fall the fire got in his corn field and came very near burning him up and he is hard run to keep up he bought 50 head of cows and paid his crop on them he has about 20 calves he has a good many potatoes to sell and think they will fetch the money as soon as I get it I will send it. Maga I wish as soon as you get this letter you would send me the Catalpa seeds by mail shell them out of the pods and make a little square sack of factory just large enough to hold them and sow them up.⁷ past a piece of paper on the side of the sack and direct them to me. I sent John for the grafts and I have got them but John did not write anything with them in the way of an answer to my letter Maga I want you to write as soon as you can and let us know the news. what is Jake doing. how is Charles and his family and all the connection I have wrote to Charles two letters but he don't write to us the reason why he don't answer my letters I don't know . . .

I Remain your truly Saml. Myers . . .

⁷ "Factory" is another word for unbleached muslin.

Myers Family Tree



[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Missouri April the 14th 1873

Dear Sister

Mary we ricieved your kind and welcom leter night before last and was glad to here from you and was glad to here that you was well but was sory to here that Magy was not well Mother Says She [wishes] Magy was out here to our hous so She could take care of her I doent se why Jake couldnot send her for you say he does not Stay at home and is peddling* when She is Sick tel him to send hir it wold do Magy good and it wold not coest much to bring her out here we do not have much Sic [torn] is the worst Docter Churchil has it very bad and Mr Cofmen litel girl has it is all that I no about we had the coeldist wether week before last the Snow was 8 inches deep and to days and nights we had three hens a siting and onley had too chickins hatched

Mary you wanted to no if we was cuming out to se you this Sumer I am a fraid not we are like you not got the stamps or we wold we wold like to cum back on avisot if we had I wold like to se Magys and Rachel litel girls as well as you tel Sary to if she noes how to write to her oeld Uncel if she haint forgot mee well Mary does Charley lieve in Fairbanks or does he live in Sullivan tel him to write and Send me Bell and his boys pictyurr and Mary hav you got Homers pichure takin if you hav I wish you wold send one to me. how do like the new Story in the ledger⁹ we got the money and pa he got the grafts John sent him all rite Barney is at home and is well [torn] [Sc]ot Carr is Stil Staying at Nelsons I was over their the other week and Staye thre days Mary I wish you lived cloest here So I could cum and se you ever week we beat you in the garden line we have Peas Lettys and radishes up and lots of pie plant [illegible] and goin to have lots more

I must Stop Mother Says you must write soon and tell her how Magy is. I must write to Homer or their will be a fus So good by write Soon

from your Broken bache Brother Milton

* In the 1880 manuscript federal census for Fairbanks Township, Sullivan County, Indiana, Jacob Harris's occupation is listed as "huckster." U.S., Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedules for Sullivan County, Indiana.

⁹ The *Ledger* to which Milton frequently refers has not been identified. A letter from Samuel Myers to Jacob and Margaret Harris dated August 9, 1877, refers to a Nevada *Ledger*, but it seems unlikely that this newspaper could be the one about which Milton writes.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City, Missouri March 27th 1874

Dear Sister

I once more take my old goos quill up to drop you a few lins to let you no that I hav not forgot my old Sister yet and am in hopes that you will not forget me your ugly little Brother. I hav not herd from you for so long that I did not no but you had

We are all well at the preasant time. I hav been complaining with my back but it is better

we are having a Spell of weather now that is very disagreeable it is cold & rainy and I hav not got any thing to read and I am awful lonsum. it is to bad to be out a dors I wish you was here or I was back their. So we could hav a talk and would not I hav a big time with that Smasher of a boy Magy wrote to me a bout it not long ago. She Sade it was Awful big. you Said you had named it after me I am not pleased about it. you wold not name Homer what I wanted you to. but I will get him Sumthing one of thoes days. a pair of britches or some thing Charls Milton Davis.¹⁰ What a name. it ought to be a big boy with Such a name as that has Charley got him anything yet for his name if I was cloest to your hous I wold get him lots of thing but I cant the way it is I wish I could

.....
Pa is fensing forty Akers of land in front of the hous this Spring he will get it done in too weeks if nothin hapens Mary where is Sary Myers Pa and me wants to Send her our pichure but doent no how to go a bout it I want you to write and let us no how She is &c when did you here from Emma let us no about her also I want you to write all the News you can think of and tell us of Charley and Bell and all of the old frends Mother Says that you must not get out of humor with her for not writing She has So much work to do that when She gets done She doent feel like writ-ing So I write for her She Says she wold like to hav you to cum to see her this Sumer if you could for She wold like to see you She Sends her lov to all and her Compliments to Mrs. Ernest Mrs Susan Debound Mrs Harris and to all other friends

Nelson and Lucy is well or Nelson is Lucy is complaining a good deal they hav built them a citchen to the hous this spring ...

love to all good By From your little ugly Brother

Milton Myers to his Sister Mary Davis

P.S. I am goin to send a receipt for makin preservs out of California Citrus they the best you ever saw

¹⁰ Charles Milton Davis, born in August, 1873, was named for two of his Myers uncles.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City July the 18th 1874

Dear Sister Mary

.....
I did think I wold not write to you till you wrote to me, but I could not Stand it any longer. *Mary Why doent you write . . .* We are all well as usel. Nelson has been very Sick but he is well now. he had the infilamation (bad Speling) of the bowels. he was Sick too weeks, and Magie's litle girl has the hooping cough, but not very bad.

We are having lots of rain now it has rained ever day or So for the last week I See by the Sullivan paper that you are having quite a dry Spell back their write and let us no if you hav had rain if you need Some very bad we will Send you Some in a letter for we hav more than we need

Well Mary how is Charls Milton Davis esqr geting along Magie Says it is a whopper She also Says you talk of cuming to See us this fall if you do let us no the time so we can go to the Stashion after you I wish you could come and I doent see no reson why you canot then I wold get to See Charley

we will have lots of graps but our blackberys doent amount to much Some peaches anuf for our one [own] use I wish you could See our graps we hav over 150 bairing vins and they will hav 15 or 20 pounds of graps each we will hav lots of Sweet potatoes Father has about 1200 plants out and Barns has Same

if you come Homer can get all the Sweet potatoes he can eat and save to take home

tell Homer that I was well pleased with his preasants he sent me I will Send him Som thing if I can find any thing I think will pleas him. I am very much a thank you for the truck you Sent me for a waist but I doent wair waists now¹¹ it will make me a nice Jacket I wish had Somthing to send you but I hav not

