

[The following information was secured by I. Persons from Miss Elizabeth Whitcomb, Home for Aged Women, 3201 First Avenue South, Minneapolis, on Friday, June 11, 1937.]

George Carlos Whitcomb with his family arrived in St. Anthony in the spring of 1856 from the state of New York. The family consisted of himself, his wife, the former Anne Bell Felch whom he had married in 1847, and two children: Elizabeth, born September 29, 1853, and George who was four years older. Elizabeth had been born in Potsdam, New York, where her father had failed in business.

While in St. Anthony the family lived in a two-story white house on the bluff in Cheevertown overlooking the Mississippi river. They spent two years here and then left for a farm in Mesker County, Minnesota, about twelve miles from Forest City. Another son, Edward, was born there in 1861.

During the winter of 1861, according to Miss Whitcomb, her father suffered from ill health so the farm was rented to another family. This family lived in the granary.

The Whitcomb farm was in an attractive location on the shore of Lake Minni [?] Belle. The lake had been named by Mrs. Whitcomb and George, a combination of Indian and French meaning "beautiful water." There were no buildings on the land at the time of the Whitcomb family's arrival. However, Mr. Whitcomb secured white logs; a lime kiln was erected, and eventually a comfortable log house was raised. This consisted of two rooms (kitchen and living) and a loft above. The loft was curtained off by quilts thus creating several bedrooms.

Miss Whitcomb believed that there was no school in the locality during their first year on the farm. During this period she was taught at home by her mother, a clergyman's daughter. The second year there was a school, and a Miss Rice was the first teacher.



During these first years on the farm Indians frequently camped on the shores of the adjacent lake for hunting and fishing. Indian scares at this time were frequent. Settlers would come racing through the country with their stock and other possessions only to return to their farms in a brief time.

Miss Whitcomb was a trifle uncertain on this point, but she believed that her father was serving as county treasurer about 1861. On one occasion he did not wish to bring money for safe-keeping down to Minneapolis; consequently, his wife, Elizabeth, Mrs. Delamater, and George drove to Minneapolis with the money. The journey required two days' driving. The first day they reached Monticello, the second Minneapolis.

Shortly before the outbreak several Indians, who had camped near the lake during the winter or autumn, returned for a wagon they had left behind. At this time one of them (Miss Whitcomb recalled that he always wore a gold bracelet on one wrist) hinted that an outbreak would occur. After the interview, Elizabeth asked if the whites and Indians were going to fight. Her father replied, "They wouldn't dare."

One Sunday, after Mr. Whitcomb had left his family to go to Forest City, Mrs. Whitcomb spied a man riding across the prairie toward their farm. He had come to tell them that the Jones family had been murdered by a group of young braves. Jones, according to Miss Whitcomb, had often sold whiskey to the Indians and cheated them in various ways.

Since the granary was made of stout oak boards, the Whitcomb family and their renters, decided to seek safety in it. They were in the granary for some time when the dog outside began to bark. Mrs. Whitcomb was certain the Indians had come. Then wagon wheels sounded and finally stopped in the farmyard. Someone

called, "Ho, Mrs. Whitcomb." Mrs. Whitcomb recognized the voice as that of a neighbor, Mr. Branham. The occupants of the granary came out. Mr. Branham and other settlers had decided to come to the Whitcomb farm because it would be easier to defend against attacks. The house and granary stood on a rolling bit of land. Two men from the neighborhood who had been sent out to investigate the rumors of the murders returned. They had actually occurred.

At six o'clock the next morning Mr. Whitcomb returned from Forest City. It was necessary, he said, for someone to go to St. Paul to notify the governor. People continued to flock to the Whitcomb farm. At breakfast time that same morning an Irish family appeared. Mr. Whitcomb decided to go to St. Paul. According to Miss Whitcomb, he drove to Carver and then proceeded by boat to St. Paul. The governor gave him a captain's commission with the privilege of pressing into service any guns and ammunition he required.

