
War at the Crossroads

*Erich L. Ewald**

Reverend Samuel Sayford's Lutheran church still stands at the Crossroads, a spiritual sentinel guarding Delaware County's southwestern corner. The dark brown bricks have weathered just as traffic has faded along the two lonely county roads that meet nearby. Several stone throws' distance from the church lies the Henry County line. That boundary's invisible presence, as if acting in accordance with pure Lutheran doctrine, is dependent upon the faith of the believer.

Like those of many other Hoosiers, Sayford's life became bound up in the American Civil War. He could not have suspected that the little seminary from which he graduated in 1835 would be swept with rifle shot three decades later. Poised on a ridge in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the building in which he studied Christ's grace witnessed some of the worst horrors of battle. Nor could he foresee that his own son, a boy just three weeks shy of his twenty-first birthday, would die in that war amid the brambles and canebrakes of a desolate and nearly forgotten portion of the South.

Reverend Sayford arrived in central Indiana in 1848, and his hard years of riding and preaching brought to life one of the earliest Lutheran congregations in that part of the state. Three years after the war this same congregation, weary of an Ishmaelite existence and enjoying a brief spasm of prosperity, built the church that still welcomes Lutheran faithful today.¹

*Erich L. Ewald is a freelance writer with degrees in history from Wittenberg University, Wittenberg, Ohio, and Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. An occasional contributor to the *Indiana Magazine of History* and *Traces*, Ewald is Senior Labor Relations Representative for Delphi Interior and Lighting Systems, General Motors, Anderson, Indiana. He would like to thank Melvin Sayford of Middletown, Indiana, for the careful preservation of his family's Crossroads Civil War letters, cited below as Sayford Collection. Richard McKnight of New Castle, Indiana, the Henry County Historical Society, and Betty Lou Heintz, curator of the Henry County Historical Society Museum (New Castle) are thanked for allowing access to Cyrus VanMatre's Civil War diary. Ewald also wishes to thank the Delaware County Historical Alliance for access to its fine facility in Muncie.

¹For a biographical sketch of Samuel Sayford, see George Hazzard, *Hazzard's History of Henry County, Indiana, 1822-1906* ("military edition," 2 vols., New Castle, Ind., 1906), I, 288-89. Testifying to Reverend Sayford's persuasiveness is the fact

Many hands built the church, some belonging to battle-hardened survivors who had been friends of and had corresponded with young Augustus Sayford in the days before he was killed by a bullet at Port Gibson, Mississippi. Others in that close circle of companions never returned: James A. Brown, killed in an assault upon Vicksburg; Joseph VanMatre, died in a St. Louis hospital; Thomas Graves, mortally wounded at Jackson, Mississippi; John Rinker, died at Shiloh. The survivors themselves did not come back whole, but carried with them to the end of their lives the physical and emotional scars that all wars produce.

Crossroads itself never amounted to much, and its story is like that of many other Indiana communities. The railroad never came through; roads, once thought to be paved with possibilities, were bypassed by others; tolls fell off from precious little to absolutely nothing. Many of the founders, astutely reading the writing on the economic wall, packed up surveyor instruments and plat books and headed out for parts unknown. One hundred thirty years after the war, Crossroads, Indiana, consists of one church and an atoll of houses surrounded on all sides by a sea of corn.

In point of fact, Crossroads never even attained the status of a village. It remains today a dot on the map where the roads meet in Delaware County's Salem Township. The township itself is a five-mile by seven-mile wedge of gently rolling countryside unremarkable in appearance to the casual observer. There are no natural landmarks to distinguish this part of east-central Indiana from neighboring townships. The only physical feature of note is the White River, which makes a cameo appearance in the township's northwestern quadrant before wandering down to Madison County.

The first settlers entered Salem Township in the early 1820s and began clearing the land with typical Hoosier energy. What consisted originally of temporary hunters' huts and Indian trails running through the wilderness evolved eventually into one of Indiana's fine agricultural centers.

The land, once cleared, proved so rich and black that it would have been a poor farmer not to have prospered. Bearing testimony to Salem Township's fertility, some of the earliest land purchases averaged \$7.81 an acre when public lands could be had for \$1.25 in the rest of the county. Between the clearings grew stands of black walnut trees in such profusion that residents named them the "Rich Woods." One portion of this deep tract, aided and abetted by a

that, upon arriving in Indiana, he took over a temporarily leaderless Presbyterian congregation and galvanized it into "Richwood's Evangelical Lutheran Church," the immediate predecessor of Crossroads Lutheran Church. See Henry G. Waltman, ed., *History of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Lutheran Church in America: Its Development, Congregations, and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1971), 250-52. Crossroads, never incorporated and appearing only sporadically on modern maps, is located at the junction of 600W and 700S in Delaware County.