Mother Says She is well pleased with her new dress and to tell John that She is much obliged to him and She Says She is obliged to you for that what do you call it you Sent her I will do as Homer used to Say I will Save my money and buy you somthing one of thoes days I must Stop for Magie Says She will write Some good By gieve my Spectacle to John write Soon tell us how Charley is

from your Brother Milty Myers

Well Mary I thought I would write you a few lines to let you

¹¹ Milton uses the word "truck" to mean cloth or yard goods rather than "heterogeneous small articles usually of small value," which is a more general definition. A "waist" is a child's undergarment to which other undergarments can be attached. Milton, who was humpbacked, might possibly have had to wear waists longer than other children.

no how we are the baby hant very well it has the dirier very bad and the Hooping cough has taking hir down Consideribal but hir cough is better now She had the chills last week but I have them broke on hir now we have a good rain yesterday Mary I hant herd from home since I left. thay think that Jake would go craisy if I come out here I dont think he is hirting him Self very much or he would write to no how we was I dont think he will git any more letters. Mary I want you to write and let me no if any of the children has the Hooping cough if you see Jake tell him I dont no when I will come home not till I here from him any way

[Maggie]

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada City M.O. Oct 10 1874

Dear Sister

I hav wated, and, wated, for a letter from you, but It does not come. I do wish you wold write and let me no what is the matter.

We are all well except bad colds and we all eat yet. I am in hopes you are able to do the Same thing, and that Florance is well and geting fat as a little pig.

Well Maggie, I am goin to School at Nevada. I hav went one week and I take *larning* fast. I Study Spelling—reading—Arithmetic—and geography. Lon is goin with me—he is up Stairs and I am down our Teacher Says that he will send me up Stares before the term is out. Oh; I expect to bee of Some consequences yet. See if I doent Well a nuff of School now for the NEWs first Nelson and Lucie are gone to Kansas on a look out for a home and do not expect to be back for three weeks yet. they have been gon too weeks. I got a letter from Lucie last week they are well. they are at a town cawled Wichita

News 2

Louisa Foster is no more—She is married to a man by the name of Warrington he is a farmer about fifty years old I Should guess he has no farm but rents. has too teams—and is a widdower, but his children is all Married. this discription is prety well mixed up you will think but I am in a hurry for this is Saturday and I hav lots to do

News 3

Ady Litle is living with her old man again all right till he gets drunk then She will run off again

Well Maggie I Suppose Mary has give up coming to See us. tell her if She canot come to write to us and let us no if She has forgot us or not. we hav not got a letter from Mary for over a year. I want you to tell me all about how Mary homer Charley and all the oth-

ers are—and doent ferget the little black eyed girl that I like So well. tell us all about her. what She Says, and, tell her about Uncle Milty the little boy that is gon, you kiss her for me

Well. Well. What will I Say next Well, Maggie we had lots of peaches we hav caned 9 gallons & dryed most too bushels we did not hav one third as meny as we wold if the grass hoppers had not come¹² the grass hoppers come down So thick that the ground was covered and they eat them (the peaches) up as fast as they got ripe the hogs and chickens had lots of fun catchen them (the grass hoppers) and got fat

There is very litle wheat Seen on the account of them. they will eat any thing from a fence rale to a grind stone, they are about all gon now and So is ever thing elce. Well I will Stop and let you finish for it is not my time I will expect too letters from you in too days I must Stop to learn my geography lesson for monday Write Soon and tell us all about all the folks tell me hav you Seen Emma Myers yet what is She doing where is She hav you Seen Sarah.

Good By this time love to all

from your loving Brother Milty Myers

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada M.O. Oct 28th 1872.¹³

Dear daughter

I received you kind letter of the 9th inst; and was glad to hear from you but was very sory to hear that Jacob and Florance have been sick I hope this letter will find you all well. Maga it will be out of the queson for us to com and make the visit you speak of this fall. Milton is going to school and if he is able I dont want him to miss a day. I take him to school in the morning and fetch him back in the evening. we are all well as common. Times is very hard money scearce and we have nothing to sell. Barns thrashed his wheat last week he had 426 Bushels it weighs 61 lbs per bushel

The Grass hoppers have all left or nearly so they destroyed about half our Peach crop and eat nearly every thing up. we have plenty of Sweet potatoes but no Irish potatoes, no corn to amount

¹² In the summer of 1874 grasshoppers swarmed into Missouri from farther west. They stripped the foliage from trees and ate the blades of corn; wheat, oats, and grass were devoured. The grasshoppers covered the floors of houses and filled drawers and cupboards. Worse, they deposited their eggs for an even more destructive campaign the following year. Howard L. Conard, *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri* . . . (6 vols., New York, 1901), III, 89.

¹³ Internal evidence strongly suggests that this letter was written in 1874. Although a two-year discrepancy seems rather large, it is assumed that Samuel Myers wrote the date incorrectly.



LUCY MYERS
1870s

Courtesy Clella Kelley.



NELSON MYERS
1873

Courtesy Clella Kelley.

to any thing, from two to three bushels nubens [nubbins] to the acre how our horses will git along this winter I dont know to Sum the whole mater up I have lost my whole Summers work and have nothing to pay my hired hand with, but there is no use to complain about it. it is so and we can not help it. There is hundreds of famleys in a wors conditions then we are Give our respects to all write soon.

So Faireyouwell all

Saml. Myers

P.S. Milton is learning fast and is much respected by the School Teachers

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada M. O. April 17th 1875

To Margaret Harris and famley connections

Dear children

I received a letter from you (Maga) and one from Mary yours is dated the 2d day of april & Marys is dated the 4th inst. Milton was quet proud of the present you sent him and hopes he may git able to return the complement. He is very little better then when I last wrote Some nights he rest better than he did a month back but cant help himself any better poor fellow he is nothing but a sceliton Still he talks and is liveley through the day but when night comes he has no peace cant lay in one posision over 10 or 15 minets unless he goes to sleep which lasts from 15 minets to an hour his sleep and resting throught the day is a good eale [good deal] the Same except not so sevear pain as night The pain is in his neck Sholders and hump as he calls it that is between the Sholders but no Swelling at eather place we scareley ever moove him but he hollows with pain. you perposed use Turpentine we are appling it at presant and it has a good affect at the time of the sevear spell of Pain but nothing more we will continue it for a fair triel, all our hopes is worm wether may posible make a change on him when it comes

I am not well my self I have worked hard and lost my rest until I am wore out not able to scareley go your mother is in the same fix Mrs Briley dose the washing for your Mother I hope this letter will find you all injoying good helth nothing more at presant. We have very cold wether for the time of year the last two nights 15 & 16 ins[t] has been very frosty. Peach trees in full bloom write soon our best respects to all

Yours Truly,
Saml Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Missouri July 4 1875

Dear Sister Mary

I once more try to write to you but it is hard work, I have to hold my head up with one hand while I write with the other, and this is my first writing pretty shakey I hope though, I will be better Some day. (cannot make my pencil mark I will finish with pen) Mary I have had a hard time. it is Six months Since I have been away from the house, part of the time I could not Shut my hands or feed my Self. I do not expect I ever *will* walk again my leg is drawed up So.

