

Civil War veterans of Trempealeau County organized the Winfield Scott Post at Whitehall in 1883. At one time this organization had a membership over eighty. A membership that was exclusively made up of Civil War veterans sealed the fate of this organization. The following paragraphs give a description of some of those historic figures.

William Louw was born in the state of New York, Ulster County, December 23, 1840. His parents Wessel Louw and Hannah De Pew Louw were both in New York state. In 1852 William, in company with his brothers, Rufus and Ira and their parents, left their New York home and landed in Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois. Here the two brothers contracted the dreaded disease cholera and died in less than 24 hours from the time they were taken sick. They were buried in a Presbyterian cemetery.

Shortly after this William and his parents emigrated with horse team and wagon to Dartford, Wisconsin, Green Lake County. This being the month of March made the going slow and tedious. At that time they covered in the neighborhood of 25 to 30 miles a day. The nearer they came to Wisconsin more snow was encountered which retarded their progress.

Arriving at their destination, Wessel Louw hired out for a farmer by the name of McConnell at \$16 a month for the season and William, then only a lad of 13 years acted in the capacity of cow boy with wages at 25 cents a day.

The following spring Wessel Louw and Herman Schneider (a friend from New York) walked from Dartford to Trempealeau County to hunt a location, having heard that prospects were great in this section of the country for farming. He finally located in what is now known as the "Carpenter School District". He took a preemption on 80 acres of land three miles west of Blair.

In a years time he was required to pay \$100 for the 80 acres and gained his title on the land in that manner. To pay for this land he went to a La Crosse bank and borrowed money and paid 50 per cent interest for one year. The following year Hubbard Hines, a neighbor lent him money for five years at 20 per cent to pay the debt. The interest money was paid in working for Hines at 75 cents a day. The same fall his wife and son William joined him. A log house was built and the water they needed was taken from the river. Here they lived peacefully and happily until the war broke out in 1861. In the month of August,¹⁵ 1862 William enlisted. Their recruiting officer was G.Y. Freeman of Galesville. The recruiting was done in a school house in what is now known as the village of Blair.

There was a call made at this time for 600,000 volunteers and William responded to his country's call. He was supposed to go in the 25th Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteers, but when he came to report everything up to the 30th Regiment was filled, so he served in the 30th Regiment, Company C. He was at this time about 21 years of age.

Their squad had headquarters at Galesville and boarded in hotels. Alexander A. Arnold was their commanding officer. Here they drilled for a time and were then ordered to Madison. The farmers hauled the soldiers with teams as far as Trempealeau and there they waited for the steam boats which was loaded with troops for the same regiment. Their squad was last company to board the boat. They went to Prairie du Chien and got there at daylight the following morning. Then they went by railroad to Madison. Arriving there the soldiers were ordered in line and although nearly noon they were then served brakfast which consisted of hot coffee (minus the cream)

bread cut into "chunks" about three or four slices or chunks to the loaf. The soldiers were then ordered to leave for Camp Randall, where they made their headquarters for nearly a year. When night came they were ordered into the cow barns out on the fair grounds. When the soldiers craved heat they had to cross the race track to an old sheet iron stove that consumed four foot wood. To feed this heater they had to carry wood from the railroad track on their backs, a distance of about 60 rods. A squad of 75 or 80 men would go once a day to perform this duty. While at Camp Randall their chief duties were drilling and doing guard duty.

From Madison they were transferred to Camp Washburn at Milwaukee, also located on the city's fair grounds. While here they were sent in squads to different places. At one time a squad of which William was a member was ordered to West Bend, once to Hartford and then again to Brownsville on the Fox River and not far from Waupun to look into some disturbances which had arisen and needed the presence of soldiers.

William remembers an incident centered about William Thompson, Sam Wood and himself. One morning these three men hired a boat to take a boat ride. They went to the state asylum at the head of the lake, etc., and finally encountered an old comrade by the name of Silas Parker, who was off duty and invited them to have supper with him and his family. This invitation was gladly accepted, after which the boys returned to their boat to leave for camp again. In the meantime a wind storm had come up and William said it was a miracle he survived to tell it as the boat was but a toy in such a wind and they could make no headway. They ran the boat to shore and left it in the brush and made a "double quick" march, a distance of about five

miles, to camp. Imagine their consternation on arriving to find their company gone. Their bunkmates had, however packed their knpsacks and left instructions that they had left for New Lisbon. Duke Porter, was William's bunkmate. They immediately took the track for the depot and just made the distance as the train pulled in.

This change in the company's plans was due to a disturbance arising in Juneau County over Indians murdering a white woman, and this squad of soldiers was sent to guard the whites from further assaults.