CROSSROADS LUTHERAN CHURCH, AS IT APPEARS IN THE PRESENT

Photograph by David Hedley. Courtesy Erich Ewald.

riot of wild cherry and poplar, bounded the 180-acre Sayford family farm.

In such lush surroundings, with black land and valuable timber, with the White River overflowing with fish and playing host to game of every description, it is not surprising that industry never stood a chance except to serve as a handmaiden to agriculture. The 1860 census reveals 227 farmers and sixty-four farm laborers. Sixty-eight other Salem Township residents listed their chief occupations as blacksmiths, millers, carpenters, wagon makers and the like. The professional ranks were not exactly swollen, consisting of one physician, two school teachers, and—to stretch the definition of “professional” a bit—one “cigar maker.” Reverend Sayford, whose ministerial salary could be measured more often than not in bushels, listed himself as “Farmer.”

By 1860, Miami Indians were nonexistent and merchants almost as scarce in Salem Township. John Gustin had attempted a general merchandise shop at the Crossroads in 1832. He lost money and hope in quick succession and abandoned the enterprise. William and Erasmus Moffitt entered the mercantile lists at Crossroads in 1838 and hung on stubbornly for several lean years. At one time or another and in one form or another, between the mid-1830s

and the 1880s, Crossroads supported a church, wagon shop, cooper shop, school, post office, general store, and a brace of blacksmith shops.

Into this peaceful community blew the American Civil War. Like the legendary Indiana tornados that come every spring, the war arrived and left in its wake unprecedented emotional destruction. The citizens were no strangers to hardship. There could be no such immunity among people who created farms and industries out of a frontier environment. However, when the great test came, Crossroads, like the rest of the nation, stood blissfully unaware of the sacrifice to be demanded of it. It is fairly said that every Indiana community, large and small, suffered the tragic consequences of the Civil War. At the Crossroads, a small and unpretentious mark on the map, war's human cost received magnification in a proportion far beyond the census statistics. Not one Crossroads inhabitant escaped the war's fury. Candles burning by the window periodically announced to neighbors that one of their own had paid the price of preserving the Union. Despite the cost, loyalty to the old flag flowed unabated in Salem Township, a tiny corner of the Union that consisted in the main of homegrown Hoosiers and transplanted Pennsylvanians and Ohioans. A large contingent of former Virginians, 188 of them to be exact, remained overwhelmingly loyal to their adopted state and the national cause.²

The casualties of the war were immense, and every letter arriving from the front threatened to bring sorrow to the people at home. It is true that the casualties of war littered such places as Gettysburg's Seminary Ridge and the banks of the Chickamauga. But the war also reached down into thousands of communities like the Crossroads, where each individual death produced dozens of wounded back home in the form of grieving parents, children, wives, and sweethearts.

The Crossroads Civil War soldiers were ordinary young men who fished and hunted together along the creeks and in the woods surrounding the church. Most were farm boys, many hailed from

² Information regarding Crossroads and Salem Township was derived from the following sources: John S. Ellis, *Our County: Its History and Early Settlement by Townships* (Muncie, Ind., 1898), 135-48; Gordon Griffing *et al.*, comps., *An Atlas of Delaware County, Indiana* (reprint ed., Knightstown, Ind., 1971), 17; March Sayford, comp., "Early History of Salem Township (Crossroads), Delaware County, Indiana," typescript (Delaware County Historical Alliance, Muncie, Ind.); Thomas B. Helm, *History of Delaware County, Indiana, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Chicago, 1881), 282-87; U. S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedules for DeKalb County and Delaware County, Indiana, pp. 501-33. Former Virginians in pre-war Salem Township include Mrs. Polly Sayford and three of the children: Augustus, Mary, and Emma. Two letters to the editor of the *Middletown News* in 1911 by a former resident, George W. Franklin, form an excellent account of the Henry/Delaware county communities during the Civil War. The letters are reprinted in Dora Mattox *et al.*, comps., *Memories, Dreams and Reflections of Middletown* (Middletown, Ind., 1975), 9-17.

nearby Middletown, and all were eager to serve. They joined three regiments that marched and fought across nearly every state of the Confederacy. James Brown, Fred Tykle, Cyrus, William, and Abner VanMatre, and Perry Shoemaker joined the 8th Indiana Infantry. George Baker, Joseph VanMatre, and John Rinker enlisted in the 57th Indiana Infantry. The 69th Indiana Infantry received Thomas Graves, Sam Johnson, and Augustus Sayford.³

