

INDIAN MASSACRE OF 1862

at Redwood Agency

Four wrecked homes

15 killed -all relatives

2 taken captive

Only survivors of the family in America.

This is an authentic story: of my grandmother's captivity with her baby. She, Mrs. William Ienefeldt, nee Wilhelmina Zitzlaff whose second husband was a soldier-Frederick Grose, lies buried together with him at Olivia, Minnesota. The baby (my aunt) Mrs. Charles Lawin is still living at Renville Minnesota. The four wrecked homes were located in Renville County near the Minnesota River-where Beaver Falls and Flora townships join.

1. Father-Micheal Zitzlaff

Son- Mr. and Mrs. Micheal Zitzlaff Jr.

2. Daughter

Mr. and Mrs. John Meier---three children.

3. Daughter

Mr. and Mrs. John Seig ----four children.

4. Youngest Daughter

Mr. and Mrs. William Ienefeldt-one child

Written by Dorothy Kuske
from incidents told by my grandmother
Mrs. Wilhelmina Zitzlaff Grose
my aunt
Mrs. Charles Lawin
my mother
Mrs. Emma Grose Kuske

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5400 6 Apr 43 Kuskus, Dorothy

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INTENTIONAL DUPLICATE EXPOSURE

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

6 1 7

On a peaceful Sabbath morning in Aug. 1862, an old frontier father sat on the doorstep of his sons home, basking in the sun, thankful that his three daughters were happily married and living in homes near each other. Yes, each one lived on a choice location, in log cabins amid the wooded hills, overlooking the valley of the Minnesota River; raising crops to the north, on earth that had just been wild prairie. -----How hopeful he was for the future of his children ! -----

There now he must be up and going, wasn't that Micheal calling ? Yes, he and his wife Mary were ready to leave !

They went to a neighbors house where an Evangelical Church service was held. Little did he realize this would be the last meeting he would attend, he and all his descendents save one, the youngest daughter and her baby.

After the service someone spoke up saying that a friendly Indian had warned them of a danger of the outbreak of the Sioux who lived on the reservation beyond the river. But those German settlers, accustomed to the redman's friendly visits, did not heed that warning.

A gun shot heard the next morning by Wilhelmina, who had gone with her brother Micheal to the Redwood agency to trade butter and eggs for groceries, put a real fear into their hearts ! "What was that ?" They inquired of the half-breed at this government store, he openly tried to be calm and answered that they were only shooting the white mans cattle because they were hungry. Secretely the brother and sister noticed he was greatly excited.

There followed an anxious two mile ride home, constantly plodding along the oxen and planning how they were to gather the four families fleeing with them, thirteen miles to Fort Ridgely.

Finally home, they instructed the aged father to load supplies on the wagon. The brother meanwhile ran to get his sisters families returning with them.

Wilhelmina, leaving her baby, went to fetch her husband. He couldn't believe it, asked for a few minutes to investigate. He told her he would lie behind the thicket and listen, she should run ahead taking the woods road instead of the prairie. When she arrived at the brother's house everyone was ready. She looked back, her husband had not overtaken her, she dashed back wildly and stopped as she came to their yard. The Indians had been there before

her! Feathers from her bed were flying in the wind, her furniture wrecked near the house-----
Where was William? On the doorstep a dark object lay-he'd been scalped before he had heeded. She took one look, then in her wild agony of grief fled back to her brother's, called for her child but did not know it---- flung it back and said it was not her baby.

In another minute they had her in the wagon, crowded together on the hay rack with all of her relatives. Afraid lest the savages be in the ticket they drove the prairie road, just a few rods around the cornfield in which lay crouching, twenty warriors and some squaws. They were ready to sound their war-whoop and spring upon them.

Those wicked piercing yells, a shot, and the ox driver lay dead. Someone shouted that each should try to dash for safety. The enemy sweeping down the hillside, would let none escape. The fastest runners were the first to be massacred. Thus it was that Micheal's wife Mary, soon to become a mother, and Wilhelmina, carrying her baby, were left behind. Seeing what had happened those two stopped, wanting to die with the rest. Just then one raised his gun to shoot Wilhelmina and the baby. The cap snapped, the weapon didn't go off. Three times it did this. Then he lowered it and said
"Wash ta W(good)

He reckoned the Great Spirit had protected her. He summoned three squaws and ordered one on each side and one pushing; she must be taken away captive. She called for Mary not to leave her. Those merciless ones quieted her by saying she would follow with the others-----but a shot fired just then, a squaw said it was only a dog, told her that now she was alone with her baby.