At the Whitcomb farm a long bed was made on the living room floor for the children. The Whitcombs were under the protection of a Mr. Green. By Wednesday the settlers at the Whitcomb farm had left for Forest City where there was a school, hotel, and several houses. Mrs. Whitcomb wanted to wait until her husband's return from St. Paul, but Mr. Green decided that it would be best for his family and the Whitcombs to proceed to Forest City.

In Forest City the refugees gathered in the hotel. In the entire village there were only about twelve men. These men dug a ditch around the Whitney house which had the advantage of being on high ground.

On Saturday Mr. Whitcomb returned from St. Paul with a supply



of Springfield rifles. Miss Whitcomb could not recall whether there were any men with him. Several men in Forest City attempted to reach settlers who had been cut off from the village but the Indians drove them back.

Upon his arrival, Captain Whitcomb ordered a stockade built around another house. Evidently he did not feel that the Whitney place was a satisfactory location for purposes of defense. After the third attempt to save the settlers who had been cut off, the Indians drove the men back into the village proper. At this time the stockade was not quite finished.

Captain Whitcomb encountered difficulties with the settlers, too. Some of them refused to remain in the stockade because of their eagerness to watch the stock.

The house in which the refugees were living was crowded. The stockade was also filled. The Greens, the Whitcombs, and a woman with five children occupied one room. One morning, not long after midnight, Captain Whitcomb, lying across the foot of a bed in this room, heard a shot. The Indians had come. Shots were exchanged between the whites and them. One house was set afire. At dawn the Indians disappeared. During the battle the refugees crowded into a central hall which thus afforded them the protection of two walls. One bullet struck the wall just above the shoulder of a Mrs. Krueger [2], and next morning Miss Whitcomb dug it out.

The day following the battle (Miss Whitcomb was not certain about time), Elizabeth Whitcomb watched Indians cut down a flag pole. As she stood watching through a second floor window, the chief rode away wrapped in the flag with the stock following. Some of the Scandinavians, aroused at the sight of the Indians leading away their stock, ran out of the stockade. One of them

a Mr. Olson was shot down. Whitcomb and others dragged him back into the safety of the stockade.

Before the Green and Whitcomb families left for Forest City, two wounded men, Foote and Erickson, were brought to the Whitcomb farm. They lay on feather mattresses in an ox cart. Mrs. Foote had walked a distance of twenty miles. Miss Whitcomb believed that this occurred before her father's return. She did not remember how long the wounded men remained at the farm, but she thought they were sent on to some other point, St. Cloud perhaps, for care and treatment.

Miss Whitcomb could not remember how long refugees remained in stockade at Forest City. It was most inconvenient, she said, for only one cookstove served all of them.

After outbreak the Whitcomb family took a house in Forest City. For some time Mr. Whitcomb was employed by the government. This work, according to Miss Whitcomb, involved secreted property. She was somewhat vague on this point.

Later her father enlisted in Company B of Hatch's battalion. About the time of the outbreak, Mr. Whitcomb had already raised a company of 30 men for service in the Civil War. During 1863 and 1864, while her father served in the army, the Whitcomb family lived in Minneapolis on Cataract Street (now Sixth Avenue South). While attending school in Minneapolis, she said, the school house burned down, and the different classes were distributed in different buildings. She attended school in what was called the "toothpick" church on the site of the present city hospital.

During the seventies the Whitcombs lived near Alexandria. Miss Whitcomb taught school. Her brother, George Whitcomb, was survived by two sons: Carlos Finch Whitcomb (his mother was Lucy Finch) was born about 1875. His brother, Harry, was born about

two years later. Harry, a dentist, now resides in Grand Forks with his wife and one adopted daughter. Carlos has three daughters: Elinor, Mary Elizabeth (now Mrs. Harold Eberhart), and Sallilou. He lives in Minneapolis.

There is some information about Miss Whitcomb's father in a genealogical work entitled, "The Whitcomb Family in America." The author is a relative, Charlotte Whitcomb.