I want you to come out to See me this Summer. for do not expect I will be able to come to See you Nelson and Lucy are talking of coming to see us this fall. and I wish you all would be here together.

I want to see the Boys as well as you. Mary you need not be afraid of Starving. we have Something to eat as well as you. we have had peas and potatoes for three weeks. and Some beans and beets. and we will have lots of grapes Well now about them Ledgers, Mary you need not Send any more. I have been getting them at town, and can get them three weeks earlier, which is better than to wait so long—we *had* read all the papers before you Sent them

we will Send you Some Weeklys which I like better than the Ledger. I must Stop, I am tired, Pa will finish. I Send Love to all the family

Good By from your Brother Milton Myers

come and we will have fried grasshoppers.

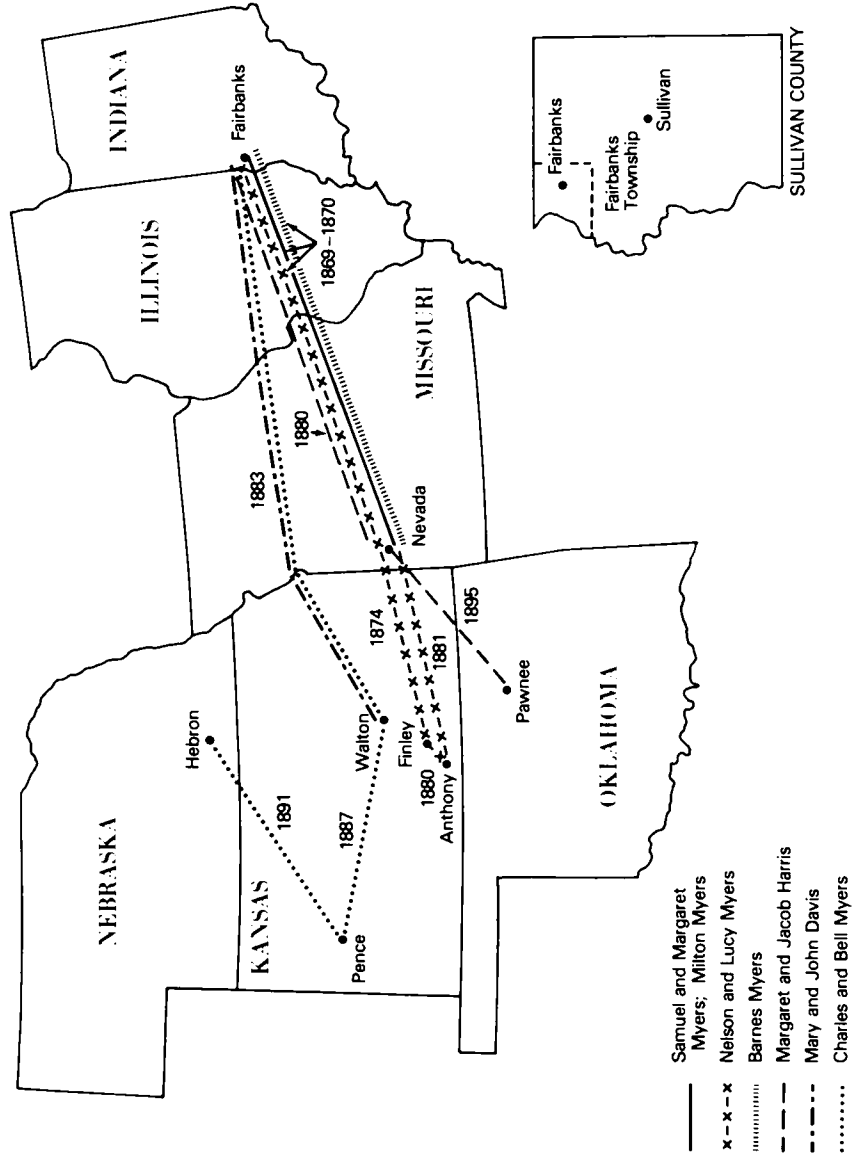
[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City, Missouri. Oct, 21 first [?] 1875

Dear Sister Mary,

I once more, take the opportunity of dropping you a few lines in answer to a letter, you wrote to Pa. his hands is So Sore, that he cannot write, So I will write for him. he has had a Spell of the chills. Since you was here, and after he got them broke, his blood being out of order, his hands got Sore. his lip is about like it was, when you was here. my neck is Still on the rise and looks like it would break pretty Soon or have to be opened; Mother, and Barney, are both well; and he is busy haling up the winter wood I got a letter from Lucy last week She Said that Nelson had a chill, ever day on the road but had them broke now, they were Six days on the trip

MIGRATIONS (WITH APPROXIMATE DATES) OF VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE SAMUEL MYERS FAMILY



well Mary, I, wish you, and Charley; had Some of our Sweet potatoes. Pa, has been diging ours, there will be over twenty bushels of them. we will have to keep them over winter, as there is no Sale for them at this time of the year.

Mary I want you to write to me as Soon as you get this, and let us know about the helth of the connection. and if jim Anderson, is any better the helth here is a great deal better than it was when you was here but a great many has the chills yet. the big meeting up to Mr Click's passed of nicely. we didnot go. that is non *but Mother went. She attendid all the time.*

Mother wants to know how Aunt Polina, Charley, and Maggie, liked the truck She Sent them, and allso how Rachel and family is geting.

Mary we have not Seen any thing of that box you alls was goin to Send us. if you have not Sent it when you get this, box up Charley, and Send him along, for Grandma has no one to hurry her up, when She is geting diner.

tell Homer he must learn to write. So he can write to me

Tell John that if I ever get able to come to Indiana, I expect to thrash him, for not leting you Stay longer he got Sick just a purpose to get you to come home. how did Homer like the puzzle I Sent him. has he lerned to put it togather yet. tell Maggie if her children gets well So I can for her to write to me, *or XXXX*

well Mary I, must Stop, for this time, give my respect to John. tell him not to get uneasy as I dont expect I will ever come you moest write, Soon and gieve us all the news.

Good By from your Brother Milton Myers
(the little boy with the big hed)

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada. Missouri. Nov. 25. 1875.

Mornin. to you Magggg

I thot being Pa was goin to write that I would write Some two. I was much pleased with the books you Sent me and only wish there had been more of them. you must tell Josh that I am much obliged to him and hope Some day to repay his kindness. I liked the Hoosher School master the best. and I fell in love with Miranda Meanss first Sight,¹⁴ but what under the Sun poseded you to Send that litle Book. I have been plaging Barney over it. pretending that

¹⁴ Edward Eggleston, *The Hoosier School-Master: A Novel* (1871; Bloomington, 1974). Since Eggleston described Mirandy Means, one of the antagonists in his novel, as "the richest, the ugliest, the silliest, the coarsest, and most entirely contemptible girl in Flat Creek district," Milton is obviously indulging his sense of humor. *Ibid.*, 27.