After Sumter's fall the Crossroads boys enlisted as soon as their individual circumstances would permit. Beginning in the late summer of 1861, Augustus Sayford received from his friends in the service a series of letters that could have only increased his own desire to join. The first came from Indianapolis, where James Brown and the reinlisted 8th Indiana were preparing to break camp and move south.⁴ Each line, simple and unpretentious, conveys the exuberance of boys playing at war. Such early letters display the beginning of the transformation from civilian to soldier that so many American men, North and South, experienced:

Dear friend,

It is with pleasure that I take my seat to let you know how I am getting along. I am well all but my big toe it is very sore. me and Harmon was cutting up the other night and I was bare footed and I got my toe snagged. I was out on drill this morning and my foot swelled up, and has got very sore. however, I dont think it is a fatal wound. I think I will get over it pretty handy.

Gustus I must tell you how I like Camp life. I like it very well so far. I would not come home under anny circumstances. when we get our uniforms, if I have a chance, I will come home to see you all. but I dont want to come to stay. they told us that we would get our uniforms this week but they tell us so menny lies that I dont believe anny thing they say.⁵

Within a few weeks the regiment found itself in Missouri as part of a growing force designed to retrieve Federal fortunes after the disaster at the battle of Wilson's Creek.⁶ Another friend in the regiment, Cyrus VanMatre, wrote to Augustus:

³ War service dates and relevant information for all individuals mentioned in this article may be found in the appropriate volumes, by regimental listings, of William H. H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1866–1869). War record summaries of the regiments are printed in Volume II, as follows: 8th Indiana (three months' service), p. 16; 8th Indiana (three years' service), pp. 55-56; 57th Indiana, pp. 556-58; 69th Indiana, pp. 637-39.

⁴ The 8th Indiana Infantry had been raised originally as one of Indiana's six three months' service regiments. Three of the Crossroads volunteers—Cyrus VanMatre, Frederick Tykle, and Samuel Johnson—served in the regiment until it mustered out on August 6, 1861. The three years' service 8th Indiana Infantry reorganized on September 5, 1861.

⁵ James A. Brown to Augustus L. Sayford, August 28, 1861, Sayford Collection. All primary documents have been presented with capitalization and spelling unchanged. Some punctuation has been added or altered, and paragraph breaks have been added to some documents. Brackets have been employed to indicate conjectured words and letters. Ellipses indicate that passages in the original manuscripts have been omitted.

⁶ Located in southern Missouri not far from Springfield, Wilson's Creek was the site of a small but fierce battle on August 10, 1861. Hoping to halt the Confederate advance through the state, the Union's General Nathaniel Lyon led a surprise

we are all well at present and hope these few lines may find you the same.

when I say all I mean all of the boys that come from our part of the country. their are four or five of our boys down at Jefferson City [Missouri] in the hospital. their is rite smart of sickness in the regt at the present time.

we are going to stay here a few days and then proceed on up a little further to boonville about twenty two miles from here and we expect to have a little fight when we get their. we heard that the secessionists had the town surrounded and I think if they dont keep a sharp look out we will surround them. I think that the eight[h] Regt can clean them out nicely.⁷

we have prety camp ground here. its level prairie. the water is handy and toleable [tolerable] good. every thing nice and handy but wood. their is no wood close to the camp to get to cook with.

Alert to a seeming lack of patriotism and suspicious that others back home might capitalize romantically by the absence of those in service, Cyrus peevishly continued:

Augustus I [want] you to answer this letter as soon as you can and give me the news in general. let me know how George Baker and Lucinda is getting along [in] particular for I am anxious to hear of him prospering. I dont suppose their are any danger of him going to war and I would like to hear of that he was doing something for his self if he wont do any[thing] for his country.⁸

His fears that George would not serve proved groundless. By November, Cyrus was writing:

Gust I have received eight letters this week and nearly all of them states that our Friend George Baker had enlisted for war; I will acknowledge that I was surprised, but it may be so. I hope it is. I reckon him and Liza had a good time before he left. I heard that he was over there.

