

Shared Paths of the Roberson & Yates Families

By: Ronald E. Yates-August 2008

This story is the general content of a presentation given orally to the Crawford County, Indiana Historical & Genealogy Society August 11, 2008. The meeting was held at English, Indiana on the grounds of *Sycamore Springs Park*; a privately owned and funded park of the Clayton Roberson Family Foundation. It is a beautiful 250 acre farm with a long and documented history. The focus here will be on the inter-relationship of the Roberson and Yates families primarily throughout the 19th century.

I have been through the County several times now and have developed a soft spot for Crawford County in my heart. In my mind I seem to focus on 1810-1890 as it was such an exciting time for those who had migrated to the region and of course how things were developing in a broad way nationally. As a result of my family circumstances I lost contact with the usual forces which shape our personal knowledge of our family histories. It was 2005 when I made my first trip to Crawford County and learned that 100% of my paternal line migrated into and hailed from Crawford County.

My uncle Jim Yates and my older 2nd cousin Wilbur Yates patiently took me through it all. Yates, Roberson, Laswell, Curl, Klingman and Ott are my major lines. In a prior visit I introduced myself at the Crawford County Historical Society meeting as likely being related somehow to everyone in the room. I think of Grantsburg as the center of where our family lived, died and developed over time.

I have reached the time in my life that I can appreciate that any life is hard living regardless of when it is lived and I greatly appreciate my ancestors for giving it their best shot! I am the 3G Grandson of Benjamin Roberson & Sarah Yates, 2G Grandson of Elizabeth Roberson & John Yates, G Grandson of Mary Ellen Ott & James Wilson Yates and Grandson of Jessie Leah Laswell & Harry Elmer Yates.

Starting Point in the 1780-1800's

This story could start in several places but for our purposes we will concentrate on Prince George's County, Maryland and Barren County, Kentucky in the 1780-1800's where decisions are being made which will connect our two subject families later. This is a rough and woolly time for the New United States in a post revolutionary but pre-constitutional state.

Barren County (about 90 miles south of Louisville) was still Virginia; danger lurked everywhere, but opportunity was abundant. The location of the new

Federal City of Washington DC was being negotiated and/or early in construction so Prince George's County, Maryland could have felt almost as rural and undeveloped sitting just across the Potomac River from George Washington's great estate extending towards Annapolis, Maryland.

In 1781 in Prince George's County we find George Roberson b.1760 deciding to marry his sweetheart Violinda Johnston b. 1760 and beginning their family of three daughters and four sons. We will hear more about three of these guys as they will establish the primary Roberson family lines resident in Crawford County to this day, 2008.

In 1782, 510 miles west in Barren County, Kentucky (at that point still Virginia) John Yates, Sr. b.1764 marries his unknown sweetheart as well and begins his family which will soon develop into three daughters and four sons. Two of these daughters marry Roberson brothers as mentioned above and other members of the respective two families will also eventually intermarry. Several Yates men spread a large footprint in the new County of Crawford during the early 19th century; however their presence today is largely found in area cemeteries and the descendants of cross pollinated family lines.

For our purpose we have chosen to designate George Roberson b.1760 and John Yates b.1764 the senior paternal leaders of our subject families. This not only helps frame our story parameters but it is also convenient as we know very little of these two men or the women they marry. We can speculate that because of their ages, the regions where we find them living and the fact that they survived and had the ability to acquire land in a post-revolutionary time, they may have been veterans of the American Revolution. Other more experienced and patient researchers may yet be able to add more to this puzzle later.

A reality is that the winners are usually the ones around to tell the stories and live the lives. The American Revolutionary War was not just a rebellion against the English, but a Civil War. Many battles were not a battle between Englishmen and Americans, but American against American, neighbor against neighbor, and kinsman against kinsman. For example, at the important battle of Kings Mountain in North Carolina only one English Military officer was present. This will become an even more pressing issue for the Roberson and Yates families when descendants who didn't migrate on to Indiana and other locations face off in the conflict of 1861-1865. These men were living, breathing, human beings with cares and concerns not all that different from those of our brothers, fathers and grandfathers who served in later American wars which I believe strengthens this speculation.

The First Move West

Between 1781 and 1795 George & Violinda Roberson's family expands to Daniel b.1781, Stephen b.1783, Violetty b.1786, Eleanor b.1887, George b.1791, Elizabeth b.1793 and lastly, the author's 3G Grandfather Benjamin b.1795. The next documentation available suggests major change has occurred in the family. George Roberson appears on the Washington County, Kentucky 1799 tax list with 50 acres on the Beechfork River, and then he was on the 1805 tax list of Nelson County, Kentucky with 50 acres in 1805. He then is shown increasing his ownership in Washington County, Kentucky to 100 acres in 1806.

In 1803 Daniel Roberson appears on the Washington County, KY tax list with 50 acres on the Beechfork River. By 1806 Daniel Roberson is gone from Washington County and appears on the 1806 tax list of adjoining Hardin County KY. By 1807 George is missing from Washington County tax list and appears on the 1807 tax list of Hardin County. Subsequently, Daniel, George and Stephen Roberson are on the 1810 census of Hardin County KY.

Parallel to acquiring property the Roberson family group is also increasing its footprint in these Kentucky Counties by finding spouses. An impressive surge of this activity is started by Daniel Robert Roberson who meets and marries Ester Ada Yates in 1803 in Green County, Kentucky. This marriage is the earliest formal connection between our two subject families.

