

HOLY CROSS BROTHER CIVIL WAR VETERANS:
The Grand Old Army of Notre Dame:
G.A.R. Post No. 569 of the Department of Indiana

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In 1910, there were eight brothers living in the Community House who were veterans of the War Between the States. Each had seen his share, and more, of combat: one had been held as a prisoner of war; one heard at the onset of a battle, a voice that declared “you will die today;” one was to become well known as a contributor to the science of all things bees; another would become the lab assistant to Father Zahm in the new Science Hall; and three others were so self-effacing that little is known about their 40+ years as Holy Cross Brothers. Each man was alive and fully functioning in 1897 when they, and the three living priests’ chaplains, comprised the membership of the newly formed G.A.R. Post 569 of the Department of Indiana. This was the only G.A.R. Post in the country composed exclusively of Catholic religious members—Brothers and Priests, and in their case, all but one was a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

Included in the photo of these very proud and stately men are those seated in the first row: Brother Leander McLain (his last name is spelled three different ways in archival materials), Rev. General William Olmstead (a diocesan priest), Rev. William Corby, Rev. Peter Cooney and Brother John Chrysostom Will. Standing in the second row are Brother Benedict Mantele (his last name is also spelled with two ls in some records), Brother Ignatius Mayer, Coronel William Hayes, Brother Raphael Maloy, Brother Cosmos Bath and Brother Eustachius McInerny. The eighth veteran, is Brother Agatho Parle, living at the time, but not pictured in this photo. My research has yet to provide why he was absent.

Three—Leander, John Chrysostom and Raphael were Pennsylvania-born—Pottsville, Chess Springs and Homer. Three were born in Ireland—County Clare, Wexford and Galway. And two were born in Wurtemberg, Germany—Benedict and Ignatius. When the clarion call came to side-up and fight, each took his responsibility as a citizen in this new land of liberty seriously. Each lived through five years of hell

emerging battered and scarred and for many unknown reasons prepared sometime after 1865 to join the Army of Christ as so many civilian soldiers did throughout two millennia.

There is much that has been written about the Holy Cross priests who were Civil War Chaplains, three of whom are of legendary status not only in Holy Cross, but the annals of Civil War history. There has also been a significant amount written about the Sisters of the Holy Cross who from the time of Mother Angela Gillespie responded to Father Sorin's request for nurses—some eighty of them—with legends like Mother Augusta Anderson and Sister Paula O'Neal receiving a good bit of historical accolade. My reading for this paper found no mention of the Brothers veterans except in James M. Schmidt's good read entitled *Notre Dame and the Civil War: Marching Onward to Victory* published in 2010. In Chapter 10, "Let Us Have Peace" in the section called "New Lives and New Arrivals" he devotes pages 111-115 to the brother veterans. He includes eleven Brothers—one a sailor, and a Brother Sebastian (Thomas Martin) who "was wounded seven or eight times during the fighting". We have a file on Brother Sylvester Martin, but nothing on Brother Sebastian Martin. If he was living with the brothers at the Community House, there is no mention of him on any of the community lists of residents. The US archive has nothing and Covid prevented my access into the Notre Dame archive. Yet, interestingly, he is mentioned in *Aidan's Extracts* in a quote taken from the October 6, 1897 article on the GAR Post, and he is buried in the Community cemetery.

Two of the veterans, Brother Ignatius and John Chrysostom, entered the congregation just two years after the war in 1867. Brother Leander entered in 1872 and Brothers Eustachius and Cosmos entered in 1877. The final three, Brothers Agatho, Benedict and Raphael enter in 1879. There is nothing I have found that described what these men did during the years after the war and prior to their entry in Holy

Cross. In fact, most of their files are very slim. Two files, Brother Leander's and Brother Benedict's, contain short, but informative bios, written by Brother Edward (religious name Hyacinth) Snietecki.

