

Crawford County, Business Papers of Alexander Byerly, 1881–1903

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The Indiana Historical Society library has several Crawford County items in its collections. One of these collections includes the Hollcroft & Sons 1876 account book, featured in an article published in the 2000 volume of *The Hoosier Genealogist*. A second article, published in 2004, provided a transcription of an 1820 letter from Lorenzo, Lois, and Susanna Chapin of Leavenworth, Indiana, to Jonathan Wales of Whitestown, New York. This article will feature material from the Alexander Byerly Papers, 1883–1903.

One of the least populated counties in Indiana, Crawford County is bounded by Perry, Dubois, Orange, Washington, and Harrison counties with acreage along the Ohio River. Much of the county is hilly and covered by the Hoosier National Forest, and both Marengo Cave and Wyandotte Cave are located on its eastern side. The county was formed in 1818 from part of Harrison County, and later portions of Perry and Orange counties were added to bring Crawford County to its present size.¹

Crawford County shares characteristics with many other southern Indiana counties. Today it has less than fifty people per square kilometer. Historically, many people in the county farmed and worked in the timber industry, shipping their products on the Ohio River. The most important crops in the area were corn, tobacco, and melons, and many farmers also raised pigs—both for meat and other items such as lard, soap, and candles.²

Brief research on Alexander Byerly and in the Byerly Papers collection provides a few details that flesh out life in Crawford County in the latter half of the nineteenth century. General Land Office Records show that Byerly purchased eighty acres of land in Crawford County on September 1, 1856.³ The 1860 census lists Alexander Byerly, twenty-four, working as a cooper, and living with his wife Mary L. Byerly and two young daughters, Clara A. and Julia.⁴ Byerly is listed in a history of Crawford County as a member of the Independent Cavalry Company, “organized to protect the border and watch the river front” during the Civil War.⁵ Military records reveal that Byerly mustered into the unit on August 13, 1863, and mustered out on

April 23, 1864.⁶ In 1878 Byerly was summoned by the board of commissioners of Leavenworth to serve on a committee to hear an argument for a Frank Campbell, who was petitioning the board for an application to sell liquor from a room in a house in town. The application was denied.¹¹ Except for the Byerly collection, nothing further is readily available on Byerly or his family until records show that he applied for a pension on April 13, 1893, as an invalid, and that his widow Mary L. applied for the pension on February 14, 1906.⁸

The Alexander Byerly Papers collection in the IHS library fills in some of the nearly thirty years between 1878 and 1906. It consists of a promissory note from 1881; a bill dated 1882 on letterhead from Fleming & Davidson, a company located in Leavenworth; receipts from 1883 through 1885, several written on Boone Township forms, for work Byerly did sawing and hauling logs and timber; a receipt from [18]90 for payment on land sold and deeded to Byerly; and a chattel mortgage from 1903 that Byerly had drawn up by a lawyer in English, Indiana, to cover a loan of \$110. According to the terms of the mortgage, Byerly would have come into the possession of a great deal of mill equipment if the mortgage was not paid off in the specified manner.⁹ Judging from the date of the chattel mortgage and the date of his widow's filing in the pension records, Byerly must have died between mid-July 1903 and mid-February 1906.

Notes

1. Ann Mensch, "Crawford County, Indiana, History < - > Genealogy," http://home.att.net/~Local_History/Crawford-Co-IN.htm, accessed April 22, 2009.
2. Historic Southern Indiana, University of Southern Indiana, "Economy," <http://www.usi.edu/hsi/trivia/economy.asp>, accessed April 22, 2009.
3. Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, "The Official Federal Land Records Site," <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>, accessed May 4, 2009.
4. 1860 U.S. federal census for Jennings Township, Crawford County, Indiana, p. 18, Alexander Byerly household, online at <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, accessed February 17, 2009.
5. Hazen Hayes Pleasant, *A History of Crawford County, Indiana* (Greenfield, IN: Wm. Mitchell Printing, 1926), 247.

6. U.S. Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles database and American Civil War Regiments database, online at <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, accessed February 17, 2009.
7. Pleasant, *A History of Crawford County*, 449.
8. National Archives and Records Administration, Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934, online at <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, accessed February 17, 2009.
9. Alexander Byerly Papers, 1883–1903, SC 0166, Indiana Historical Society.

[Promissory note]

Leavenworth Ind. January 28 1881

Eight-months after date, I Promise to pay to the Order of Alex. Byerly Fifty Dollars, With ten per cent. interest per annum until paid.