George Roberson, Sr. is without his Maryland spouse Violinda for some unknown reason. George Roberson married Teresy Watson April 25, 1805 in Nelson County, Kentucky. He was married by Rev. Joseph Ferguson and James Watson was bondsman. His marriage is followed with these: Thomas Woolley married Violetty Robertson in Washington Co., KY 4-9-1807; James Watson married Eleanor Robertson in Washington Co., KY On 4-30-1807; Stephen Roberson married Sally Watson in Nelson Co., KY on 9-22-1808; George Roberson married Francis Westfall in Harrison Co., IN 1-18-1814; Samuel Westfall married Elizabeth Roberson in Harrison Co., IN 9-22-1814; Benjamin Roberson married Sarah Yates in Crawford Co., IN 9-29-1816.

With the perspective of time we can now see that these marriages create some intriguing relationships. Using a baseball analogy, Daniel could be considered the leadoff hitter by marrying the first Yates sister and Benjamin can be considered as batting in the cleanup slot by being the last sibling to marry and that was also a Yates sister. The strength of the line up is George Roberson, Sr. marrying Teresy Watson who brings two Watson children into the fold and are adopted by George; James Watson and Sally Watson. These are the same James and Sally Watson who marry their step sister and step brothers Eleanor and Stephen Roberson. Elizabeth Roberson marries Samuel Westfall who is the Uncle of Francis Westfall who married George Roberson, Jr.

While the Roberson family was processing this western migration from Maryland, the Yates family is likewise growing and developing as one might expect in this agrarian society. John Yates was the only Yates listed on the 1800 Barren County, Kentucky census. John Yates, Sr. and his spouse have produced Robert Yates b.1783, Ester Ada Yates b.1785, John Yates, Jr. b.1790, Benjamin Yates b.1792, James Yates b.1796, Sarah Yates b.1799, and Cassa Yates. They found spouses as follows: Ester Ada Yates married Daniel Roberson in Green Co., KY 1803; John Yates married Polly Swift in Barren County January 28, 1808; Robert Yates married Mary Ann Byers in Barren County on April 21, 1808.; Sarah Yates married Benjamin Roberson in Crawford Co., IN 9-29-1816; James Yates married Mary Ann Butler in Crawford Co., IN January 7, 1819. Benjamin Yates does not marry; his estate will is important to documenting the Yates family group.

On the 1810 Barren County, Kentucky census, John Yates Sr. was listed as being over 45, with a female, probably his wife, also over age 45. Two males, age 10-16 were living with him. Their ages fit James and Benjamin Yates, who later migrate to Indiana and are referenced in Benjamin's estate will. There was also a female age 16-45 in John Yates Sr. household in 1810. This may have been a daughter, Cassa Yates, mentioned along with her 4 brothers in the Benjamin's estate will. This 1810 Census shows both John and Robert Yates as age 16-26, with wives in the same age bracket. Both men had had a son during the two years they had been married, and John also had produced a daughter.

We're Going to Indiana!

On February 16, 1816, Robert Yates b. 1773 was assigned two tracks of land of 80 acres each that had originally been assigned to Riggs Pennington. These 160 acres of land, assigned to Robert Yates were in the part of Indiana Territory that would become Crawford County after Indiana became a state two years later, in 1818.

Riggs Pennington was born in New River, Virginia in 1787. He married Joanna Osborn in Barren County, Kentucky in 1810. Riggs was a land surveyor who never neglected to file his land claims and eventually became a wealthy man from his land deals. Riggs' Uncle Richard married Hannah Boone the sister of Daniel Boone. Riggs, a brother, and their wives moved from Kentucky to Indiana Territory in 1816 where they were among the first settlers. In 1819, Riggs went to southern Illinois. Riggs was one of the first county commissioners of Knox County, served as Justice of the Peace in Schuyler County in 1827 and as a judge.

Riggs's search for land opportunity finally took him to Texas. The Pennington's left Galesville, Illinois with friends and neighbors in a wagon train of twelve and arrived in Washington County, Texas in 1836, one week after the battle of San

Jacinto. They purchased a tract of 1,225 acres from John W. Cole at \$3.25 per acre and established the "Pennington Homestead". The Pennington's reared a family of eleven and lived out their lives in Washington County. Riggs died in 1869 and Joanna died in 1873. *Source: Knox County, IL Website*

John Yates Sr. probably came to Indiana with his oldest son, Robert, for we know his younger son, James, married Mary Irvin in Crawford County, Indiana, January 7, 1819. The 1820 Crawford County Census, the first taken in Crawford County, listed John Yates as over age 45, as was his wife, for this was the oldest bracket the Census showed at that time. A male and a female, both age 16 to 20 were living with him. This is likely Benjamin as he did not marry and John Sr.'s daughter Cassa Yates. Robert Yates was on the 1820 Census, with him and his wife both listed as age 16-44, and with 7 children. James Yates, married the year before in Crawford County, was on the 1820 Census with his wife and 2 children, a boy and girl under ten.

There was only one listing for a John Yates on the 1830 Crawford County Census, and that was for John Jr., for he was listed as being age 40-50, with his wife the same age, and 7 sons and three daughters. Robert Yates was listed with his wife and 6 sons and 4 daughters. John Yates Sr. was not listed on the 1830 Census for Crawford County. This could suggest that he and his wife had both died between 1820 and 1830. Benjamin Yates is listed on the 1830 Census as head of the household with a female age 20-30, whose age matches with the female on John Sr.'s census record of ten years before. Benjamin may be the head of John Sr.'s previous household now. James Yates does not show up on the 1830 Crawford County census but we know that his daughter, Catherine was born in Illinois about that time.