As to the Crossroads's soldiers in the 8th, he continued:

I am sorry to till [tell] you that Jim Brown has got the measles. he took them yesterday evening and went to the hospital. Since noon, they were broke out all over his face just as thick as they could be. . . . we have to leave here in the morning, and he cant go with us and we hate to go and leave him and he hates to stay behind. but it cant be helped. we will have to do the best way we can till we get the rebels whipped out, then we can all go home and live in peace the rest of our days. all the

attack on the camp of some 11,600 Confederate soldiers commanded by General Ben McCulloch. Although the attack initially went well for the Federals, the Confederates eventually routed Lyon's force. This Union defeat left all of southern and western Missouri open to the Confederates, who by the end of September controlled nearly half of the state. James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (2nd ed., Princeton, 1992), 160; Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (rev. ed., New York, 1988), 932-35.

⁷ Despite VanMatre's wishes, the 8th Regiment consumed nearly two months in fruitless marching across Missouri before actually encountering the enemy in combat. On December 17, 1861, the 8th formed part of a Union force that captured nearly 1,300 rebels at Warrensburg, Missouri. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 55.

⁸ Cyrus VanMatre to Augustus L. Sayford, September 22, 1861, Sayford Collection. For background information regarding brothers Cyrus, Joseph, and Abner VanMatre, see Hazzard, *Henry County*, I, 286-88. Members of the family, including cousin William VanMatre, spelled their surname in various ways, and at varying points, during and after the war. The author has used "VanMatre" consistently in this article.

rest of us are in tolerable health. Abner has been complaining but I guess it is nothing but cold that is the matter of him.⁹

A few weeks later, Augustus began receiving news from the boys in the 57th. From Indianapolis, Joseph VanMatre wrote:

we left Richmond last tuesday and came down here. we are camped in the north west part of town close to the Lafayette depot. our boys are all well and enjoying themselves first rate. if you was down here we would have the best time you ever saw. they are putting us through on drill three about fourths of the time. we dont know how long we will stay here. I dont expect we will stay here very long. I wish they would send us down south to a warmer climate. . . .

I want you to write and let me know how you are getting along about the cross roads. if the war was over I would like to be with you. but I don't never expect to come home till the war is over.¹⁰

On Christmas Eve, Joseph wrote from Louisville his first glimpses of war and the institution of slavery:

we are all well at present and we are having some of the highest times you ever saw. while I am writing Billy Graves Eli Conn and John Rinker is wrestling and George Baker is writing a letter. when I received your letter we was fixing to leave Indianapolis. we left there last night about nine oclock and arrived at Jeffersonville [Indiana] this morning just before daylight. we stayed there till ten oclock to day and then crossed over the river to Louisville and marched out about two miles and camped.

I dont know how long we will stay here. they are more troops passing through here than congress knows of. they are five or six Regiments camped here, besides ours. To day was the first time I ever sat my feet on soil where slavery existed. I think I saw a thousand negroes in passing through Louisville to day, but I dont suppose they were all slaves.

Consoling Augustus for the fact that the Crossroads boys in the 57th were having so much fun and seeing many new sights, Joseph continued:

Gust, I want you to attend to the girls about the crossroads the best you can. I expect you will have your hands full but you must do the best you can. I think if they would send us down south and let us at the rebels we could clean them out and return home in a few days. but never will I come home again as long as there is a rebel to fight.¹¹

Possible romance could be but little consolation with a war in progress. Augustus, denied the opportunity to join perhaps because of his age, might have been chomping at the martial bit at this point. Gentle, good-natured ribbing by James Brown in January might not have helped. Recovered from his illness, Brown wrote:

⁹ Cyrus VanMatre to Augustus L. Sayford, November 8, 1861, Sayford Collection.

¹⁰ Joseph VanMatre to Augustus L. Sayford, December 13, 1861, *ibid.* One of the better Indiana regimental histories is Asbury L. Kerwood, *Annals of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Indiana Volunteer: Marches, Battles, and Incidents of Army Life* (Dayton, Ohio, 1868).

¹¹ Joseph VanMatre to Augustus L. Sayford, December 24, 1861, Sayford Collection.

you stated in your letter that you were all making grammer suffer. I guess when we soldiers gets back we wont know how to talk to you all. I dont want you to let the girls get ahead [unintelligible] of you as you are about the only one left among so many.¹²