At _____ Value Received.

[handwritten in:] waving valuation and appraisalment—laws of Indiana.

No. _____ \$50 Due _____ [signed:] Edmond Lahue

[Bill]

M. L. FLEMING. A. G. DAVIDSON.

Leavenworth, Ind. Jan 6th 1882

Mr A. Byerly

To FLEMING & DAVIDSON, Dr.

DEALERS IN

Wheat, Hay, Corn, Sorghum Molasses, Dried Fruit,

AND ALL KINDS OF COUNTRY PRODUCE.

RED FRONT, No. 67 NELSON STREET

1881

Oct	10	To Bran	1 65
"	17	" "	2 20
"	21	" "	1 25
"	25	" "	1 35
Nov	7	" Mdse	2 30
"	26	" Corn	2 07
1882			
Jan	2	" "	1 35

[12.12?]

\$ 12.17

[Receipts]

Name	Date	Amount	For
John Baker	Jan. 3 1883	\$5.20	hauling
Joseph Verney	Mar. 9, 1875 Jan 3, 1883 Aug. 24, 1885		
William Stevenson	Jan 5, 1883	\$7.40	hauling
Joseph Shorter	Jan 3, 1883	\$7.20	hauling
Peter Hail			timber
Brainey/Rainey	Jan 3, 1883		sawing; hauling timber
Thomas Hall			
Aurile Froman	Jan. 5, 1883 Sept 2, 1885		sawing
[Fiola?] Lynch	Jan 5, 1883		lumber
Andy Bower		\$9.67	lumber
Geo Huffman	Sept. 23, 1874 Nov. 28, 1878		
Thomas Hall	Sept. 23, 1874	\$11.40 \$11.14	

[Receipt for payment on land]

Leavenworth Jan [2] '90
 Rec'd of Alex Byerly \$200 in payment of land sold & deeded him.
 [signed:] John E. Goodman
 By Jno. H. Weathers.

[Chattel Mortgage]

Know All Men by these Presents, That James O. Brown of Crawford County, Indiana, has this day sold, and do by these presents sell, assign, transfer and set over to Alexander Byerly of Crawford County, Indiana, the following described personal property, to-wit:

- One Second Hand Engine Heilman Make, 18 Horse Power, with Boiler and attachments complete
- One Drive Belt ten inches wide
- One Carriage and Two [Head Blicks/Blocks?], saws, &c" being all the appurtenances complete constituting One Circular Saw Mill

The conditions of this bill of sale are, that said James O. Brown has executed to said Byerly three promissory notes, each dated this date, each for Eight per cent interest, from date, and as follows: \$40⁰⁰ due three months after date, \$40⁰⁰ due six months after date and \$30⁰⁰ due Nine months after date, all of same executed by said James O. Brown, and payable to said Alexander Byerly Provided, however, that if said debt and interest be paid, as above specified, this sale and transfer

shall be void. The property sold is to remain in possession of said Mortgagor until default be made in the payment of the debt and interest aforesaid or some part thereof; but in case of a sale, or disposal, or attempt to sell or dispose of the same, or a removal of or attempt to remove the same from the place where it now is, or if from any cause, the security shall become inadequate, the said mortgagee may take such property or any part thereof into his own possession, and upon taking said property into his own possession either in case of default or as above provided, said party of the second part shall sell the same at public or private sale, and after satisfying the aforesaid debt and interest thereon, and all necessary and reasonable costs, charges and expenses incurred, out of the proceeds of said sale _____ he shall return the surplus to said party of the first part, or his legal representatives, and if from any cause said property shall fail to satisfy said debt and interest aforesaid, said party of the first part agrees hereby to pay the deficiency.

In Witness whereof, The party of the first part has hereunto set his hand _____ and seal _____ this 13 day of July ~~1899~~1903

[signed:] James O. Brown (Seal.) . . .

State of Indiana, Crawford County, ss.

Before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public

in and for said County, this 13 day of July 1903

[formerly appeared] James O. Brown and duly
acknowledged the execution of this Chattel Mortgage.

Witness my hand and official seal.

[signed:] Jerry L. Suddarth. . . . N.P.

[stamped upside down:] My Commission Expires April 5, 1905.

[From cover of chattel mortgage:]

Geo. [N./W.?] Cuzz[o/a]rt Recorder of Crawford County, Indiana

Jerry L. Suddarth, Lawyer, English, Indiana

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