There is no record of John Sr. and other Yates family members living in Crawford County owning any land in Indiana. Further research is planned to investigate County Deeds to clarify if Robert transferred ownership to other members over time. Robert donated the land now used for the Union-Yates Chapel Cemetery; family members lived adjacent to one another as shown on census records and several burials of family members took place at Lankford School Cemetery. This opens up for speculation that certain family members rented or subleased land from Robert's land holdings obtained in 1816.

Daniel Roberson and Esther Ada Yates may have started the migration further west earlier than the balance of the Roberson family. He and Esther relocated to Meade County, Kentucky. Although this sounds distant from Crawford County it may be the closest one can get to Crawford County and not be inside the Indiana line. Meade County is located directly across the Ohio River from Leavenworth, Indiana. Starting with Mildred in 1800, all of Daniel and Esther's children were born in Meade County, Kentucky. After October 1820 Daniel Robert Roberson, the eldest son of George Roberson, Sr. died for some unknown reason. We

estimate his death date as his last child Samuel Roberson was born June 22, 1821.

Most records indicate that Daniel was buried at Mt. Hope Church Cemetery in Battletown, Kentucky. The current Methodist Church structure was erected in the 1950s. The cemetery contains graves dating back to early 1800s. As of December 2005, 118 of the headstones were readable. They were photographed and transcribed by Ron Yates and Lisa Hardin. About 40 graves were marked with a field stone and other spaces unmarked clearly were contained within the burying spaces.

The cemetery is located in Meade County on Route 1047 just off of Route 228. It is in "Big Bend" almost 17 miles on the left once you turn onto Route 228 from Route 448. This cemetery is important to those interested in Meade County and Crawford County history. The Big Bend of the Ohio River was accessible by boat and travel was common between this area and Leavenworth, Indiana. The Yates oral family history reflects that day trips from Leavenworth over to Big Bend for picnics and recreation was something to look forward to with delight.

Once the movement began then over the next several years the primary ancestors of the current Roberson and Yates lines had established themselves in Crawford County, Indiana. Although Daniel died in Kentucky, his brothers George Jr., Benjamin and adult family members accompany his widow and minor children to Indiana.

Neighbors and Families in Indiana

Several interesting stories can be extracted and told with close examination of the census data spread of 1820-1860 for Crawford County. As it relates to our subject families the 1850 census below will serve to illustrate that the Yates and Roberson families continued a close relationship started while in Kentucky and continues through settlement and life in Crawford County through the years.

Today, Yates and Roberson descendants are inclined to believe they are not related to other Township Roberson's over the years. The census data spread of 1820-1860 for Crawford County and in particular, the clustering of neighbors and subsequent family relationships make is quite clear that we are dealing with the descendants of mostly these two main Yates and Roberson family lines.

After examination of how families unfolded over time, one can look back and pick out which neighbors will in the end become part of these two family lines through marriage. By 1850 James Roberson, b.1803, eldest son of Daniel Robert and Daniel's brother George Roberson, Jr. are established in Sterling Township; they both will be buried in Hamilton-Roberson Cemetery located within Sycamore Springs Park. Benjamin Roberson has establishment himself in Union Township. His exact burial location has not been determined.

1850 Union Township Selected Census Data (Includes Grantsburg area)

Family #18: Samuel Roberson, 28; Anna C. Roberson, 27.

Family #21: John B. Roberson, 33; Emily Roberson, 36.

Family #22: Benjamin Roberson, 5; Sarah Roberson, 50.

Family #25: Stephen Roberson, 41; Sarah Ann Roberson, 36.

Family #31: Daniel Roberson, 36; Eleanor Roberson, 34.

Family #32: John Roberson, 44; Nancy Roberson, 40.

Family #33: Thomas Roberson, 43; Nancy Roberson, 42.

Family #34: Robert Yates, 68; Mary Ann Yates, 64; John Yates, 38.

Family #35: Tolbert Yates, 36; Jane Tolbert, 36.

Family #37: Elias Yates, 21; Rachel Yates, 28; Silas Yates, 22.

Family #38: William Yates, 30; Rachel Yates, 28.

Family #44: James Yates, 54; Mary Yates, 58; George Yates, 10.

Family #48: Benjamin Yates, 50; Sarah Swift, 80.

Family #50: John Yates, 24; Elizabeth Yates, 27.

Family #90: Silas W. Yates, 40; Lovina Yates, 37.

Family #1227: Wesley May, 43; Lavina May, 38; Mahala May, 16; Ben May, 15.

1850 Sterling Township Selected Census Data (Includes English area)

Family #245: William Roberson, 35; Sarah Roberson, 40.

Family #246: Elijah Roberson, 33; Mary Roberson, 25.

Family #248: James Roberson, 47; Fannie Roberson, 38.

Family #249: George Roberson, Jr., 59; Frances Roberson, 58.

Family #269: William Roberson, 30; Elizabeth Roberson, 29.

The Recent Unpleasantness and Family Tragedy

There are many ways to examine the US Civil War and how it impacted our lives. As it relates to our subject families' several themes come to mind. An under appreciated theme is that Crawford County from a Federal perspective was in a very real sense one of the "Front Lines". This is true as a result of it's physicality to a "Border State" and all parties either trying to maintain or disrupt the Border Balancing act to tilt towards one cause or another.

Crawford County also borders what in essence was the 19th Century Freeway for transportation of goods, materiel and men in the form of the Ohio River. Louisville, Kentucky and the immediate Indiana Counties became major transportation, training and infrastructure locations for the Federal war effort.

As a result of the recent migration of the Roberson and Yates families from upper Kentucky, there were many Roberson and Yates men serving the Confederate States of America. An examination of the C.S.A database indicates conflicting loyalties between many of our paternal relatives, and an untold number of maternal relatives and neighbors. When conflict came, it was literally blood against blood, and it was personal in nature.