Months passed, and the war deepened. Despite an occassional brush with the enemy, the Crossroads soldiers had not seen much actual combat. That situation changed for the men of the 8th when in March they saw action at Pea Ridge, Arkansas. It was a wild affair in which the Federal army was attacked by a strange mixture of Arkansans, Texans, and Confederate Indians. Flanked, the Federals turned full circle and eventually drove the enemy from the field.¹³ Thus, to adventure and excitement was added news of military glory. Augustus Sayford's desire to enlist must have accelerated. In June James Brown reported:

the Ladies of Terrehaute have presented the 8th Reg with a beautifull silk Banner with Rich Mountain inscribed on one Corner and Pea Ridge on the other. also the 8th has presented Gen Benton with a sword which cost nearly two hundred dollars. Gen Benton and Col Shunk are two [of] the best men that walks on top of ground. at least I think so any how.¹⁴

Sayford's turn came in August as Indiana braced for a bona fide emergency. From the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky's blue-grass region burst General Edmund Kirby Smith's rebel army. Hard on its heels arrived a much larger Confederate army under General Braxton Bragg, who had stolen a march on the Union forces in lower Tennessee and was now approaching the Ohio River. With Louisville and Cincinnati in a state of panic, Governor Oliver Morton pressed into service several new regiments and sent them packing for the front in record time.¹⁵ With friend Sam Johnson, Augustus entered the newly recruited 69th Indiana and trained for a scant eleven days before moving south.

Kirby Smith pounced upon a green, makeshift Union force, which included the 69th, at Richmond, Kentucky, on August 30,

¹² James A. Brown to Augustus L. Sayford, January 5, 1862, *ibid.*

¹³ For a brief description of Lieutenant Colonel David Shunk's battalion of the 8th Indiana at the battle of Pea Ridge (Elkhorn Tavern), see Catharine Merrill, *The Soldier of Indiana in the War for the Union* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1866–1869), I, 204–206.

¹⁴ James A. Brown to Augustus L. Sayford, June 12, 1862, Sayford Collection. Rich Mountain was the site of an important Union victory in General George B. McClellan's effort to drive Confederate troops from western Virginia in the spring and summer of 1861. The 8th Indiana (along with the 9th and 13th Indiana regiments) participated as part of General William S. Rosecrans's brigade. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 699. General William Plummer Benton commanded the 1st Division of the Army of Southeast Missouri at the time of Brown's writing. Prior to his promotion to general, Benton served as the colonel of the 8th Indiana. For a biographical sketch of Benton, see Merrill, *Soldier of Indiana*, I, 28.

¹⁵ The alarm caused by the Bragg/Kirby Smith invasion is described well in Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 149–52. The raising of the 69th in the area of Delaware and Henry counties was reported by the *New Castle Courier* and reprinted in Herbert L. Heller, ed., *Historic Henry County* (3 vols., New Castle, Ind., 1982), II, 217–18.

1862. The results were predictable. Assailed by rebel veterans, the Federals were nearly obliterated. They suffered 5,300 killed, wounded, and captured, while the Confederates sustained a mere 500 casualties. The 69th was destroyed. Two-hundred and eighteen of its members were killed and wounded, and the remainder were captured almost to a man. News of the disaster traveled fast and Indiana reeled under the shock.¹⁶ As word came that Augustus and the survivors of the 69th had been exchanged and were heading home, Thomas Graves, a recruit left behind in a training camp in Indianapolis, poured out his emotions. Addressing his letter simply to "Dear Friends," the Middletown boy wrote:

I could write with great pleasure did I but know that all the boys are yet alive. But I fear a number of them are in their graves or else are prisoners. We have heard of the fate of the brave 69th in the late battle in Kentucky. But although you were defeated and routed you have crowned yourselves with immortal honor. . . .

Boys I am proud that I am a member of your regiment although I cannot be with you yet but will be in a few days. I was sworn in yesterday. It may be a week or two before I can leave here but Ill be with you sure. . . .

I am lonesome here there is no one here with whom I am acquainted. Consequently I will do my best to get with you as soon as possible.

I am anxious to hear from you all and learn your fate.

I want some of you to write as soon as you get this and let me know who are killed.¹⁷

By late September the reconstituted regiment had returned to Indianapolis, this time learning the basics and fundamentals of soldiering. Things did not go smoothly, however, a fact indicated in Reverend Sayford's only surviving letter to his son:

Cap. Hoover was telling me that you had no drilling last week, several companies refusing to drill. He thinks he would have no trouble in getting his company to drill if the rest would. He said he heard on Friday evening that if the regiment did not do better it would be sent to Camp Chase and put under Gen. Lew Wallace. (Perhaps to send you [to] fight the Indians with the Ohio soldiers.) From what I seen in a handbill from Col Bickel [sic] in which he is calling in the absent boys of your Regt. I judge you can be kept in camp and made [to] drill, but not fight the enemy.¹⁸