Their next move was in the spring of 1864 when his regiment moved to St. Louis, Missouri. They went up the Missouri River in the spring of the year into the wilderness and built Fort Rice. While here there were about 50 wagons of emigrants going from St. Paul to Idaho and they were guarded by military cavalry men. After they had been gone about a week a couple of scouts came on horseback to Fort Rice asking for help. They had come as far as the Bad Lands and were surprised by the Indaian. A squad of infantrymen, including William in the ~~5th~~ number, footed a distance which covered two weeks time and finally brought them back to the fort.

Late in the fall the regiment was called back to Kentucky. Here they had to cut logs to make boats to get where they could make transportation by railroad. They finally landed at St. Joseph, Missouri and that night the Missouri River froze. There they laid in tents waiting for transportation and for weeks they had to shovel snow to set their tents.

Another incident at this time, depicting the brave, ^{staunch} ~~staunch~~ heart of soldier on duty is shown in the following narrative. A report was given that three desperadoes or guerrillas were located and William's squad

was ordered to get them. Captain Chappell of Galesville had charge of the squad. They took the steamboat in the evening, went down the Ohio River. Here they found a guide and travelled on foot all night. Just at break of day they approached the place. They made an attempt to enter the log building which had no windows, only cracks between the logs. Here lay a wounded man with two comrades caring for him. On attempting to make an entrance the soldiers found the door barred. The guerrillas fired shots through the cracks of the logs and wounded three of the soldiers. After considerable deliberation the enemy hung out a white flag which meant surrender, opened the door and the soldiers entered and captured them. The wounded men were brought by the farmers to the river and put on board the boats and went back to Louisville, Kentucky. A day or two later one of the guerrillas, having confessed, they were hung, a scaffold being built right in camp.

From Louisville his company went to Bowling Green, went into tents and stayed there until the surrender of Lee's Army in the spring of 1865, were then ordered back to Louisville to do more guard and garrison duty until they were discharged.

With wages at \$13 a month William managed to send \$9 a month home to his parents, which paid off the mortgage on the old farm home.

William Louw married Mary Jane Colwell of Jackson County, January 12, 1870. Eleven children were born. His wife died in 1910.

William Louw

George Dacher enlisted in Sauk County, August 12, 1862. He was a member of Company K, 26th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers. The company was sent to Milwaukee where the first two months of their army life were spent in drilling at Camp Sigel. On September 17 they were mustered into the Union Army and October were sent to Virginia. The 26th Regiment was called upon for reinforcements in the battle of Fredericksburg. They made the march, but arrived too late to engage in the fight. The next few months were spent in winter quarters and in the spring of 1863, engaged the confederates at Chancellorsville and at the historic battle of Gettysburg.

Mr. Dacher's regiment was then ordered to Waring Station, Virginia, and then into Tennessee, where they spent a month and lived on one third rations. The boys were weakened by the latter expedition and scarcity of food, but were rushed into the battle of Missionary Ridge. General Burnside and his men were in need of help at Knoxville, Tennessee, and the 26th was again called upon. They made the march, but arrived too late to give assistance. They returned to Lookout Mountain where they joined Sherman's Army and took part in the triumphal march from Atlanta to the sea.

The army was forced to forage their provisions enroute and two men from each company were detailed for that duty each day. On March 5, 1865, Mr. Dacher was one of the men assigned from his company. It developed to be an unlucky day for the entire party as they were all taken prisoner. George was confined in an army prison until April 3, when he was released and returned to Annapolis, Maryland. Mr. Dacher's service in the Civil War for his adopted country was then drawing to a close. His next move was to St. Louis, Missouri then to Madison and from there to Milwaukee, where he received his honorable discharge.

Chris and Ole Nelson were born in Norway and came to America with their mother and two older brothers and settled in Milwaukee in 1854. A year later after their arrival their mother died, leaving the boys to shift for themselves. Chris Nelson relates that he worked for \$4 a month, but out of that sum he saved money.

In 1861 he came to Trempealeau County and on August 28 enlisted in Company H, 10th Wisconsin Infantry. The regiment was first sent to New Lisbon and later to Louisville, Kentucky, where they were in training until the following spring. The 10th Wisconsin went into active service under General Thomas and was first stationed at Nashville, Tennessee. A campaign was carried on in that section during the winter and following summer. In September, 1862 they took part in the battle of Chickamauga, which was one of the important battles of the Civil War. In this engagement the 10th was captured by the Confederates and Chris was among the prisoners. They were taken to Libby Prison first and after being shifted from one place to another in Virginia they were confined in Andersonville, which has gone down in history as one of the most horrible prison camps maintained during the Civil War.