Clem Sent it to him, as a Book of advice. I think the man that wrote it is a regular fool

I am Sorry that I did not get the History of Kit Carson I no it is a good Book, if you can get it you can bring it out with you next Summer. Ma was much pleased with the things that came in the box. the cap fit her all right the Skirt was a little to long but it was easily fixed. we got Marys letter telling what was in it before we got the box. it was at the depot Several days before we new it. well Magg I hope when you get this you will have the chills broke on Joie¹⁵ and have him as fat as a litle pig. keep little black eyes well and tell popy to buy hir lots of candy. I hope Jake is making pedling pay for it will pay better than Selling corn at 20 [?] cts a bus. I must Stop good Bye. write Soon

from Milton Myers to Maggie

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada City March the 12th 1876

Dear Sister

I received your kind letter to day and thot I wold write to you we are all well except my self I am not very well I hav a pain in my back. I am Some better now I expect you will be surprised at my writing with a pencil.

I got so I could not write with a pen. I doent no how you could read my letters. I could not my Self.

Well Magie I doent expect we will get to com and see you this Sumer but I hope we will some day for I doent no how we will Stand it much longer their is a baby in the famly that I hav never Seen

I wold like to see all of you and when I get to thinken of you I get !!!!! Magie I wish you could cum to See us this Sumer and stay ever so long. I got a letter from Wm. Manning¹⁶ last month and he talks of cuming to see us this Sumer you cum with him we will hav about 2000 lbs of graps this year if they doent get pooris [?] and peaches and lots of other things to eat. and if you cum to See us! oh woent we hav a buly time Bily Maning is well or was well and just as funy as ever I hav got Several letters from him

you Said there was Snow on the ground and if I was back that you wold wash my face. I bet you could not do it but I could wash yourn mity quick you wanted to no if I greased my hair as much as I useto (NO) Barney eats all the Sop up. Mother aint got much lard left

¹⁵ Joel Harris, Jake's and Maggie's first son, was born in January, 1875.

¹⁶ William Manning was a Myers relative who lived in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Barns is a dredful fellow he says for you to tell Charley if he is cuming to See us to cum Soon and help build fense

Father is fensing forty Akers of land in front of the hous and Barney is helping. he has bought a cuple of horses this Spring. paid \$220.00 for them they are nice. and he is very proud of them I plague him a good deal a bout that good loeking young Lady you wrote about and we hav a hierd hand and me and him tease Barns til he is moest mad Magy I am Sory to here that Ponnies has the chills you aut to hav Dr. Churchel to Docter hir She would get over them Soon I am glad that the doll pleased her I wold hav got hir one that was nice but I thot you wold like to hav litle Alie's doll the best¹⁷

.....
Nelson and Lucy are both well they was here the other day Lucy Sends hir love and wants you to write they are goin to build a kitchen to ther hous this spring
.....

Good By from your good for nothing Brother Milton Myers esq.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City, Missouri. March the 19th 1876

Dear Sister Mary

I take the oppportunity of gieving you a good Scolding for not writing to me. you write to Pa, and Ma, but you cant write to me. I am geting my *back up* Our helth is prety good. Pa complains a good deal with his lip. I am afraid it gets worse all the time.

I am about the Same as when you was here. I have had two, or three, bad Spells this winter, but am better know I am afraid, I never will get on my legs again, though, for it has been So long. Well Mary you was right about Barney when you Said he was goin to Marry Clem, but I never bleaved it till I Saw Clem. we have a joke on him. he has been Saying that Clem, had taken him to raise, till it is reported all around that Clem is old enough to be Barney's Mother, and it plagues him like ever thing.

about a week after they com the boy's Shivareed them for about an hour, he paid no attention to them So they left early.¹⁸

Mary there must bee Some mistake about you Sending me a book. I never received one, and Barnes Sayes, you never Sent one by him. Some one is mistaken Shure. Barnes could think of nothing but Clem. I told him to bring the Ledgers but he come to the

¹⁷ See note 2 above.

¹⁸ Barnes and "Clem" Reynolds were married in January, 1876, in Indiana, but Clem had obviously just arrived in Vernon County.

conclushan that I had read all of them so he did not bring them. I wish if you have the old ones, that you would Send them to me I will Send you back the postage and if I ever get any thing new to read I will Send it to you I get awful lonsum these long days do nothing but whitle and eat. we have lots of company though. every one has to See Clem, and dont you beleav Barney went a visiton last Sunday and Stade all day well Mary, how is the wether. we are having regular winter *here*. biggest Snow we hav had fell last night last four days has been very cold. I guess we will pay up, for the good weather we had in the winter, and I am afraid the fruit will all be kild or injurd

I have not herd from Nelce and Lucy for over a month. they were boath well Nelce is building a new hous.

Mary Pa says if John want some whi[t]e brazillian sweet potatoe for seed, that he will express him a half bushel to Terre Haute, and Jake can get them when he goes to town. when it get warm enough if John wants them, tell him to write when to Send them.

Mary, Barney Says tell John that he has 25 Akers of corn ground plowed and Tell Homer to Send him his two pigs as he has lots of corn and no hogs. tell Charley to eat lots of chicken for me and get to be great big man.

well Mary I must Stop for this time, write Soon and to *me* Tell Maggie to write to me also

Milton Myers.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City, Missouri,
April the 23 1876

Dear Sister Mary.

I once more Set my pen to Scribbling, to inform you that we are all alive, and, am in hopse that when you get this, you will be the Same. Mother, has had, a Slite attack of the chills, but has them broke. Pa's lip pains him a great deal and I am afraid it is a cancer, it is a great deal worse than when you was here, Pa does not doctor much for it. he is goin to write to John and I will not write any more about him for he will tell you all about it Well Mary, I received the Ledgers & I was well pleased and I passed away the time pleasently as long as they lasted and by that time the others come. I will send you 25 cnts on the postage in this letter and will send the rest some other time am very much interested in the "lost Overlanders"

Well Mary, I am glad to Say that I a[m] getting a good deal better. am able to ride around in the buggyg but I canot Set up

Strate in a chair yet & I dont Suppose I ever will be able to walk again.

I am making you and Mag a Spool sack a piece. Some of you will be out to See us this Summer (I hope) and I will Send them to you if you dont come and get them your Self

Mary, you want to no how many chickens we have. we, have none we Set one hen and the Skunks eat the eggs all up. So we concluded to catch the Skunks be fore we Set any more and in the last two weeks we hav caught 7 Seven in a trap. how is that for Skunk tell John that we have Some *pigs* thats hard to beat. if they are onley comen Stock. they are three months old, and will way 100 lbs a piece.