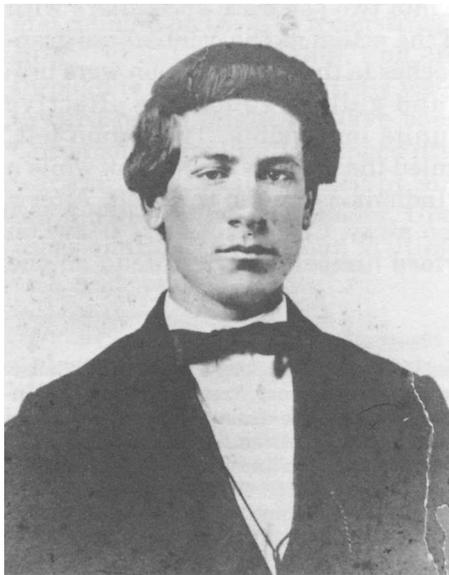
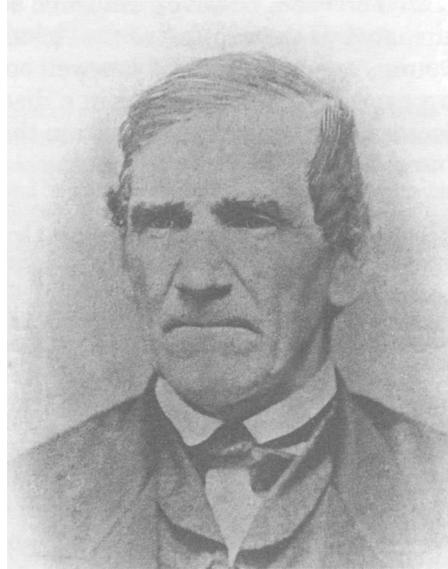
¹⁶ For a synopsis of the battle of Richmond, Kentucky, and comparative casualties, see Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 697-98. News of the disaster was carried back home quickly and efficiently by one Madison County recruit, Robert "Daddy" Thitherington. According to county historians John L. Forkner and Byron H. Dyson, "When Daddy got to retreating he never stopped till he reached Anderson. It was said that he beat the telegraphic news home. The first the Anderson people knew that a battle had been fought was when he came to town. His company never had his presence thereafter. . . . One drubbing was all he wanted." John L. Forkner and Byron H. Dyson, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of Madison County, Indiana* (Anderson, Ind., 1897), 368.

¹⁷ Letter of Thomas J. Graves, September 4, 1862, Sayford Collection.

¹⁸ Reverend Samuel Sayford to Augustus L. Sayford, September 29, 1862, *ibid.* During reorganization, command of the regiment passed from Colonel William A. Bickle, who resigned, to the able Colonel Thomas A. Bennett. David Stevenson and Theodore T. Scribner, *Indiana's Roll of Honor* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1864-1866), II, 156.

REVEREND SAMUEL SAYFORD

Courtesy Melvin Sayford.



AUGUSTUS L. SAYFORD

Courtesy Melvin Sayford.

The 69th, however, returned to the front eventually and participated in the capture of the Arkansas Post.¹⁹ By February, 1863, young Augustus Sayford was well on the way to considering himself an experienced soldier. From a disease-ridden camp in Louisiana located directly across river from the Confederate bastion at Vicksburg, Sayford wrote to a friend:

Sandford, I have seen many strange and pleasing sights since I left old Ind. Then again, I have seen some sights that I hope I may never see any more like them, such as the battlefield. I have seen as much as that as I want to see. . .

We have a great deal of sickness in our army now. The number that dies daily is estimated at 100. The boys in our Regt will average one a day. We have buried six of our boys in one day, two which belong to our old Co. We only have 30 men able for duty at the time.²⁰

Thursday, April 30, 1863: Admiral Porter's big naval guns thundered upriver at Confederate installations at Grand Gulf, located immediately below Vicksburg. It was an impressive show, but as the enemy seemed too well prepared there, the movement was only a feint. The soldiers in General Sherman's corps sweltered in their transports while Grant and the remainder of the army drifted south, looking for a better place to cross the Mississippi. The main body crossed at Bruinsburg, Mississippi, landing unopposed. During the night the rebel garrison at Grand Gulf received intelligence that the Federal army stood on Mississippi soil and sortied to the little crossroads at Port Gibson to contest the Union advance.

