



PRISONER AWAY FROM HOME

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As part of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, The Monroe Evening News will feature correspondence from Monroe County soldiers who served during the war.

This is the first story in an occasional series about local soldiers. The first story features Frederick Knapp, who wrote a poem about his experiences being imprisoned during the war.

The original copy of Mr. Knapp's poem is stored in the archives at the Monroe County Historical Museum.

The family of Frederick (Fred) Knapp never knew about the poem he wrote while he was imprisoned during the Civil War.

It wasn't until 1993 when former Monroe County Historical Museum archivist Jennifer Barner contacted Mr. Knapp's grandson Elton Lewis Knapp. At the time, the grandson was living in Indianapolis.

"I never heard Civil War stories from Gramps Fred only from our dad, Fred," the grandson wrote to Ms. Barner. "He was betrayed by his horse making noises while he hid in a barn."

Fred Knapp was one of five children born to Ludwig Knapp and Madeline Zahn Locker of Monroe.

He enlisted on Sept. 20, 1861, and served as a member of Company E of the Sixth U.S. Calvary.

Just before his capture, Mr. Knapp was serving at the Battle of Fairfield, just outside of Gettysburg.

"His horse shot from under him at Stonewall and (he) grabbed another and ran as far as it took him to a barn where he was captured."

— Elton Lewis Knapp
writing about his grandfather in a letter to
Monroe County Historical Museum archivist,
Jennifer Barner

"His horse shot from under him at Stonewall and (he) grabbed another and ran as far as it took him to a barn where he was captured," the younger Knapp said in his letter to Ms. Barner.

In the untitled poem, Mr. Knapp writes that he was captured on July 3, 1863.

The soldier was taken to Andersonville where, according to Monroe County Historical Museum records, he nearly died before he was released. After his initial capture, he spent more than a year in three prisons: Belle Isle, Libby and Andersonville.

The poem was written on Jan. 5, 1864, and was recently read aloud during an event at the Monroe County Historical Museum.

In the poem, Mr. Knapp talks about the prisons he stayed in but also offered hope for his eventual freedom.

"But I ever kept on hoping, Amid the prison a loom," he writes. "Though I

often wished for freedom. From out the living tomb." While in captivity at Belle Isle prison, Mr. Knapp was treated for kidney disease, which nearly killed him.

During the course of writing the poem, the author receives news of his release.

"For came to me the glad news, Put new life in my soul," he writes. "And but a few days afterward, I was at Camp Parole."

Camp Parole was one of three camps established during the Civil War to accept paroled Union prisoners of war. Camp Parole was in Annapolis, Md.

In the poem, Mr. Knapp talks about his time in captivity and missing his native Monroe.

"In my own native Michigan, In beautiful Monroe, I saw the Raisin running on," he wrote of the river.

After his release, Mr. Knapp was discharged after three years of service at Baltimore, Md. He then returned to Monroe where he worked as a farmer in Raisinville.

According to his obituary, he first married Julia Ruhle on Oct. 1, 1865 and had eight children. On Nov. 28, 1906, he married Ricka Muehleisen.

A member of the Monroe GAR, Mr. Knapp received disability payments from the government after the war and was paid \$65 a month until he died Sept. 3, 1927.

He is buried at Woodland Cemetery.



An untitled poem by Frederick Knapp, captured July 3, 1863, during the Civil War

*I may tell a few adventures
With interesting dates
For I'm a Calvary Soldier of
The Sixth United States
I was captured, fellow comrades,
On the Third of July, of Sixty Three,
Over Eighteen Months ago
I was took in Pennsylvania,*

*In Georgia, at Savannah
The sick men knew my care
And I witnessed scenes of sadness
And scenes of sorrow there
I'll not speak harsh Savannah now
Thou wast not harsh to me
But a lucky star has risen there
I with delight did see.*

*In my own native Michigan
In beautiful Monroe,
I saw the Raisin running on
So beautiful and bright
Ah oft since I had left Monroe
Had I dreamed of the night
And there it was before my eyes
My fancy need not roam*