Mr. Nelson was confined there nine months and a total of 16 months in Confederate prisons. He recalled an incident which was serious at the time, but he thought little of it because he had little hope of getting out of Andersonville alive. Gangrene had set in his arm following vaccination and the Rebel doctor wanted to amputate it in order to save his life. Chris refused to submit to the operation. His condition was grave and he was once carried from his bunk to the street, supposedly dead, where he lay among hundreds of Union soldiers who had succumbed to scurvy as a result of eating nothing, but beef, black beans and corn meal. Thousands starved to

death, died from wounds and disease as a result of bad food and no medical attention.

While lying there in the sun Mr. Nelson asked two boys to carry him to a pine tree. The boys did as requested and put the stretch upon which he was lying over his body. Due to his rugged constitution he survived and at the close of the ninth month, Mr. Nelson was among prisoners seriously injured exchanged for Confederate prisoners. They were taken by boat from Charleston to Annapolis, where he was mustered out of service and returned to Trempealeau County.

During Mr. Nelson's confinement at Libby Prison he met another Trempealeau County boy, William Lennon, the late father of Mrs. A.E. Van Sickle and Mrs. J.C. Southworth. Mr. Lennon nearly succumbed to hunger and privations, but was fortunate to be exchanged and returned home and lived to an advanced age, dying at Whitehall.

Following the war Mr. Nelson took land in Preston and farmed until the death of his wife, since which time he has lived with his daughter Anna at Blair.

Ole Nelson was a resident of Blair when the Civil War started. In June, 1861 he enlisted in Company A, 5th Wisconsin Infantry and engaged in many of the important battles of the war.

The first part of his army experience was with General McClellan in the Army of the Potomac and he took part in all the major engagements in that campaign. He was under General Grant for a time and fought in the bloody battle of Gettysburg. Later he accompanied his regiment into New York state to deal with the Copperheads, who were plentiful in that state during the rebellion.

After three years of service and his honorable discharge he returned to Blair. After the death of his wife he went to Kent, Ohio to make his home with his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. E.H. Willard.

Samuel E. Alexander was born September 18, 1845 at Youngstown, Ohio. At the age of 17 years he enlisted in Company A, 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry on the 6th day of August, 1862 at Youngstown.

Mr. Alexander experienced his first battle October 6 at Perryville, Kentucky. The regiment lost 265 men out of 1000. Later at Milton, Tennessee Morgan's Confederate Army was encountered and defeated. On August 19 and 20, 1863 they were engaged in the battle of Chickamauga. Mr. Alexander fought in the battles of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain and experienced 100 days of fighting enroute to Atlanta, Georgia, and was with Sherman on his famous march to the sea. As a result of foraging supplies through the country which they traveled they were dubbed "Sherman's Bummers."

Mr. Alexander was discharged at Washington D.C., June 9, 1865. In 1867 he moved to Trempealeau County and built one of the first buildings in Whitehall, the Exchange Hotel.

Lester Dewey Parsons was born in Jefferson County, July 16, 1845. When he was only a baby the family moved Marshall, Dane County. His father died when he was seven years old. Four years later his mother married Deacon Alvah Wood and the family moved to Trempealeau County and settled within a mile of what later became the village of Whitehall. That was in 1856, and when the Parsons family came into the valley there was not a wagon track to direct them on their route. Indian trails up and down the valley were numerous, but their presence only added to the discomfort of the pioneer families venturing into a new land. Fortunately the Winnebagoes were a peaceful tribe.

Mr. Parsons stepfather was not a man of rugged health and during the first several years of their residence in Trempealeau County he had three sieges of sickness which confined him to his bed for three years each. During his latter illness the Civil War was in progress and young men were answering President Lincoln's call for volunteers. Mr. Parsons could not leave home until late in the war. His stepfather finally regained his health and was able to take charge of the farm and Mr. Parsons enlisted in the Union Army. He was first sent to Camp Randall, where he was taken sick with measles. He recovered, but his health was impaired. In view of that fact he was detailed as an orderly and officiated as clerk for the company, which was stationed at St. Louis. Later they were ordered up the Missouri River to Fort Leavenworth and Kansas City, where General Beveridge called for a clerk and Mr. Parsons was selected for the position. His duty was copying all special orders. He continued in that capacity until the end of the war. While Mr. Parsons service record is not as glowing as some he offered his services to his country and fulfilled his duties in one of the armies engaged in the great conflict to preserve the Union.