The opponents collided there early on May 1. What began as one battle quickly degenerated into two separate encounters with the enemy. The terrain dictated the action as the combatants grappled in the clearings. The approaches to the rebel position were broken by brush-filled ravines and gullies, rendering effective coordination among friendly units impossible. The Union left, including the 69th Indiana, assailed the enemy's right flank while a division that contained the 8th Indiana assaulted their left. After a hard fight the enemy was driven away. Casualties were heavy on both sides, and Augustus Sayford himself was left dead on the field.²¹

¹⁹ The Arkansas Post was captured in January, 1863, by a force led by General John A. McClernand. In the autumn of the previous year, President Abraham Lincoln had authorized McClernand to mount an operation against Vicksburg. Instead of that city, however, McClernand chose to attack the Arkansas Post, located about fifty miles upriver. The post fell after a combined land and waterborne assault on January 10 and 11. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 24-25.

²⁰ Augustus L. Sayford to Sandford Heath, February 23, 1863, Sayford Collection. Sayford did not exaggerate the toll taken on the 69th Indiana during its two-month stay at Young's Point, Louisiana. More than one hundred men of the regiment died there of disease. Terrell, *Adjutant General*, II, 637.

²¹ A superb, detailed account of the battle of Port Gibson, with useful maps, is to be found in Terrence J. Winschel, "Grant's Beachhead for the Vicksburg Campaign: The Battle of Port Gibson, May 1, 1863," *Blue & Gray Magazine* (February, 1994), 9-22, 48-60. Information relating to Indiana troops in the battle is summarized in Henry C. Adams, comp., *Indiana at Vicksburg* (Indianapolis, 1911), 175-77.

In early June, long before Vicksburg fell in Grant's historic campaign, Captain David Yount of the 69th Indiana's Company H wrote to Reverend Sayford:

You know doubt have heard the sad news of the death of your son Augustus L Sayford. He fell pierced by a minnie ball in the left hip passing through and lodging in his cartridge box. He lived but few minutes. Says he tell my friends I die in peace. A few minutes after he was shot we fixed bayonets and he supposing we were going to charge exclaimed, that's right boys charge them. He died very easy [and] did not seem to mind his wound. At the time there were no carriers present to carry him off the field and we were so hard pressed by the enemy the Col would not let any one from the ranks carry him back. But Sergeants Fifer & Bigler carried him down and lay him in the shade on the grass and in a few minutes they brought me back the sad news that he was no more. There was never a better nor a braver soldier. He was always an example for his comrades in everything constituted a Christian and a Soldier. We feel his loss deeply. The boys talk about dear Gus a great deal. But such is the fate of war. Many have gone before him. Many will follow during this rebellion and whether they sleep in the lowly valleys of Virginia or on the flowery prairies of Missouri their names shall never die. A grateful people shall cherish their memories and bless their names.²²

After an absence of four years Cyrus VanMatre, suffering from wounds to face and neck, came back home.²³ One by one the other Crossroads Civil War survivors, in varying states of physical wholeness, returned to their community. Some stayed to marry, have children, and build a permanent church at the place where the roads joined. Others drifted off to where their individual fortunes carried them.

Lincoln had depended on such people to preserve the Union and counted on them to reconstruct it. They had answered his every call: in battle, in camp, and on the march they saw the war through to the bitter end. Only when the president spoke of "malice toward none" might he have been asking too much. While the Crossroads community changed little physically, the scars from the war ran deep, as illustrated by an ugly incident in Middletown a few days after Lee's surrender. Upon hearing the news of Lincoln's assassination, a Virginian visiting relatives in the neighborhood

²² Captain David Yount to Reverend Samuel Sayford, June 6, 1863, Sayford Collection. A short biography of Captain Yount is in Hazzard, *Henry County*, I, 448-50.

²³ Following the Vicksburg campaign, the 8th Indiana fought in Louisiana and Texas. On January 1, 1864, 417 of the 515 survivors, including Cyrus VanMatre, reenlisted. After a furlough back home, the regiment returned to New Orleans and eventually made its way back to the eastern theater of operations, participating in General Philip Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley campaign. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 55-56. VanMatre was wounded severely in this campaign at the battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia, on October 19, 1864. See the Cyrus VanMatre diary, VanMatre family file (Henry County Historical Society Museum, New Castle, Ind.), 82. VanMatre had already suffered a wound at Vicksburg and, as a result, had been commissioned first lieutenant for gallantry. It can be fairly said that Lieutenant VanMatre's gallantry was not confined exclusively to the battlefield. He married Augustus Sayford's sister, Sarah, in 1867. Sarah died in 1901, whereupon VanMatre besieged, wooed, and married Augustus Sayford's other sister, Laura, in 1905.

indiscreetly remarked, "It was good enough; he should have been killed long ago." According to resident George Franklin, a mob that included several soldiers home on furlough quickly surrounded the southerner. They marched him out to the railroad bridge with a rope around his neck. Saner heads prevailed, and the crowd contented itself with applying a thick coat of tar and feathers to the offender before running him out of town.²⁴ After four years of cruel sacrifice the South would not hold a monopoly on bitterness and sorrow.