Some stories on how this affected the Roberson and Yates Families.....

On January 8, 1867 Mahala May Yates traveled to Leavenworth, Indiana with her 1st cousin Elizabeth Roberson Yates to complete an affidavit which would be filed relative to the widow's pension for Elizabeth. Like many other pioneer women of the time they did so with heavy hearts and fortitude which kept both of them going. To do otherwise would give into the personal losses that must be borne by many families both Federal and C.S.A. In this affidavit Mahala swore to her personal presence during the births of John and Elizabeth's children.

Like her brother Benjamin, Mahala was a child of John Wesley May and Lavina Roberson. John and Lavina were married in 1843 in Crawford County. Lavina is the 4th child of George Roberson, Jr. and Francis Westfall. Mahala May born in 1843 is the 1st child and Benjamin H. May born in 1844 was the 2nd child of John and Lavina Wesley. Both the 1850 and 1860 census show John and Lavina developing their own family living in Union Township near neighbors with names familiar to us.

On May 9, 1861 Mahala May married John Winfield Yates, born July 31, 1835 as the 4th child of Tolbert Thompson Yates and Jane McCraney. Tolbert is the oldest child of Robert Yates who had previously migrated from Kentucky. Soon thereafter Mahala and John Yates produced their only child Lavina Yates born before the fall of 1862. At some point during the summer of 1862, 24 year old John Winfield Yates determined it was time for him to volunteer for Federal

service. You can almost imagine the times where they sat around and discussed this whole serious matter and how it would impact their lives. You can also imagine what impact his sister's husband might have had on an 18 year old Benjamin May. We now know they decided to go together.

With the decision made it doesn't take much imagination to think of how the scene played out with Mahala saying goodbye to her husband and brother as they embarked on their adventure. They left the Grantsburg area in time to make it to Camp Noble in New Albany, Indiana on August 29, 1862. They were enlisted in Company H, 81st Indiana Volunteers Infantry, by Captain Alexander C. Scott with each man signing for a term of three years. John W. Yates is described as 24 years old, 5 feet 10 inches, light complexion, blue eyes and dark hair. His brother-in-law Benjamin H. May is described as 18 years old 5 feet 11 inches, light complexion, blue eyes and light hair.

In 1859 the Indiana State Fair was brought to New Albany. During the Civil War the grounds were converted into Camp Noble where regiments were mustered. During the Civil War, New Albany became a strategic supply center for the Union Armies fighting in the South and a hospital center for the wounded being sent North as well as a part of an "underground railroad" for slaves escaping from the South. President Abraham Lincoln established one of the first seven National Cemeteries in the United States in New Albany in 1862.

While not unique, the 81st Indiana Volunteers was an authentic family and community affair. The men serving were doing so with family members and neighbors. The roster of Company H could almost be a family reunion as follows: John M. B. Scott, Second Lieutenant (Benjamin's Uncle); Joseph Landiss, Musician (Husband of Benjamin's 2nd cousin); Joseph G. Benham, Musician (Brother-in-law of John W. Yates); Daniel D. Grant, (Husband of Benjamin's 2nd cousin); Harvey Roberson, Private (Benjamin's Great 1st Cousin); Henry C. Roberson, Private (Benjamin's 2nd cousin).

In regards to today's descendants: Benjamin H. May and Ronald E. Yates are 2nd cousins 3 times removed. Daniel Robert Roberson and Esther Ada Yates are the grand-uncle and aunt of Benjamin H. May. Benjamin H. May and Nidrah, Jack and Dale Roberson are 2nd cousins 3 times removed. And, John Winfield Yates and Ronald E. Yates are 2nd cousins 3 times removed. Esther Ada Yates and Daniel Robert Roberson are the grand-aunt and uncle of John Winfield Yates. John Winfield Yates and Nidrah, Jack and Dale Roberson are 2nd cousins 3 times removed.

Company H, 81st Indiana Volunteers Infantry with Mahala's two men got off to a fast start once ready. They started with a pursuit of General Bragg into Kentucky October 1-15, 1862 engaging in the Battle of Perryville, KY, on October 8, 1862. The Company thereafter marched to Nashville, TN., from October 16th to November 7th, and thereafter stood active duty until December 26, 1862.

The first of the two men to have trouble was John Winfield Yates. After the Battle of Perryville while the Company was on the march to Nashville he was taken sick on October 20th with dysentery in Lebanon, KY. Dysentery is an infection of the digestive system that results in severe diarrhea containing mucus and blood in the feces. Dysentery is typically the result of unsanitary water containing micro-organisms which damage the intestinal lining.

Amoebic dysentery is transmitted through contaminated food and water. Amoebic dysentery is well known as a "traveler's dysentery" because of its prevalence in developing nations, or "Montezuma's Revenge". John became so ill he was taken to the General US Hospital located in New Albany. Benjamin May must have been heartsick when he heard his brother-in-law died on November 14, 1862 of "Acute Dysentery".

While on the march to Nashville Benjamin's trouble had already begun but he just didn't know it as a result of an 8-12 day symptom free disease incubation period. After arriving in Nashville, only 10 days after his brother-in-law John W. Yates had died, Benjamin was taken sick with Rubeola Measles on November 24, 1862 and was hospitalized.

Rubeola is the ordinary measles, an acute highly contagious viral disease with fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, and a spreading skin rash. Rubeola (measles) is a potentially disastrous disease. It can be complicated by ear infections, pneumonia, encephalitis and/or the sudden onset of low blood platelet levels with severe bleeding. Rubeola (measles) now can be prevented through vaccination. You can imagine Mahala's heartache when she heard her brother Benjamin died at age 18 on December 1, 1862.