I want you to write and tel me if any of you folks is comeing to See us this Summer if Jake and Mag comes out let Homer come with them. tell Homer we will make him a cros bow if he comes. I would like to See "you alls" much

Clem Sends her best wishes to you and Says She would write to you but She has So many to write to that She never has time. "(She writes about five letters a week,) I must bring my letter to a close for I have no more to write. I will put this in Pa's letter. write Soon and lets here all the news. From Your Brother

Milton Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada City Missouri, August the 27th 1876

Dear Daughter

I received a letter from you, a long time a go but neglected to answer it untill now.

We are all well as comen except my Self. I have been having the hed ake very bad, the last two weeks. I dont hardly get over one spell till I have an other. Your Pa's lip is a good deal better. but it is bad enough still in your letter to Milty you Said that you wanted us to come back with Jake and Mag and Stay all winter.

well Mary, I would like to come back there the best thing in the world, but we cant do it Milty has grown so heavy that we cant hardly cary him any more and then your Pa dont think he could come on the account of his lip. but wate till Mag come out and then we will talk it over. I wish we could come for I no we would enjoy our Selves. I wish it was posibel that you and Charles Myers could come to se us. but I suppose you cant. but you must try and let Homer come with Mag if you can . . .

Well Mary. I dont no what to write that would be of any interest to you. we are having very dry times here. corn will not be very good will not have much fruit I have 24 quarts of rasberys and

black berries put up and some goosberries of last year. I have been canning tomatoes last week. that is all I have put up yet will have some Grapes, but not many have a quilt up now we quilted one quilt for Clem and now we ar quilting mine. I have peased me a new quilt this spring like the one Clem had I espect you have seen it. She calls it the tower of babel. I wish you was here to help us quilt and we would get done in a hurry

When did you se Rachel and Sarah? I would like to here from them the next time you write. I send my love to boath of them.

Clem Says She will write to you and John, Some time Soon. I must Stop I send respects to all inquiring friends so good By.

Margaret Myers
Milton Myers. Private Secretary . . .

[To Jacob Harris]

Nevada M.O. Sept. 21th 1876

Dear Sir

Barns requested me to write you a fue lines and let know that the Howell place is for sale and if you want to purches it you can git it at \$1200. and perhaps less there is 80 akers prarie fenced and 40 akers broke and 10 akers timber he will give the Corn on the place which is about three hundred bushels with the place it has a good fraim house not plastered which will want some alterations which will make it comferable. Turms will be five hundred down & the balance in one & two years. there is a clame against the land of about \$190, that will come out of the two last payments I think you can get time on that clame it is coming to Mr. Nipp. If you want it or not write as soon as you git this and let us know. Howell wants to go to Texes and is wating to hear from you

Now Jacob how is it about you & famley coming out on a visit We have been looking for you For the last three weeks and dont hear from you do write as soon as you git this and let us know when you will likeley be hear dont fall [fail]. we are all well as common I hope you all are in good helth Nothing more at present

Yours Truley Saml. Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis and Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada M.O. Oct: 14th 1876

Dear children

We received your letter of the 7th instent in which you tell us of your bad helth. (I hope this letter will find you in better helth)

and further you insist on Ma Milton & my self to com and spend the winter with you I have consulted the Dr. and he advised me to go if I can do so, & we have concluded this morning to come just as soon as we can hear from you which will likley be about the 1th of Nov. let us know the time of the week Jake will be at Terre Haute and then we will Start to suet [?] it and let you know We will likley come a head of the time and give Wm B Manning a call. Now if no Provedential hendrence occurs we are comming. It is quiet a undertaking for us three to make the trip two invalids out of three. You perpose to pay our expences if we will come. I dont like to except such a propisision but I cant help myself at presant. I have been an invaled for the last year and not made any thing but a heavy Dr. Bill. My lip is still improving but not well by any means otherwise my helth is good Milton has a bad cold at presant Ma Clem & Barns is well and sends there respects to you all Now I want you to write as soon as you can So that we can git there before the wether gits so cold so no more at presant but remain yours Truly

Saml. Myers Margaret Myers & Milton

[To John W. Davis and family]

Nevada M.O. March 23d 1877

I promised to let you hear from us as soon as we got home. So I now write the facts. we left Terre Haute Wensday at 10 oclock A.M. arrived all safe at St Louis at 5 oclock P.M. same day and we layed over there tel 9 oclock which was a delay of 4 hours. we then left St. Louis and arived at Nevada the next morning at 10 oclock A.M. both will and Barnes was there redy to take us home. The wether is very pleasant and warm the farmers are plowing for Corn all around the neighbourhood very little mud hear the season hear is earley by the side of Fairbanks. Barns & Clem is both well and has things about the house & yard looking well the house plants are all looking well and in bloom the Tulip bed looks fine the groth is about six inches hig. peaches & Cherries are alive and bids fair to be a full crop if not kiled hear after. There is some sickness hear measels & winter feaver is the complaint mostley. Mrs Cauffman is quiet sick at presant Mother has gon over to see her to day my lip is no wors then when I started from your house that red spot has sence I left broke and is runing just like a little boyle but paines me very much but I hope it will not remain So Long. I have not saw the Dr. yet dont know what he thinks of it. I hope this letter will find you all well write as soon as is convennant and let us know how you are gitting a long.

Charles when I got home I found in the Seller about a big wheelbarrow load of the finest big Apples you ever saw that

Barnes and Clem had kep for us Wine saps & Jemtons & some Ben Davis. I wish you & Homer was here to help us eat them. I want you to take care of that wheelbarrow

I must close for this time

I Remain Yours Truly Saml Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

[Spring, 1877]¹⁹

Mary

Your mother and Clem milks four cows make lots of Butter. They have the butter & eggs ingaged in town and your mother goes to market every monday morning & sells and collects and devides with Clem they have too cows a peace. they have lots of chickens but how many we dont know they sell a great many eggs git ten cents a Dozen & 10 cents a lb for butter

I try to git a long and not be discouriaged on account of my lip but that is very hard for me to do I have allways been ust to work and it is hard for me to pass my time a way in idleness. and I dont hear that fermilure whisle and have that company that I have had for so many years both day and night it is a great change and burdon of mind for me to over come I try to over com it but is hard for me to so let me gow any place about the house, gardon. stable or orched and I come a cross somthing that calls to mind that Milton is gon and I feel distressed and lost.²⁰ I must Close and say no more at presant on that Subject. I hope this letter will find you all well write soon as you can. give our respects to all Charles have you broke your wheelbarrow yet if you have git it fixed up a little so you can make it go and wheal it out hear and I will make it all right again. Hommer I am glad to hear that you are going to chool and I know you will learn fast be a good boy John I wish you would write me a letter and let me know somthing about the prospects of a corn crop with you and how your wheet has turned out &c. &c. & Charley you send me a Pig in the letter or git one by the tale and throw it over to Grand Pa be a good boy.²¹ I must Close for this time . . .

