

*Geneva, Minn.*

The Hanging Of Thirty-eight Sioux Indians At Mankato.

In the year 1860, I came with my father from Harvard, Illinois , to Geneva, Freeborn County ,Minnesota. I was twelve years old at that time and Minnesota was in her infancy, having been admitted into the Union but two years previously.

My father bought one hundred and sixty acres of wild land and a log cabin was the only building we had for our home. The land was covered with timber, mostly oak and hard to clear, but this had to be done before we could raise a crop. Machinery was scarce in those days and the grain was cut with an old-fashioned cradle, then raked and bound by hand. Our hay was cut with a scythe and it was all very hard work.

The Civil War began in 1861, and in 1862 my father enlisted with Company E. 10th. Regiment Volunteers. This left me , a boy of fourteen years, and my step-mother to carry on the work of the farm. It was a hard struggle for us at home. Our grain had to be hauled to Winona, over a hundred miles away, to be marketed. A soldier's pay was small, being only thirteen dollars a month, so father did not have much to send home to us.

We did not have many of the luxuries of life, for coffee we used browned barley, carrots and crusts of bread, in fact, anything which would enable us to have something warm to drink. Besides the many hardships we were in constant fear of the Sioux Indians, as we expected them to fall on the white settlers at any time.

All of the able-bodied men and boys who were old enough to enlist were away , therefore we were all in great danger and always on the watch. One night my step-mother came to my bed and awakened me, saying that she heard something outside and feared it was the Indians. I quickly dressed and getting our old shotgun opened the window a little and watched. I was very brave, being fifteen, and intended to shoot any Indian who might come that way. The hours of the night wore away and no Indian appeared.

*[Crossed out]*

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INTENTIONAL DUPLICATE EXPOSURE

DAKOTA CONFLICT OF 1862 MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS  
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The entire company in which my father enlisted was made up of men from Freeborn County, and their captain and lieutenant were men from Geneva. They were first stationed at Fort Snelling and it was here that their captain, James Robinson, was accidentally shot, and his remains were brought back to Geneva for burial.

This was our first military funeral and it made a lasting impression upon us. The body was carried in a large government wagon, drawn by a team of six mules. To drive them the driver rode the left hand wheel mule and had one line on the left hand leader, the swing or middle team had no lines on them.

First Lieutenant John Heath was then made their captain. The company was soon moved to LeSeuer, and then to Mankato to guard the Indians who had been taken prisoners at the New Ulm and Birch Coulee massacres. The leaders of the Sioux Indians who had committed this terrible slaughter of the white settlers were tried by the government and found guilty and were sentenced to be hanged.

We had a horse team and while the soldiers were stationed at Mankato, I would drive there and bring the soldiers who were given furloughs, home and then back again. It was on one of these trips that brought me to Mankato at the time of the hanging of these Indians.

The scaffold was made in the shape of a square with a platform to be raised and lowered on the outside of it. A large pole stood upright in the center of the square, a pulley at the top, with a large cable running through it, which was brought down to connect with guy ropes all around the platform. This arrangement made it possible for the platform when raised, to be held in that position by fastening the large cable rope at the bottom of the large center pole.

At the time of the execution, the platform was raised and fastened. The Indians were brought out accompanied by a Catholic priest, and by means of a step-ladder ascended the platform. Some of the Indians were singing, while others were smoking cigars as they walked up the steps and around the platform to their places. Ropes were placed around their necks, caps were pulled down over their faces, their elbows tied behind their backs and their wrists fastened in front of them.

When everything was ready, a man whose family had all been killed by the Indians, stood with an ax in his hand to cut the big cable at the sounding of three taps of the drum. The signal was given, the waiting man severed the rope and all the Indians fell at once, one however, broke his rope but was immediately raised again.

After the physicians had pronounced the Indians dead, big government wagons drawn by six mules were brought to the scaffold. A soldier taking hold of either side of the bodies, while a third soldier cut the ropes which held them. The bodies were then placed in the wagons and carried to one long trench prepared for them. Here the thirty-eight Sioux Indians, leaders of the terrible massacre were all buried in one long grave.

*Julius Owen*

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Mahnomen, Minnesota. Box 349.

Julius Owen was 85 years old, July 11, 1933, and was an eye-witness to the hanging of the 38 Sioux Indians at Mankato, in 1862.