John Winfield Yates is buried at Union Chapel-Yates Cemetery outside Grantsburg, Indiana near his parents and Benjamin is buried in Nashville National Cemetery, South Madison, TN 37115, Section B, site #6419. The manner of their deaths is consistent with fully 67% of how all Civil War deaths occurred. In fact, consistent with death patterns of all wars up to and including the horrendous disease source deaths of World War I. World War II would be the first time these percentages were modified as a result of scientific advancement and organization.

More Apprehension for the Roberson and Yates Families.....

While Mahala's heartache came quickly in 1862, Elizabeth Roberson Yates apprehension would be drawn out but not typical. Her husband John Yates enlisted at Grantsburg, Indiana on November 20, 1861 for a period of time extending for, "During the War" and reported for duty seven days later on November 27, 1861 at Camp Nevin, located 76 miles from home in Munfordville, Kentucky.

John Yates joined Company K, 38th Indiana Volunteers Infantry along with these neighbors and family: Cyrus Benham (Sergeant), Peter Curl, Moses O. Goldman, died at Madison 30 April 1864, George Goodson, Thomas W. Goodson, Wm. Goodson, Laban Gregory, James G. Land, James Laswell, Talbert McCraney, George W. Roberson, William Greenberry Roberson, George W. Seaton, Daniel Yates and others. John & Daniel Yates were brother-in-laws as they married sisters and John and Daniel were most likely first cousins.

John Yates' Company First Sergeant was William G. Roberson, his wife's first cousin. Because John Yates and his wife Elizabeth Roberson were first cousins, William G. Roberson was a first cousin to both John and his wife Elizabeth. Upon Company K formation, James G. Land enlisted with the rank of corporal. He subsequently was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and thereafter was appointed Captain and Company Commander.

Talbert McCraney married Samantha (Matt) Yates on May 4, 1865 just after the close of action which means he will become John Yates's son-in-law. In regards to today's Yates and Roberson descendants: John Yates is the 2nd great-grandfather of Ronald E. Yates. Esther Ada Yates and Daniel Robert Roberson are the aunt and uncle of John Yates. John Yates and Nidrah, Jack and Dale Roberson are 1st cousins 4 times removed.

John Yates's experience as a soldier in the broad view brings to mind an old quote: "If it wasn't for all the bad luck, I wouldn't have any luck at all". Three months after joining his company John Yates was hospitalized and subsequently given thirty days medical leave which needed extension when he returned for some unknown ailment. He reported back to duty in March 1862 and participated with the company during the summer months. It would appear that during this service he was injured either in action or by accident such that he could not ambulate well. When his regiment was to march to Nashville in October 1862 he could not make the march and was subsequently hospitalized again. His condition worsened to the extent that physicians initiated a medical discharge from the Army and he departed for Grantsburg January 7, 1863 understanding he was no longer in the military.

John Yates's problems were just beginning but he didn't know it yet. The Army Medical Staff failed to report or file John's medical discharge to his previous Company Command. He returned home to his family to try to regain his health. He apparently was suffering from multiple problems, some orthopedic and some infectious producing large quantities of fluid drainage when his chest cavity. His survival was likely a surprise to all concerned. While at home he wrote several letters to his previous officers and friends. So you can imagine his surprise eight months later in September 1863 when the Provost Marshalls arrested him for desertion and transported him immediately to Chattanooga as a prisoner.

The John Yates Court Martial (AA 623) was conducted in Chattanooga, TN on October 22, 1863. The full transcript of the proceedings were discovered in 2008 and confirmed previous deduction based on logic as to how things took place. 1st Lieutenant James G. Land, 2nd Lieutenant George S. Newman, Captain George W. Windell, Surgeon John Curry, and Private George W. Roberson testified at his Court Martial. After a review of the facts including a copy of his medical release from the Army endorsed by the 2nd District Provost Marshall he was found not guilty of all charges and specification. His reward for all of this was he was now re-enrolled in the Army and was welcomed back to his old Company K Company with his neighbors and friends.

At this point his Company was involved in the siege of Chattanooga, Tenn., September 24-November 23, 1863; Chattanooga-Ringgold Campaign November 23-27; Lookout Mountain November 23-24, 1863; Mission Ridge November 25, 1863; Pea Vine Creek and Graysville November 26, 1863 then Ringgold Gap, Taylor's Ridge, November 27, 1863. The Company then started their duty at Rossville, Ga., and Chattanooga, TN, until February, 1864, and at Tyner's Station and Graysville, GA until May 1864. The winter of 1863-64 was passed at Rossville, GA and Chattanooga. While at Rossville, GA the regiment re-enlisted on the 28th of December, 1863, and, on the 3rd of January, 1864, the entire regiment started home on a Veteran furlough reaching Indianapolis on the January 9th with 360 men and officers.

It would seem logical that John would be excited to see his family he likely had not seen since he was taken away under arrest earlier in September 1863. Waiting for him at home on January 10th or 11th after traveling from Indianapolis was Samantha 16, James Wilson 13, Thomas Jefferson 11, Evaline 8 and twins Emmie and John R. age 6, waiting to see and touch their father again. The celebration of the homecoming was shattered when little Evaline age 8 died for some unknown reason about 10 days later. You can imagine the grief felt by all as they bury their young child near their home at Lankford School Cemetery. The last time they will see their father will be on the 26th of February, 1864 when the regiment returned to Chattanooga and moved to Tyner's Station in March and then Graysville, GA in April 1864 in preparation for the push to Atlanta.