I Remain yours Truly Saml. Myers

¹⁹ This letter lacks the usual heading and salutation. Its two pages are headed "3rd" and "4th," indicating perhaps that the initial pages of the letter are missing.

²⁰ Milton Myers died in the spring of 1877, sometime after he and his parents returned from their visit to Indiana. He is buried in Nevada beside his parents and Alice Harris.

²¹ Samuel Myers's affection for Charles Milton Davis was reciprocated and fondly remembered almost seventy years after this letter was written.

[To Jacob and Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada MO. Aug. 9th, 1877

I have Ricd letters from you Marry, Homer & Dohn [John] Davis and have not answered any of them my reasons for not answering sooner is that I was expecting to be able to tell you all that my lip or Cancer was better but I have been somewhat disappointed I dont want you to be alarmed it is not so bad as it was this time last year the old Sore of the lip is healed up except a Small place in the corner of my mouth . . . there is no sore inside of my mouth except it is some inflamed, but on the out side there is a lump about the size of a large haslenut and as red as blood and I have a hole in the upper side of it about as large as a large pea in which I have been applining the Sheep Sorrel and what a punishment I have to indure no one can tell but my self. I will write again as soon as I can to mary Hommer & John. we will stop this give other particklers your Ma has had two much to do and is complaing some Barns & Clem are more then well they are having a terable time & what do you think has happened them no use you cant gess it is a Boy Baby is nearly four weeks old weight was 8 lbs *he is a smasher* doing well Clem is helping do the work doing fine. Tell aunt Jane Earnest that she aught to be hear and see Clem nusing the boy his name is James Earnest Myers²² Maga you wold laff to hear Barns talking to the boy We had a very wet spring but July has been very dry early corn is hurt we had a very fine rain on the 6th of Augst, which will help our late corn wheet & oats was good our caster beans will about be a half crop. Fruit is plenty our apples & Cherries was som damedgd by a hale storm. Our Peaches is fine they commence gitting ripe the last week in June So we have been using peaches for the last five weeks I think we have picked over twenty bushels of Black berries they only Sold for 25 to 35 C per Gal. we will have more peaches & Grapes then we will know what to do with. I wish you had some of them. Barns is cutting hay and delivering to town and I dont do but very little I am making some hay rakes for Mr Click work when I can Mrs. Saml De Baun is hear on a visit She was at our house Wensday I hope this letter will find you all in good helth. Tell Poncy & Jody [?] that Granpa would like to See them and would like if they could git some of our great big peaches. Give my best respects to Mr. Harris or Grand pa Harris and the old Lady also and all my inquiring friends May God bless you all so no more at presant I Remain your affectionate father

Saml Myers

²² Barnes's and Clem's son, James Earnest, was born in July of 1877.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada M.O. Sept 17th 1877

Dear daughter

I am now going to try to write you a few lines. my excuse for not writing sooner is only because I did not wish to tell you that my lip was no better and part of the time I have been so tormented with pain both day and night that I could not write I hope and beleave you will forgive me. Your Mother has had a little Bilous spell was sick 4 or 5 days but she is a going again drying peaches and working harder then when you was a girl at home She works hard all day and peaces quilts tel bed time Barnes and Clem and the baby James are all well the baby has never been sick grows fast

I must say something more inreguard to my Cancer. It is more painfull then when I was at your house the open sore is about the size of a silver dime and about half way between the Corner of my mouth and the edge of my Chin the sore is not deep but inflames the inside of my lip so that it gives me trouble about eating or talking the lump under my Jaw that has increased in size it is about as large as a hens egg is not sore to the tech but the shooting pains from my lip to my ear goes through the lump and gives me a great eal of suffering meny nights I dont sleep an hour on account of the terable pains. I am still able to go abut and do some work. I have sold a good many peaches and have taken them down town my self Ma helps me gether them we have had hundreds of bushels gon to wast will stop for this letter will write mor to John & Homer

Yours Saml Myers

[To John W. Davis]

[September 17, 1877]

Dear Sir

I now will try and answer your letter. It has been nedglicted a long time I did want to write sooner but my lip has been very painfull and I did hope that I could in a few weeks say to you that it was better but I can not do so now it hurts me so bad now that I can hardley set still long anuf to write or think of wat to write. I am doing but little I take peaches to town and help geather caster Beens I have a Boy hired to help in the Beens &c. Barns gave up the Been crop because it rained so much and I hired hands to how & tend about ten akers of them & Barns plow up the balance about 15 akers & put in wheet got it in last week Barns is making hay

& haling his old corn to town gets 25 cents per bushel has thrashed his wheet had near 200 Bushels

The Season has been very wet except July we had no rain which was against early corn late corn has come out fine and beds fair to make a full crop we had a good rain yesterday & a nother last night The corn crop will be better then last year and oats was good Beens & Flax will not be as good as last year on account of two much wet wether in May. The fruit Crop is very good we have plenty of apples to do us and Such a crop of peaches I never saw I am giving away to all that Comes after them we cant use them and they are roting by the wagon load. I have wished often that you could only have a 100 bushels of them Mary would dry some and I expect Charles would eat them I had lots of Peaches that meashed ten inches around I must stop for this time write again as soon as you can. Yours Truly . . .

Saml. Myers

[To Jacob and Margaret Myers Harris]

Nevada M.O. Oct. 4th 1877

I concluded this morning that I must write you a letter and tell you my true condition of the cancer I am suffering under The famley are all injoying good helth and I hope this letter will find you all well. I wish we was not so far apart so we could see one another oftener but it cant be helped now we Still have plenty of Peaches but they will soon all be gon

Now for a plain statement of the cancer. It is no better but wors I had a Dr. Edmontson from the North part of the state a reglor cancer Dr. come to see me about three weeks ago, and he gave me but little incouriagement considered it incuriable and would not take the case I then got Dr. Thornton of Texas a speshel cancer Dr. has been in the practice for 35 years he examened it very carful and pronounced it a hopless case but gave me advice to quit Doctern except simple saves and use blood purifying medison and to take good care of myself but not to spend money in trying to have it cured that only made it wors and would shorten my days. The cancer on the lip and chin he said he could cure but it would only make the case wors the tumor under my jaw was the great trouble it was so closeley attached to the large blood vessle of the neck that in attempting to take the tumor out there was great danger in opening the artre and then deth would be the consequence, both of the Drs are opposed to using the knife or costicks they use remadays that give but little pain I must stop on this subject