Other wars came and went. The Crossroads soldiers, having done their duty, concentrated on peaceful pursuits. A new world filled with technological marvels overtook them, and the events of the 1860s faded into distant memory.

Despite change, the men who survived the war could never forget what they had been through in their younger days. One old Crossroads soldier, fast approaching the end, looked back wistfully upon nearly eighty years of life. In the spring of 1925, Sam Johnson of the 69th Indiana wrote to Augustus Sayford's brother:

Well the first day of May is about to arrive and what happened in May 1863 at Vicksburg is on my mind.

We made an all night march from the Mississippi River to [P]ort Gibson Miss. where fighting began at two o'clock in the afternoon and continued until a little after four the following day. That is where your brother A[u]gustus was killed on May 1, 1863 just a little before four o'clock.

John A. Logan came in with his men about four o'clock and drove the Confederates away.²⁵ We were all in and had it not been for Logan and his men we would have been captured. We went into camp on the battle field and made coffee and prepared a bite to eat for we had not had anything to eat since the day before and we were getting pretty lank. Then we gathered up our dead and wounded and cared for them either dug graves or dressed wounds then we took a little trip over the battle field. It certainly was a sight to see where the enemy had been slaughtered in the cane brakes by Logan's artillery. Early the next morning we moved on to Raymond where a big battle was fought and from there to Edward's Station and on in the direction of Jackson Mississippi and then we turned back west toward Champion[']s Hill where we landed on the fifteenth and fighting began on the sixteenth.²⁶ That was my birth-day and I wondered whether I would ever live to see another but as it is I have seen several. It was a pretty hot battle. We captured several rebel flags and took several prisoners. The next morning we moved on to Black River where we had another pretty hard fight. We captured about 5,000 rebels and around 25 cannons.

²⁴ Franklin's recollection of this incident is reprinted in Mattox, *Middletown*, 14-15. Sayford family tradition has it that Reverend Sayford was instrumental in preventing the lynching.

²⁵ General John A. Logan commanded the 15th Corps in the Army of the Tennessee during the Vicksburg campaign. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 874.

²⁶ Raymond, Mississippi, was the site of a small battle on May 12, 1863, when a Confederate brigade under General John Gregg contested the advance of Ulysses S. Grant's army toward Jackson. Gregg held off General James Birdseye McPherson's corps for several hours before retreating to Jackson. After taking that city on May 14, Grant turned back toward Vicksburg and the army of General John Pemberton. At Champion's Hill, on May 16, advancing Union forces under McPherson and John McClernand defeated Pemberton in the most severe fighting of the Vicksburg campaign. *Ibid.*, 875.

From there we went on and shut Pemberton up at Vicksburg.²⁷ On the 22[nd] of May we made a charge upon the fort but were defeated. Then we began digging up to the fort and at last captured it on the fourth of July 1863. Then we followed Johnston to Jackson where Thomas Graves was killed. A shell hit him in the head and came out low down on his left side.²⁸

Some sixty years after the last shot was fired, the war had come to an end for the Crossroads volunteers. The impact of the great struggle on the tiny Crossroads community, as on the entire state of Indiana, had been profound. The volunteers left as boy-soldiers; the ones who survived came back as men devoted to the blessings of peace. In the words of Augustus Sayford's captain, "A grateful people shall cherish their memories and bless their names."

²⁷ On May 17, 1863, General John Pemberton attempted to slow the Union advance on Vicksburg by defending the Big Black River. The Confederates were beaten handily, although Sam Johnson's estimates of the numbers of men and guns captured are rather inflated. In fact, Union forces captured about 1,700 Confederates and 18 guns. *Ibid.*, 876.

²⁸ Samuel J. Johnson to Edward Sayford, April 29, 1925, Sayford Collection. James A. Brown was killed in Grant's disastrous May 22, 1863, assault on the Vicksburg works. An eyewitness account of the 8th Indiana's attack, written by a soldier of the 33rd Illinois Infantry (a regiment brigaded with the Hoosiers) is reprinted in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Blue and the Gray* (Indianapolis, 1950), 655-56.