April, May, June and July 1864 will represent the best and worst of men at war as the Federal advance proceeded and the Confederate forces resisted each and every bloody mile of ground. In mid-July 1864 the Federal advance paused in Vinings, GA while both sides continued to engage and posture with one another. Vinings GA was a notable stopping point as the topography of the area shows this area to be the highest point showing a commanding panoramic view of the terrain. While Company K, 38th Indiana Volunteers was encamped in and around the Chattahoochee River John Yates's luck finally expired along with him on July 14, 1864. As a formal notification system did not exist yet during the Civil War, we lift from pension records that must have come from anecdotal information that John was inside his tent and a tree fell and crushed him dead. Falling trees were

not an unusual occurrence at the time but, to say the least, it was unfortunate for John Yates.

Mahala May Yates and Elizabeth Roberson Yates carried on with their lives as best they could. Mahala will remarry Cyrus Benham who served along with John Yates in the 38th Indiana. They will go on to produce a family of their own and John Winfield Yates's daughter appears to have grown to adulthood and married. Elizabeth will not remarry but will live until 1906 and age 83. She will soon bury one of the twins, Emmie who dies in 1872 and is buried next to her sister at Lankford School Cemetery. She is also preceded in death by her son James Wilson and his daughter, sweet Nellie B. Yates from smallpox in 1903. She, James, Nellie and others are buried in Grantsburg Cemetery.

More Misery on the Way.....

George William Roberson is the 8th child out of eleven of Daniel Robert Roberson and Esther Ada Yates born December 10, 1815 in Meade County, Kentucky. He married Sarah A. Kinter November 6, 1834 in Harrison County, Indiana. Sarah was the daughter of George Kinter and Susannah Lamb born September 11, 1810. They show up on the 1850 Sterling Township Census already with 9 of their eleven children. George William will reach age 80 when he dies in 1895 and Sarah age 78 and will be buried in the Grant-Roberson Cemetery in Grantsburg, Indiana. George William Roberson and Sarah Kinter Roberson are the 2G uncle and aunt of Nidrah, Jack and Dale Roberson. George and Sarah are the 4G 1st cousins of Ronald E. Yates.

Oh what a time to be a parent! Just as others were doing, the nine Roberson boys would have sat around endlessly discussing how they were going to be able to participate in the great upcoming conflict. Of the nine boys produced by George William and Sarah six were at an age appropriate for military service. We don't have an indication of how the final decisions were made but we do know that five of his sons will enlist and three of them will die. Disease would be the cause of at least two of their deaths.

Twins William T. and Daniel M. age 21 along with their older brother James F. age 25 would meet up with Captain George S. Babbitt on July 12, 1861 a week before the disastrous First Battle of Bull Run is fought near Washington, DC. They had made a decision to join Company D, 23rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry together. The first to die will be twin William T. Roberson who takes sick while in New Albany in January 1862. He is likely hospitalized for January and February and subsequently is sent home and will die of typhoid fever March 12, 1862. Typhoid fever, also known as Yellow Jack, is transmitted by the ingestion of food or water contaminated with feces from an infected person.

The 23rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry was based at Paducah, Kentucky until February, 1862. From there they marched into Columbus, Kentucky on

November 7-9, 1861 and thereafter moved to Fort Donelson, TN February 12-15, 1862. They executed an expedition toward Purdy and operations about Crump's Landing, TN March 9-14 and the Battle of Shiloh, TN April 6-7 and then advanced on and conducted a siege of Corinth, MS, April 29-May 30. They march to Bolivar, TN and stay there until September 1862. The second to die is James F. Roberson who will die May 21, 1862 in a Shiloh TN hospital presumably from wounds received in the Battle of Shiloh, just a short few months after his brother William. There exists a discrepancy between his death dates per his military records compared to his headstone death date of December, 1862. He is dead early in this conflict none the less.

The third to die will be 24 year old Daniel M. Roberson who dies May 22, 1864 in New Albany. Like his twin William T., Daniel apparently was very susceptible to disease as well. His Company records indicate he was present for regular duties through December 1861; however he fell ill beginning in January 1862 and never returned to his regular unit. Although serving differently then he might have first imagined he indeed served well and consistently. His records indicate his presence serving in capacities described as nurse and at times as a teamster for the U.S.A. General Hospital #1 located in New Albany. He served in these roles until he is recorded as dying on May 22, 1864.

It is a sad poignant thing to see the first time you walk into the small cemetery off old route 37 in Grantsburg and view the headstone of George William and Sarah Kinter Roberson with three identical headstones for their sons William, James and Daniel next to them. Henry Clay Roberson decided to enlist in Company H, 81st Indiana Volunteers Infantry along with John Winfield Yates and Benjamin H. May. He will return home safely and marry his sweetheart Mary Jane Landiss and live to age 86. George W. Roberson enlisted and served in Company E, 38th Indiana Volunteers Infantry and will also return home safely and live until age 78. He will marry Mariah Martin who is the granddaughter of Robert Yates and daughter of Cassa Yates Martin.

George and Mariah are buried in Grantsburg Cemetery just a few feet from their cousin Elizabeth Roberson Yates, widow of John Yates who died in Vinings, Georgia. In an interesting twist of fate, as John Yates was struggling to make his march to Nashville with his unit October 1, 1862 he encountered George W. Roberson. This encounter turns out to be important as George W. Roberson provided testimony in the 1863 Court Martial held in Chattanooga which exonerated John Yates. And lastly, George William's youngest son, Adam will marry Alice Goodman. This marriage will produce Eunice Aldah Roberson who will marry Rev. Mann Roberson. They are buried in Hamilton Roberson Cemetery.