The Tumor on my jaw is not a runing sore as that is on my chin or lip but still it is very painful I have a hard time to git any

sleep I git up from 2 to 5 times during the night to dress it which gives me ease, I dont know whether you can read this or not I am in a poor condition to write but shall try to keep you posted inregard to my afflections. write soon and let me hear from you and all the friends. Give my best respects to all. I wish Charles would write and let me know wheather he is comming out to see us or not

Mrs Tilitson has been very sick but is recovering slowley I have the ear ake so bad I can not write any more Ma wants to know if Jody [?] can talk yet or not So no more at presant I remain your afflicted parent

Saml. Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Missouri [Fall, 1877]

Dear Mary,

By the request of your Father it is my painful duty to answer your letter which he received yesterday and tell you of the sad condition he is in he has been confined to his room for the last two weeks and to the bed the greater part of the time. that place that was growing on his Jaw when he was in Indiana kept growing till last week it broke. and now his neck and throat is swelled so bad and so sore that he can hardly swallow any thing at all he has two regular Cancer Doctors to visit him recently and both told him they could do nothing for him. one of them was here and staid all night with him one night this week. he wants you and Charlie to come see him if you can. he knows of course Mag cant come.²³ and I think you will have to come soon if you get to see him. Charlie promised when he was there to come this fall. and since he has been so bad he talks about him all the time. tell him to come if he can by all means the rest of us are well but your Mother is nearly worn out. our baby is a big fat boy and a great deal of trouble he is not very cross but we have all talked to him so much we have spoiled him so he dont want to be alone any as I have filled my paper will have to stop writing with the hope of seeing or hearing from you soon I would like to see Mags an Sue's babies so well. if you cant come write as soon as you get this please excuse bad writing and all mistakes for I am intirely out of practice

Yours &c Clem Myers

²³ Jake's and Maggie's third child to live, Prudence, was born in October, 1877.

[To Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada Missouri Dec th 23 [1877]

Dear Mary

Your letter of th 18 was received yesterday and we also got one from Mag Just a week before we were glad to hear from you both. and to hear you were all well. Pa is apparently about the same that he has been for some time. some days he feels better than he does others. but he is really no better at any time. he still has chills about the same way he did when Charlie was here. he had not had one for two or three days until today. he had one.²⁴

I am glad the children all got their present I sent them. we are having very warm weather and have had for some time. Nels & Lucy are still here. the Diptheria and Scarlet fever are raging here among the children we are keeping the Baby at home. but there are so many persons coming to see Pa that we fear it will be carried in clothes. We are as well as usual. I hope that Sadie will be well soon. as I have written all that I can think of at this time will close this short note . . .

Margaret Myers

[To John and Mary Myers Davis]

Nevada. Mo
Mar th 9. 1878

Dear John & Mary

Your Mother received your letter last friday. and wishes me to answer for her. and suppose I must try to do so. We are all as well as usual I believe and are having very warm nice weather with the exception of an (occasional rain) which makes a little mud but that soon dries up here. The Peach trees will be in bloom in a few days if it stays warm. but I think it is entirely too early and fear we will not have any peaches this year. Your Mother is getting along with the business very well. thinks she will get it settled up without any trouble. she made a sale of the property about three weeks ago. some thing brought all they were really worth while others as a matter of course sold very low. Nels & Lucy started home two weeks ago last thursday. we have not heard from since they got home. they wrote from Humboldt Kansas and said they had to hire a man at Fort Scott to help them through. but the roads were getting better then and thought they would have no more trouble.

²⁴ Samuel Myers died of his cancer on January 17, 1878. His widow, Margaret, seems to have taken on the settlement of his affairs herself.

Funeral Notice.

The Funeral of

Mr. Samuel Meyers,

*will take place Friday, January 18th, at
11 o'clock. Services at the house by Elder
W. J. Brown.*

*The friends of the deceased are respect-
fully invited to attend.*

*Nevada Lodge No. 194 I. O. O.F. will
conduct the services at the grave.*

SAMUEL MYERS'S FUNERAL NOTICE
1878

Courtesy Rodney O. Davis

John I must admit that I was very much surprised to hear that you had joined Church. I rec'd a letter from Sue before we got yours. telling me about it. I hope you will all be benefited by it. We have had protracted meetings all us this winter but I have not attended any for I dont get out any place. I find but very little to go and if I had the time Barnes's horses are so wild that I am afraid of them. and it is too far for me to walk even to a neighbors. The Babtists are holding forth in Town now. your mother was down last week and staid three days & nights attending and visiting the members. Tell Chrlie that our boy is almost as large as he is. has four teeth and is beginning to try to talk I expect he can make as much noise as he can. and sits at the table in his high chair as large as you please John if there has been any maple sugar made there this spring we would like to get 100 lbs if it can be bought reasonable. we dont want to pay more than 10 cts per pound. and if you could get for less please do so. but will pay that much. Barnes says if you havnt the money to spare just now to pay for it. to please write soon and he will send it. and if you buy and send it right away he will pay all expense when it comes. if you get it you can go to Jane's and get the trunk I left there and if it has been destroyed tell Jim he must furnish a box. Charlie promised to get it and send it. But as his Mother got a letter from him the other day and he said nothing about it we are afraid he has forgotten it. With love to all I must stop writing for this time. Excuse all mistakes and bad writing for I am entirely out of practice. Write soon

Clem

Mary your Mother wants you when you write to give the names of all the persons that joined Church Sue gave a few but she wants to know all of them please answer soon

[To Mary Myers Davis]

[Spring, 1878]

Dear Mary

I thoght that I would drp you a few lines to let you know that I am well at this time I received Mags letter with the news from your Church and was glad to hear of John Converson I hope he will hold out faithfull and was glad to hear of Charles and Bells converseon I hope they may hold out faithfull Mary a word. you know John have patience with him and do all you can to help him to hold out faithfull. tell him I feel glad that has determend to do right

Margaret Myers

[To Mary Myers Davis and children]

Nevada Missourie May th 19 79²⁵

Dear Daughter

I set down to answer your letter I received a good while ago we are all well at this time have not ben very well all Spring have had A great deal of rain hear Barney has some corn planted I am a going to wright and tell you how your Father left his bisnss he made A will before Milton Died he left all to me to support him his lifetime and if he died before I did it was mine to do with as I pleased after the deats was paid I made a sale and sold of the stock horses and wagon and farming implements and when the notes air paid I think there will bee enough to pay all I do not know yeat I have paid some of them now it will tak all I will have the rent of the place to live on that will keep me

I wish I could come in but I cannot I would like if some of you could come out there will bee peaches but no apples no more at this time

Margaret Myers

Now for Homer and Charles I suppose Homer is helping his father farm this summer and Charley is helping you rais chickens Jimmey hasent got any pigs but has got four caffes [?] he can crall all over the house

how I wish I could see all of the children and Mags new baby

Tell John Clem says that she will answer his letter sometime soon wright soon and tell us all of the news tell Mag I am waiting for that letter she promised me

Love to all the Family and friends

Your Mother

excuse bad wrighting for I have been picking goosberries and my hands is sour [sore] and it is night

[To John Davis]

Nevada Mo June th 16 [1878]

Well John I suppose you think that I am never going to answer your letter. for it has been some time since I received it. and I have been trying to answer ever since but just as sure as I would get ready to write some one would come. or something happen to prevent me. so I think I will try it tonight by lamp light

²⁵ Although this letter is apparently dated 1879, internal evidence places it more probably in 1878. Again, the misdating cannot be explained.