She begged to be killed but they taunted her, marched on down the river, crossed it in a canoe, and entered the Indian village. They led her into a bark tepee. They were to go to sleep now on a buffalo robe, no garments were to be removed, she had to spread out her wide skirt so one could lie on each side. But this night and many others were filled with sleepless tossless twitching. Just as many days were almost foodless. Yes they offered her meat, but it was stale, (The white man's cows had been shot and dragged along on a hot dry August day!) She could not drink (polluted water from the swamps) This eighteen year old robust mother soon grew pale and poor. That poor little four months old nursing baby how it suffered and cried! Tears have never been tolerated by that race but here was incessant crying; Once a squaw tried to drown the crying infant in a river while Wilhelmina swished their clothes in the water.

(6)
At one time they tried to choke her with a potato. At another time as Wilhelmina was sewing dresses from the cloth they had taken in plunder a young squaw raised a sharpened butcher knife but she clasped her child to her breast and received a frightful blow on her own head. It was on this day that the oldest squaw in their tepee became tender hearted. She would guard the baby herself hereafter and quiet the mothers fears from other hostile Indians.

The squaws were so extremely cautious that the white captives were very rarely permitted to see each other. Many times the other captives sought to communicate with Wilhelmina because she could interpret much of the Indian language. (She had learned some, from an Indian whom she had fed and sheltered in her home the Spring before. It had happened that on one warm day he had come to hunt near her home, while there, the ice in the river broke, the valley was flooded, and he was forced to remain as their guest until the water had receded). One afternoon during a quick consultation a seventeen year old lad and she planned an escape. That night when she thought the squaws were sleeping soundly she cautiously tried to free her skirt but her two body guards rose up each time they felt it stir beneath them

(7)
The band fearing the pursuit of the soldiers started to flee to the west, and with them she wearily marched all day bare headed in the hot sun, barefooted over the wild grass on the prairie, praying God to speed on those pursuers!!! She wished they might let her ride one of the ponies but he was loaded with bags of bundles, which were on the ends of two poles tied to his sides and fastened together behind him. When they came to the bank of the Redwood River she tried to ride on an ox wagon but the load was too heavy so she had to wade thru the water.

In the evenings as she squatted on the ground before the tepee she learned many customs of the Red Man; (1) How after riding all day the warriors would return flaunting skulls of women victims, holding up a finger and for each counting "Neepo". Then Chief Little Crow in all his pomp would ride back and forth talking loudly and praising his men for their good work. (2) How the young braves would mount their ponies and practice wild riding and shooting before the elders. (3) How the men would sit at the door of the tepee and relate tales of warfare until one by one they fell asleep. (4) How the warriors prepared for a battle by killing dogs and partaking of them in a Sacred Feast and staging their wierd dances.

(8) The night before the battle of Wood Lake was the last feast for that tribe! The soldiers won, and Chief Little Crow immediately planned; that the tribe should flee to Dakota, and the captives should all be killed instantly! But they werent-----Wilhelmina and her baby were saved again- a half breed hid them beneath a buffalo robe.

No, they didnt get to Dakota! A few days after that as they were encamped on a high hill (Camp Release, Montevideo) the warriors formed a circle. In the center of that circle a white flag was flying, flying high above on a hugh pole. Yes, there was to be a surrender! The prisoners were commanded to enter and when they had all done so they announced that the soldiers were very near and they would be given up to them. Everyone strained **their** eyes to the East and off in the distance they saw General Sibley with his First Regiment of Mounted Rangers, coming marching towards them. Their guns and muskets glistened in the morning sunshine. They drew up at the foot of the hill and held a conference with the Indian Chieftans.

During those weeks of continuous excitement Wilhelmina pressed on with the thought of the soldiers and freedom, but now as those soldiers, cheering, led her down the hillside, back to-----the thought that she had

(9) no one to go to flashed across her mind and she wept for the first time since the massacre.

Silently she rode back in this refuge train, the soldier beside her breaking the stillness by beseaching her to let him wrap his army blanket about her cold feet. They reached Fort Ridgely one evening at sundown. The company of soldiers, who awaited their arrival seated them at tables. Eating again at a table for the first time in ten weeks!

President Abraham Lincoln had decreed that a trial of all Indians should be held at Mankato, those proven guilty must be hung! So Wilhelmina was taken there to testify. In her testimony she identified one warriors face who had been in the party to murder her people. This face she could never forget, for it was the one of the friendly Indian hunter whom she had sheltered a few short months before in her own home.

After the trial they traveled to St. Peter where in an empty store relatives and friends flocked in to claim the prisoners. At the open window sat one last survivor---the young widow and her baby, who with tears in her eyes watched for someone to take her. Just then the soldier (Frederick Grose) with whom she rode from the West, looked in at the door. The sight that greeted him there melted his heart for her then we think, for after a year whrn she was living with friends he sought her hand and took her with him.