Another story about migration involving the Roberson and Yates Families.....

James Yates b.1796 was part of the general migration of the Yates family from Kentucky to Crawford County in the early 19th century. We have records that indicate that James married Mary Ann Butler b.1792. Mary was a widow who had previously married William Irvin when they resided in Barren County, Kentucky. James and Mary were married January 7, 1819 in Crawford County, Indiana. Our best judgment at this writing is that James and Mary produced six children: John b.1825, Silas b.1827, Elias b.1829, Catherine b.1834, Benjamin b.1837 and George b.1840.

Three brothers will migrate to Illinois perhaps drawn by the work in coal fields, land speculation or other interests. In 1860 we find Silas and his wife Jane, Elias and his wife Rachel and we find George who will marry Eliza Jane Rockwell living in Will County, Illinois. This migration is how we find three good Crawford County men residing in and serving in Illinois military units. George elected to serve in the 39th Illinois Infantry and Elias served in the 100th Illinois Infantry.

The 39th Illinois Infantry was organized at Chicago, IL and mustered in October 11, 1861 then moved from to Hancock, Md., December 11, 1861 for guard duty on Baltimore and Ohio R. R. till January, 1862. Moved to Cumberland, Md., January 5 then advanced on Winchester, Va., March 7-15. Reconnaissance and operations throughout the Shenandoah Valley; marched to Fredericksburg, Va. then on to Fortress Monroe, Va., August 16-22, and duty there till September 1, 1862. Moved to Suffolk, Va. and there until January, 1863.

The 39th moved to New Berne, N. C. January 23, 1863 then to Port Royal, S. C., Camp at St. Helena Island, S. C., and then an expedition against Charleston, S.C. April 7-13 with occupation of Folly Island, S. C. April 13 to July 10, 1863. It was during this time that George took a leave and was home and married Eliza Jane Rockwell on June 16, 1863. Conducted attacks on Morris Island, S. C. July 10 with assaults on Fort Wagner, Morris Island, S. C., July 11 and 18. Then siege work of Forts Wagner and Gregg, Morris Island, S. C., and operations against Fort Sumpter and Charleston July 18-September 7, 1863.

Capture of Forts Wagner and Gregg, September 7 and siege operations against Charleston, S. C., until October 1863. Duty at Folly Island, S. C., and at Hilton Head, S. C. until April, 1864. On January 1st George Yates reenlisted for 3 years and also was promoted to Corporal. The 39th veterans went on furlough home January 1 to February 3, 1864. They then moved from Chicago to Washington, D. C., then to Yorktown, Va. Work against Petersburg and Richmond May 5-June 15; occupation of Bermuda Hundred and City Point May 5, 1864; Chester Station June 6-7; Weir Bottom Church May 9; Swift Creek May 9-10 and Proctor's and Palmer's Creeks and Drury's Bluff May 12-16, 1864.

Siege operations were conducted against Petersburg and Richmond June 16, 1864 through April 2, 1865. Operations conducted on the Bermuda Hundred front till August 14, 1864. On August 16, 1864 George W. Yates was given a field

promotion from Corporal to Sergeant for gallant conduct. The 39th are in the trenches in Petersburg, VA August 25-September 27; Chaffin's Farm, New Market Heights, September 28-30. Then Darbytown Road October 13, 1864. On October 13, Union forces advanced to find and feel the new Confederate defensive line in front of Richmond.

While mostly a battle of skirmishers, a Federal brigade assaulted fortifications north of Darbytown Road and was repulsed with heavy casualties. The Federals retired to their entrenched lines along New Market Road. It was during this assault that George W. Yates was seriously wounded by gunshot and was taken prisoner. His wounds were so severe that he was rapidly paroled and returned to the Federal forces for treatment. We know from his records that he was transported to the City Point, VA area and medically evacuated by the USS Steamer New York. He was processed through Parole Island near Annapolis, Maryland and admitted to USA Hospital Division #2. At the age of 24 on October 26, 1864, George died from his wounds. He was buried but subsequently reburied at Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington, IL.

Speaking at a 39th Illinois reunion held in February 4, 1885, Sergeant D.H. Slage made the following remarks regarding the events at Darbytown Road October 13, 1864:

“At 2:00 P.M. we are in front of the enemy’s works at Darbytown Crossroads. Our regiment and brigade are deployed in close column by division; the order comes down the line to charge! You all recall that terrible YELL, as we made the assault through the brush, the air seeming filled with whizzing bullets, the scream of solid shot and shell, the rattle and sweep of grape and canister through our ranks. Comrades fell on our right and on our left; we find the “Johnnies” too many. Their forces behind protected works outnumber ours two to one. The old brigade find they cannot take the works this time, and are compelled to fall back and re-form their line. That day I and many others were wounded and made prisoners.

Color-Sergeant George W. Yates who sleeps in the cemetery nearby in Will County, that day received his fatal wounds and was made prisoner. I was transferred in the same ambulance with him to Richmond; blood from his wounds trickling along the pike the entire distance from Darbytown battlefield to the city, he having received four severe wounds that proved fatal a few days after our parole and arrival at Annapolis, Maryland.

You will recollect that just before the order came to make the assault our mail arrived and was distributed. His company was on the skirmish line; their letters had been handed to Sergeant Yates, of the color-guard, who placed them in his left breast coat-pocket. In the assault he received a bullet which pierced those letters and also his watch, and penetrated his side, the letters turning the bullet away from the heart. The next day I noticed those letters saturated with blood,

and I have often wondered if they ever reached the parties to whom they were addressed, or whether the writers ever knew that their letters had helped to turn a rebel bullet from the heart and for a brief period spared the life of one of our brave men.”