Barnes and his Mother are neither one very well but are able to go round and I have the (blues) a little occasionally it does nothing but rain here all the time and the prospect for corn is decidedly very poor Barnes planted his first about the first of last month and it commenced raining and did not stop more than two days at a time for four weeks the consequence was it did not come up. and as soon he could get in with the planter he planted all over. it is just now coming up. and will not be anything extra of a stand. but he is not going to plant any more think perhaps if it ever gets dry enough for him to plow it make something. some few of the farmers got planting done very early and have got it plowed over and it is looking fine. and there are others that have not planted any yet. and some have planted as often as three times before they had it to come up

the wheat is all getting ripe and they cant get in it with machines. Barnes bought a Cradle yesterday and commenced on his. and thought that he could get in by tomorrow with the harvester if it did not rain any more. but it is pouring down now. I think it has set in for a steady nights rain the crop here is generally pretty good if it can only be taken care of

We received a letter from Nels last week he says his corn looks fine and he has forty Acres of wheat that will make 25 bushels per Acre

We had a terrible wind storm here last thursday week. but it did not do any very serious damage blew (the white house) over the hen house and buggy shed all over and broke down a great many trees in the yard and orchard and all the fence on the place Just the week before we had one that struck a house about a mile and a half from here and unroofed it lifted of the foundation and blew nearly every thing out of it

Tell Homer and Charlie that our baby is eleven months old today and can speak several words real plain can climb up by chair and stand alone he is considered a very pretty and smart boy by every one that see him. we have had ripe peaches for more than two week and blackberries getting ripe. there will be bushels on this place as I have filled my paper will stop my scribbling for this time you said if you thought I would answer you would write me a long letter I want you to be sure and do so the next time and I will answer every time and will promise not to be so long about it as have this time. Love to Mary and children and be sure to write soon Yours truly

Clem

Tell Mary that her Mother is looking for a letter from her every day Barnes says tell Charlie that we have seven calves we let them have nearly all the milk and they are nice and fat excuse all mistakes Clem

[To Margaret Myers Harris]

July 13th [1878]

Dear Daughter

I received your letter and was glad to hear you was all well I would like to see you and the children verry mutch I have neglected to right bet you must forgive me I am a poor letter writer at best and not being verry well and having a gooddeal to attend to I have had the berries to attend to I sold 52 gallons of blackberries one week and had three weeks picking but they are all gon now and am not sorry

you wanted me to come in and stay with you I cannot come till I get the bisness settled and then it wont make any difERENCE where I am I wish some of you could come and see us this fall if you can wright and let us know

I thout of going to see Nelson this fall but do not know yet if mr Fry will go but if I go will not stay but four weeks

I wrote a letter to Mary some time ago and havent had an anser yet tell the children that I have not forgot them but would like to see them verry much I wish you could see our baby he is a verry nice redheaded boy verry cross

.....
I send my love to all of my friends

you wanted to know Nelsons address Finley Segwic County Kansas

write soon

Margaret Myers

[Probably to Susan Drake of Fairbanks]

Nevada Missouri July th 21st 1879

Dear Sue

It at last falls on me to write you and tell you of our sad loss. that we have lost our darling little treasure. our precious little boy. he died of Flux th 12 last saturday week at Eleven Oclock went to sleep while playing on tuesday night before[,] apparently as well as he ever was. and was taken during the night we had the best Medical assistance in Nevada called at first. and we gave him the best attention. never left him a minute. his Grandma helped us so much she loved him so well and thought he was so smart. but it just seemed that he must go every thing worked gainst him from the first. medicine would not have any effect on him and he just grew worse all the time. The few days of his sickness poor little fellow suffered every thing and he bore it with so much patience. took his medicine just as nice as any grown person he was per-

fectly conscious until a few minutes before he drew his last breath tried to tell me some thing but was to near gone for me to understand him. Sue I dont think I can ever get over this blow. but know you can surly sympathize with me if any one can. he was so much company for me. we miss him when we go to bed and when we get up in the morning at the table and every place he could say every thing and knew everything was always with me trying to help me work only when he was asleep I cannot Give him up yet I some times imagine he will yet come back to us again. and when I think it all over and know that he is gone from us forever I think I am the most miserable being on earth. I have good neighbors & friends here that have done all the could for me but all they can do or say cannot make me feel any better

Sue I did not think when I heard of little Jennie's and Charlie's death last spring I would so soon be called upon to give up my little pet. I know I should have written to you then and thought about it a great many times. but did not think I could say anything that would be any consolation to you. but I know your fellings now. but hope you are felling a little better by this time. perhaps the little Dears are better of but I cant think so now one thing that grieves me so much is because we never had Jimmies picture taken. we spent a half day over trying to get it but we couldnt get him still long enough. and after that Barnes horses got so wild that I was afraid to ride with them and just for that reason we never got it. Mother just got a letter from Mary last friday and she wrote for his picture. but we have nothing but a little of his hair

Mary & Mag will no doubt think very shortly that we have not written to them yet. but I did not feel as though I could write to any one unless it was you. and knew we ought to write to some of you we expected to send some papers to you with the Aubituary in last week it was written and taken to the Office but by some means it was misplaced and do not know whether we will get it this week or not please send word to the girls as soon as you can Mother has got the sick head ache today I was not able to be up half the time last week had to keep a girl and am not much better yet but as we have but little to do am trying to do alone it seems if I did not try to work alittle I would go crazy though it is very little that I do dont feel as though I will ever have any energy again please excuse all mistakes I do not know whether you can read it at all or not Now Sue I think you ought to be sure and answer this just as soon as you get it shall look for it at [illegible] will send you a piece of Jimmies little dress he was buried in so Florence and Hadie can see what it is like or a pair of little white slippers. tell Florence she must write to me. write soon

Clem

My I wish you and the children could come see us

[The Myers family correspondence covering the years 1880–1895 will appear in the June, 1990, issue of the *Indiana Magazine of History*.]