

ECHO OF THE PAST

The following is a copy of a letter written in September 1862 by Mrs. David Currier of Nicollet, and in it she describes the feelings of those who were driven from their farms at the time of the Indian Outbreak in 1862. The letter was written to her brother-in-law, Henry Currier, in Canada and was found among his effects and sent to Mrs. Ned Rist, a daughter of Mrs. Currier.

Eden Prairie, Hennepin County, Minn.

Sept. 12, 1862.

Dear Brother Henry:

I was glad to hear from you and to hear that you are all well, but sorry to hear of the death of your wife. Your nearest and dearest friend has left you, and no doubt you feel her loss very keenly but you cannot recall her, she has gone to a better world than this. This world is full of trouble and trials. We are in great trouble here at present for the Indians have driven us from our homes. We were warned at the dead of night when we were all sleeping soundly and unaware of danger. We arose and started out as soon as possible leaving everything behind. We turned out the hogs into the fields of grain to remain there with all the rest of the things. There were two of our neighbors houses burned and two of our near neighbors killed. No tongue can tell, no pen can describe the awful depredations, the horrible savages have committed. They strip themselves of every article in the shape of clothing and lie down and crawl on the ground in the grass like a snake, fill their heads with wild flowers from the prairie so they may not be seen. The troops will be out watching for Indians, when they can't see Indians anywhere around. They rise out of the grass and fire into the troops before the troops even have time to take aim. There are over a thousand men, women and children that have given up their lives, but the government has succeeded in getting only a few of the Indians yet. Parents are finding their children stretched

and nailed to the sides of their houses through their hands and feet. They leave some with their arms cut off, others with their leggs cut off, and some with their stomachs cut out. I saw one child with seventeen hatchet gashes in it. I tell you it is an awful thing to see their work.

There was one poor woman who witnessed the killing of her husband and all her children except the baby, three weeks old. Then they locked the woman and child in the house and set fire to the house. She ran down cellar and the house burned over her head. She crawled out of the cellar window with her child in her arms and crawled off in the tall grass almost burned to death. She crawled about a mile day until she reached the fort, living on roots and grass all that time. She kept her child with her. This is a hard story to tell, but true never-the-less. I tell you it is awful to think of the terrible distress that is going on here, and the crops and property that is fat going to destruction. I cannot tell you only a small portion to give you a faint idea of it.

We are sixty miles from our farm. My husband takes the state of affairs very cool, but I cannot. We are all very destitute of clothing as I have told you, we had to leave everything, and no money to get away from here with, nor to buy clothes or provisions of any kind with, so it seems as if we must suffer this winter. We are working for our board now but cannot stop here this winter. The house is small and very cold. We have worked hard and fared hard since we left Canada, and seen some very hard times. We had just got so we thought we were quite well off, a plenty of everything around us and a good crop, quite a little stock and then we had to leave it all, and never expect to go back there again. It is hard to think of, sometimes I am almost crazy and at other times I think there will be some way provided for us, so that we may not have to suffer. Tell my folks that I shall write them in a few days and I hope I shall have better news.

The Indians say they will take the country and it looks now as if they would. They have taken a great many women and children prisoners, painted them and dressed them in their own style and made them eat grass and roots. The government is trying to buy these prisoners, but I'm afraid they will never get them alive. Some of them are people we know. They will try to make a treaty with the Indians. If they can surround them they will kill every Indian squaw and child so there will never be any more trouble with Indians. They are led by white secessionists from down south, and are armed by them. They go in companies of twenty.

Will try to write to you soon as we expect to be driven from here at any time and are ready to go at a moments notice, so do not write until you hear from us.

Give best regards to all of our friends,

(Signed) Electa Currier

This was copied from the piece in the Nicollet paper published years ago.

[Typed By A. L. Henn.
Collected by Kathryn
Johnson-Catherine Rafter

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[Typed By A. Dana Flynn.
Collected by Kathryn
Johnson-Catherine Puffer.

INTENTIONAL DUPLICATE EXPOSURE

DAKOTA CONFLICT OF 1862 MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS
MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55102

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