George's widow Eliza Jane Rockwell would remarry after the war and have three children before she too dies young in 1870. George's brother Elias also received serious wounds in the Battle of Chickamauga September 19, 1864 and will be medical evacuated to Keokuk, Iowa. He survives the war and returns to Rachel in Wilmington. We lose track of him in a migration at a later date. George's other brother Silas W. Yates and Jane Wellman Yates live a long life in Wilmington. They are buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Wilmington, IL. George W. Yates is the 2G uncle to Ronald E. Yates and George W. Yates and Nidrah, Jack and Dale Roberson are 1st cousins 4 times removed.

Last story on how this affected the Roberson and Yates Families.....

After the migration from Kentucky we find George Roberson Jr. and his wife Francis residing in the English area where they raise six girls and a boy starting with Mary in 1813 and ending with their youngest Sarah born 1833. The 2nd daughter Eleanor known as Nelly at 17 falls in love with her cousin Daniel Roberson Jr., marry in 1833 and have three sons. Daniel is the 7th child of Daniel Roberson and Ester Ada Yates.

Their daughter Elizabeth will have her first son out of wedlock; his name is Origin Roberson. Origin will serve in the 1st Indiana Calvary and survive the war. Their only son, William Greenberry Roberson must have had remarkable leadership qualities as he is appointed the 1st Sergeant of Company K, 38th Indiana Volunteers Infantry. Their daughter Lavina will marry John Wesley and she is the mother of Mahala and Benjamin May described above.

Their daughter Francis will marry John M.B. Scott who serves in the 81st Indiana with John Winfield Yates and Ben May and survives the war. And their youngest daughter Sarah born in 1833 will marry Silas S. Breeden. Silas's brother Francis has already married Mary Ann Yates, a daughter of Tolbert Thompson Yates and Jane McCraney. There must be a very close relationship between the Yates, Roberson and Breeden family at this point as the 1860 census indicates that Ester Ada Yates Roberson, widow of Daniel Roberson Sr. and sister to Robert Yates appears to be living with James Breeden and his wife Sally.

The first of our two subject warriors to die is Silas S. Breeden. We do not know the exact details of his day to day service but we know he served with the familiar Company K, 38th Indiana Volunteers Infantry. We have recently been able to identify that while serving with the 38th he died on August 25, 1863 in Decherd, TN and buried at Stones River National Cemetery about 25 miles east of Nashville. The Civil War dominated life in Decherd during the war years. No

major battles were fought in the area, but several skirmishes were fought over control of the railroad and Elk River. In 1863 Federals under Colonel John T. Wilder drove a Confederate force from Decherd and destroyed about 300 yards of the railroad between Decherd and Cowan. From pension records we know that Sarah began a widow's pension starting October 28 1863 through March 1878. This may be the date of her death but this is unknown.

By 1865, Samuel C. Roberson, the eldest of the three sons of Nelly and Daniel Roberson turned 19 years of age. Either through a volunteer decision or as a result of conscription Samuel entered service with Company D, 144th Indiana Volunteer Infantry at age 19. He mustered in February 9, 1865 in Jeffersonville, IN.; he was described as blue eyes, light hair, 5'8" tall of fair complexion. By March 8, 1865 he was already home where he presumably died of disease. He is buried at Hamilton-Roberson Cemetery. Daniel Roberson's pain will be extended further as his wife Nelly dies about a year later and is also buried at Hamilton-Roberson Cemetery.

Summing up some Thoughts.....

Does any of this matter to us? No, we can get through the life we are leading today and not think too much about the days of old. In the big picture our concept of old is all relative and is just simply part of the continuum of life; we are not living out our ancestor's future, we are living our now and we ought to make the best life we can out of the opportunities we have been offered. One of the reasons I am so struck by the deaths of John W. Yates, Benjamin H. May, John Yates, William, James and Daniel Roberson along with George Yates is they were not given the same life opportunity we have been given but I am sure they gave it their best shot. We owe our ancestors to be the best we can be I think, particularly those who died young so we might have a better life.

I am constantly reminded as I read and study through the census reports, family histories and cemetery records just how close we are through our family lines separated sometimes only by small degrees of angle on the family tree. In this case our subject has been how the Roberson and Yates families that migrated in the 19th century are very close and those ties bind us yet today. I am surprised at times how isolated and myopic we can become and amazed at how open we can become almost immediately once we acquire a mutual understanding of how we are related. It seems family matters after all and I am glad it does.

Research credit is acknowledged to Mr. James Courtney, Ms. Jane Bye, Ms. Sharon Newlin & Mr. James Robert Yates, Sr.; I have relied extensively on their earlier works regarding census data evaluation and speculation as to certain relationships.

I wish to acknowledge the warm selfless interest in family and the outstanding example of a life well lived by Wilbur Wilson Yates 1915-2006.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of Mr. Richard Eastridge, Crawford County Historian and the Crawford County Historical & Genealogy Society in promoting interest in Crawford County and give special mention to Mr. Larry Burmeister for the work he is doing.

I also want to thank my 5th cousin Mr. Jack Roger Roberson b.1931 for a warm reception on a day when his other option was to tell me to get off his porch!
Thanks Jack!

The combined reported deaths during the US Civil War were 618,000; 204,070 (33%) deaths were described as "battle deaths leaving 414,152 "non-battle deaths" (67%).

Special thanks are extended to my 2nd cousin Norma Hall Ewing for her insightful editing assistance. And lastly, any corrections or better interpretation of the facts are warmly solicited and any errors or confusion is entirely my own.

Ron Yates 7/22/2008