

THE 1ST CAVALRY REGIMENT, WISCONSIN VOLUNTEERS

BY S.F. Darling

Some years ago, an elderly friend of mine, Mrs. Robert Wolters, who has since passed away, gave me a package of civil war letters. These letters had been written by her husband's uncle, William E. Spencer, who was a volunteer member of Company G, First Wisconsin Cavalry whose commander was Captain (later Major) Nathan Paine of Oshkosh.

Spencer volunteered on Oct. 1, 1861 and after training at Camp Fremont at Ripon, then at Camp Harvey at Kenosha and finally at Benton Barracks, St. Louis, Mo. was sent to Cape Girardeau, Mo. where different companies of the regiment were dispersed to the interior of Missouri and Arkansas for active duty. Spencer's letters cover all these movements and his last letter was written on Sept. 7, 1862 from Helena, Ark. On September 26, 1862 he succumbed to disease on a steamboat near Memphis, Tenn. He was the son of Elihu Spencer, an early Appleton pioneer, to whom most of the letters were addressed.

From the time he enlisted until he died he wrote thirty one letters home and in my possession are twenty eight of these letters and their covers. Fortunately for us his sister, Fidelia Spencer, saved every letter her brother wrote home whether they were addressed to her, her father, or another member of the family. Each letter has been numbered consecutively beginning with No. 1 dated Oct. 15, 1861 and postmarked Ripon, Wis. to his last No. 31 dated Sept. 7, 1862 written from Helena, Ark. and postmarked Memphis, Tenn. The actual letter No. 31 is missing in its envelope and in its place is a clipping from the local paper, Appleton Motor, of a copy of his last letter.

Letters numbered 5, 16, and 22 are missing. Mrs. Wolter told me she gave these three letters to a descendant of Captain Paine in Oshkosh because he was mentioned in these letters. I tried to con-