In the 1897 *Scholastic* article there is a snippet taken from the St. Louis Post Dispatch chronicling how the GAR Post came to be when General Olmstead and Father Corby were sharing their war stories. Olmstead, a diocesan priest "suggested that there were enough old soldiers at the University" to form such a post. "Father Corby counted off a dozen old warriors, and the organization thence grew into a reality through the efforts of Brother Leander."

In 1897 the roster for the GAR post listed the following brother members:

- Brother Richard (William Stoney), 38 New Jersey Volunteers – no file on this man
- Brother Sebastian (Thomas Martin) 1st Pennsylvania Volunteers Calvary – no file
- Brother Polycarp (James White) U.S. Navy – no file
- Brother Leander (James McLain) Corporal, 15th US Infantry
- Brother John Chrysostom (Mark Wills) 54th Pennsylvania Volunteers
- Brother Cosmas (Nicholas Bathe [*sic*]) 2nd US Infantry (His last name is spelled Bathe) Bath on his file
- Brother Eustachius (John McInerney) 38th Ohio Infantry Volunteers
- Brother Benedict (James Matele [*sic*] [the n has been left out of his last name]) 1st Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery, United State
- Brother Ignatius (Ignatz Mayer) 75th Pennsylvania Infantry Volunteers
- Brother Raphael (James Maloy) 133rd Pennsylvania Volunteers

Brother Leander became one of the charter members holding the office of Vice Commander. In 1905, he placed the flag upon Peter Cooney's coffin. During his war years, James McLain was described by a fellow soldier as "very brave, a big strapping fellow, always very religious, and never failed to say his prayers in the morning and the evening. No matter what the surroundings or circumstances, this show of religion was absolutely sincere and earned the profound respect of every man in the regiment."

As a brother he was a revered Prefect, truly loved by students who held a special celebration for him on his tenth anniversary of installation as their prefect complete with a poem that begins "We Cecilians of '83 / Remembering 'tis your jubilee, / (Your tin one too) at Notre Dame / You've on our gratitude a claim. / For kindly acts to each and all, / For sprightly students great and small."

When Provincial Andrew Morrissey reopened the House of Studies for the Brothers in 1906, Brother Leander became its superior because "his words and example could be counted upon to instill in young religious the virtues for a successful religious life." In 1909, he retired after 30 years of active service in Holy Cross, and he passed on to his beloved heavenly general at age 68 in 1911.

As Brother Leander was a man of exemplary example and virtue, so, too, was Brother John Chrysostom Will. He was the soldier who just prior to entering battle heard a voice that said, "You will die today." Stunned he prayed to the Blessed Mother for assistance telling her, "If I am spared death, I will enter a religious congregation." He next heard, "You will only be wounded today" and that is what happened. It took him three years after the war to honor his prayer to Notre Dame du Lac.

The three photos of him depict more a monk than an active religious. He held the position of Assistant Master of Novices for many years and saw to the general upkeep of the novitiate grounds. He had two hobbies one very practical, beekeeping, and the other oddly esoteric: researching the life of the

Russian Prince turned missionary priest Father Gallitzin who spent so much time ministering in Pennsylvania, that his name graces a Pennsylvania hamlet.

Brother John's bees were truly busy. The novitiate and the Community House were never without honey, and, apparently, very good honey. He had so many hives that he named them after religious communities that he called "bee monasteries": Cistercians, Carthusians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Augustinians, Redemptorists, Passionists, Oblates and Christian Brothers. He contributed many articles to the scholarly apiculture journals of the time and became nationally noted for his work. He died a "holy" death in 1919.

One claim to fame for Brother Benedict Mantele was that he fought on both sides of the Civil War. Landing in New Orleans when he came from Germany, he was almost immediately pressed into the service of the Confederacy. Although he openly expressed his dislike for slavery, he saw "severe fighting in several areas, until he was taken prisoner by Union forces in Pennsylvania. While in the prison camp, he heard President Lincoln's proclamation offering amnesty and freedom to anyone who changed allegiance. He immediately stepped out of ranks, and "to jeers and curses" he joined the Union Army.

