

# Palmyra Men Fell at Shiloh

by Tom Emery  
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The Civil War battle of Shiloh was one of the bloodiest of the western theater in the Civil War. Several Palmyra men were among the 13,000 Union troops who were casualties in the battle, 160 years ago this month.

The troops were part of the 32nd Illinois, which lost 224 of 546 effectives at Shiloh, contested on April 6-7, 1862. The regiment was commanded by Col. John Logan, a Carlinville physician who is often confused with his first cousin, the controversial John A. “Black Jack” Logan of southern Illinois political fame.

The fighting was particularly fierce on the first day near the Union center, where the 32nd was stationed for part of that day’s action.

The combat was so intense that the position earned the nickname “Hornet’s Nest,” reflected in the words of an officer of the 52nd Illinois, who wrote that “balls flew around and among us like hail.” There, several central Illinois regiments manned an increasingly untenable position.

At least six Palmyra men of Company A of the 32nd were killed in action on April 6. The descriptions in the muster rolls reflect the cross-section of men, particularly from rural areas, who served from Illinois and elsewhere.

Many of them were young, including Pvt. Charles Alford, a Tennessee native. He was just 18 years old. Pvt. Corydon Gifford, another Palmyra casualty, was just a year older than Alford, as was Pvt. Issac Smith, a native of Kentucky.

All three were listed as farmers, as was Joseph Rice, who also fell at Shiloh. The first lieutenant of Company A, Rice was a dark-haired 32-year-old.

They were not the only Palmyra men of the 32nd to die in the war. Another combat death was Cpl. Samuel Delaplain, 35, a farmer with brown hair, hazel eyes, and a dark complexion. He was killed in action at Nickajack Creek, Ga. during the Atlanta campaign on July 5, 1864.

Sgt. Nathan Gill, an English-born mason who was 27 years old, died of smallpox in Memphis on April 29, 1863. The muster rolls list Pvt. Gilford King as only 17 when his life ended at Rome, Ga. on Aug. 10, 1864.

Pvt. William Moore, like many others, was a farmer, though he was of smaller size, standing only five-feet-four and a half inches. Twenty-eight years old, he died at Memphis on Sept. 9, 1862.

Some never even made it to the field. Pvt. George Chiles, a 24-year-old merchant with light hair and a fair complexion, died at Camp Butler during training on Sept. 22, 1861. That was also where Pvt. Preston Mahan, a 22-year-old farmer, died that November 2.

While many Civil War soldiers died hundreds of miles from home, some breathed their last in more familiar surroundings. Pvt. Samuel Hodges died at home in Palmyra on Oct. 31, 1861, two months and two days after enlisting. Two Palmyra men died in Girard in May 1862, possibly from wounds or illness contracted while in service.

In addition to the 32nd, Palmyra men were scattered across various other units, including the 14th Illinois Consolidated Infantry and the 133rd Illinois, a 100-days unit that performed guard duty at the Rock Island military prison. Some were also in cavalry units, such as the 10th Illinois Cavalry.

*Tom Emery is a freelance writer and historical researcher from Carlinville, Ill. He may be reached at [ilcivilwar@yahoo.com](mailto:ilcivilwar@yahoo.com) or 217-710-8392.*

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