

## Museum Notes

by Kristen Parrott, curator  
for the week of February 25 – March 3, 2018

Have you ever heard of the Bad Axe Tigers? That's a funny name. The name dates to 1861, when our county was still called Bad Axe County (it changed to Vernon County in 1862).

The "Bad Axe Tigers" is a nickname for Company C of the 18<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, which fought in the Civil War. The company was organized in Viroqua in December of 1861. Many companies were given nicknames, such as the Anderson Rifles (Company I of the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, also from Viroqua) and the Lemonweir Minute Men (Company K of the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, organized in Mauston).

You can learn more about the Bad Axe Tigers at our next free public program, to be held at the museum on Tuesday, March 6, at 7PM. Local pastor Pete Beckstrand has been researching the Bad Axe Tigers recently, and he will share what he's learned.

Brett Barker's book, *Exploring Civil War Wisconsin: A Survival Guide for Researchers*, has a good definition of a company: "For most soldiers, the company remained the most important organization. Commanded by a captain and containing approximately 100 men, companies often consisted of men from a single community who went into camp together. Companies formed early in the war carried colorful names" – such as the Bad Axe Tigers – and "when ten companies were combined to form a regiment, the companies received more practical letter designations" – such as Company C.

The captain of the Bad Axe Tigers was Newton Layne of Viroqua. Pastor Pete has studied Layne's Civil War letters, which are in the museum's collection. The 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment fought at the Battle of Pittsburgh Landing, or Shiloh, in Tennessee on April 6, 1862. On April 9, Newton wrote home, "I am a prisoner of war in the hands of the enemy but am well treated and I am well and unhurt. 15 or 20 of my company were killed and all are missing but 15 that ... were taken at the time I was .... in a few minutes we will be taken further south."

What happened next? Well, you'll have to come to the program to find out. Programs are held in the museum's handicapped-accessible conference room. Everyone is welcome to attend. Refreshments will be served afterward.

The genealogy class will not meet on its usual date in March but instead will meet on Wednesday, March 14, at 10AM at the museum. The guest teacher for the day will be Liv Marit Haakenstad, visiting scholar from Norway, who will talk about doing research using Norwegian and Norwegian-American newspapers. More details next week.