In the memoirs of Brother Raymond Ott, there is the recollection of an evening during recreation when Brother Benedict asked if anyone wanted to hear how he was converted in Germany. "All urged him to tell us the story." He was a mischievous boy and disliked school, "yet [I] got a fairly good knowledge of my religion." He made his first communion when he was 13 and the following year, against his parents' wishes, he left for America because "I was determined to see the New World. My mother made me promise that I would be faithful to my religion."

He landed in New Orleans and we know the story of his time in the Confederacy and in the Union Army. During 18 years of that time he was able to attend mass only one time, "however, I said my

prayers.” After the war he worked building forts throughout Texas “which at the time was infested with Indians.” Once when he and the other fort builders were camped in a field, Benedict was herding the goats, and Indians attacked. “I barely got back to camp – bullets and Indians all about me.” He was so mentally exhausted by the event, he did not sleep well and had “a vision of my mother dressed in black standing beside me. “Why, mother, how did you get here?” I exclaimed. “You are dead” was her only answer. “No, I am not dead. The Indians did not kill me.” “But your soul is dead because you did not keep your promise. Go at once to Austin and make your peace with God. I promised and she disappeared.”

He was found the next morning in a kind of trance, and the men gave him up for dead. Yet he does finally get to Texas and makes his confession to Holy Cross priest Daniel Spillard. Several years later he meets some Brothers and “their peaceful and devoted life appealed to me.” He travelled to Notre Dame and became the brother who spent 35 years “contributing to the needs of the community in any way possible” and one of his tasks was to assist Father Zahm in the new Science Building caring for the equipment and the physical plant. I’m uncertain how much of the back story prior to Notre Dame is true, but it is a good yarn.

Brother Raphael’s story is not nearly as Zane Gray as Benedict’s, but he was a real mechanical genius who spent years modernizing the presses at the Ave Maria. He made a version of a coco clock that was the talk of the University and South Bend. According to Brother Onesimus, Brother Raphael was a man who helped whenever needed. On the occasion of the hiring of a lay superintendent, “To be polite, Brother Raphael told the new man that he would be glad to be of any assistance he could, but the new man curtly said that he did not need help. This nettled the good Brother, so he did not show up to the Ave the next day, nor the next, nor the next.” The editor, Father Daniel Hudson, finally tracked him down.

Hudson gave him a good talking to, and Raphael said "Yes, Father. Yes, Father." When he returned the next day, the layman was gone.

There is next to nothing one can learn about Brother Cosmos. When he died in 1917, the two living members of the GAR, Raphael and John Chrysostom, saw him to his grave. All that is recorded in his file is that he worked for years at the Ave as a printer.

Brother Agatho is another man about whom nothing has been left to history save that he worked as a landscape gardener and that he was assigned to Saint Joseph Farm in Granger. He is only mentioned in a list of the farm brothers that is one a series of lists in Brother Carl (Aloysius) Tiedt's 1987 short but very informative history of the Farm "The Peat Bog". There is also a lot of back and forth emails between Brother John Kuhn and members of the Parle family who were looking for information to add to the family genealogy. John provided some photos of his gravestone in the Community cemetery and little else.

Brothers Eustachius and Ignatius have left even less information about themselves other than that the first was the steam man and the later did the butchering of the cattle, perhaps pigs and other animals too, but nothing that indicates that.

The most remarkable part of my work with these men is that there is a formal portrait photo of each of them. I have done many short bios of late nineteenth early twentieth century brothers with no existing images of any of them. The files are rife with images of these men and really interesting ones. Perhaps, because they were veterans, they were given the latitude to sit for formal photographs. This was definitely not the custom for the early brothers.

Finally, each of these men brought their gifts to Holy Cross not because of the war, but regardless of it. For a few the gifts given to Sorin were grand, and for the remainder the gifts were quite pedestrian.

But for each of these old warriors, and their photos radiate it, there is a determination in their individual eyes that provided them with the ability to be victorious as citizens of this world and very worthy citizens of heaven.