

MR. FRIDLEY, who is director of the Minnesota Historical Society, assisted in editing a work on Charles E. Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm, a documentary account published recently by the Brown County Historical Society.

Charles E. Flandrau

ATTORNEY at WAR

RUSSELL W. FRIDLEY

FROM THE FIERCE fighting with which Minnesotans put down the Sioux Uprising in August and September, 1862, the names of two military commanders emerge with particular prominence. They are Henry H. Sibley and Charles E. Flandrau. Far from being professional soldiers, neither had any previous military training, but under the bitter pressure of necessity they took charge of inexperienced troops and led them in decisive engagements against the enemy. There is, however, little other similarity between the two men.

Sibley — serious, conscientious, and a trifle pompous — was burdened with the weight of official responsibility and the knowledge that he commanded the only organized force standing between the enraged Sioux and the state's main centers of population. His movements were so hesitant and cautious that they aroused scathing criticism among the impatient citizens behind the lines. At the same time Flandrau — genial, buoyant, and adventurous — was acclaimed the "Savior of New Ulm" and the worker of a military miracle. Not knowing what he faced, he had rushed impulsively with other volunteers to the aid of his Minnesota Valley neighbors, and when they voted him their leader, he directed their fight against overwhelming odds with off-the-cuff, intuitive brilliance.

The news that the Sioux had taken the warpath was brought by a messenger from New Ulm to Flandrau at his Traverse des Sioux home about 4:00 A.M. on August 19, 1862. As soon as he learned of the danger, Flandrau sent his wife and children to St. Paul and hastened to nearby St. Peter. There he helped raise a company of more than a hundred volunteers who armed themselves as best they could and immediately set out for New Ulm. They reached the beleaguered community late that night — at about the same time that Sibley was taking command of a hastily organized relief force at Fort Snelling.¹

Flandrau was chosen to conduct the town's defense and immediately set about preparing it for the inevitable attack. The Indians

¹ Charles E. Flandrau, *The History of Minnesota and Tales of the Frontier*, 276 (St. Paul, 1900). Although he acted immediately to prevent the spread of a situation he believed grave, Flandrau at first thought that the uprising was localized and that it was the work of the Yankton. See *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865*, 2:198 (St. Paul, 1892).

² For Flandrau's own account of the second battle of New Ulm, see Russell W. Fridley, Leota M. Kellett, and June D. Holmquist, eds., *Charles E. Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm*, 32-49 (New Ulm, 1962). Portions of the present article first appeared in the author's introduction to this volume.

³ The total number of structures destroyed in New Ulm is usually placed at about 190.

were amply justified in approaching the encounter with confidence. In five short days they had rolled back the frontier to vulnerable Fort Ridgely and to the exposed and hastily constructed barricades of New Ulm. They had killed hundreds of settlers and taken a large number of captives, and they had regained much of the fertile land reluctantly ceded to the whites under the treaties of 1851 and 1858. The surprised settlers had offered little resistance. Thus the Indians continued their offensive down the valley with increased momentum. On Saturday, August 23, as they approached New Ulm it was evident that a climactic encounter between Indian and settler was to take place.

During the ensuing thirty hours, about two hundred and fifty poorly equipped defenders, largely German, under the inspired leadership of Flandrau, withstood the repeated assaults of some six hundred Sioux braves. This gallant and successful defense of New Ulm halted the deepest penetration of the Sioux offensive and drastically altered the course of the Sioux Uprising.²

Flandrau's exploit in galvanizing a panic-stricken community, under heavy siege, into an effective defense force is one of the great stories of the American frontier. Years later, on November 10, 1903, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* said: "He devised and led the desperate offensive movement which drove the Indians from the cover of the buildings they had taken, and saved the day. He burned in the faces of their owners one hundred twenty-five houses and stores."³ . . . No despot ever exercised more absolute power or was more implicitly obeyed. . . . And yet he took all this responsibility without a scratch of a pen, without even a verbal order by way of authority."

The feat is more remarkable in view of the fact that Flandrau had no previous military training or experience. He held no commission; his only official post at the time was that of associate justice of the Minnesota



CHARLES E. Flandrau in 1862



A scene from the second battle of New Ulm as pictured by Alexander Schwendinger

Supreme Court. To understand the phenomenon of this judge who left "the wool-sack for a dragoon's saddle," one must examine the man's rare qualities of leadership and his unique position as pioneer counselor to the settlers of the Minnesota Valley.⁴

IT WAS in 1853 that Flandrau, a twenty-five-year-old lawyer from New York State, arrived in Minnesota Territory. By that time the frontier had passed Fort Snelling on the outskirts of St. Paul and had moved westward to the newly constructed post of Fort Ridgely, some hundred and twenty-five miles up the Minnesota River. Settlers were pouring in, and townsite speculation was running riot. The buying and selling of land furnished the major source of legal business, for commerce was still in its infancy, and Flandrau soon found himself involved with a real estate promotion scheme.⁵

During the winter of 1853-54 a group of speculators headed by the Territorial Governor, Willis A. Gorman, asked the young attorney to look for promising townsites in the valley of the Minnesota River. They wished Flandrau to travel over the valley,

explore its tributaries, and report on the prospects for founding a city at Rock Bend (now St. Peter). He enthusiastically accepted the assignment, an undertaking that was to have far-reaching results: "It was to me," he wrote many years later, "what the Klondike has been to thousands recently."⁶

Flandrau was well suited for the task. Contemporaries describe him as a picturesque and handsome figure. "He had a strong, wiry physique," wrote one, "in which muscle predominated, and legs like an antelope."⁷ His backers furnished him with good horses, for there were no railroads west of Chicago and no regular steamboat service up the Minnesota, and he set off.

⁴ Christopher C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minnesota*, part 2, p. 36 (Syracuse, 1890).

⁵ For information on Minnesota during this period, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:354-364, 377 (St. Paul, 1956); Flandrau, "Reminiscences of Minnesota During the Territorial Period," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9:197-222 (1901).

⁶ Flandrau, *Tales*, 270. This work includes many incidents of his years in the Minnesota Valley.

⁷ Greenleaf Clark, "The Life and Influence of Judge Flandrau," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 10, part 2, p. 771-782 (1905).

Few settlers had as yet penetrated the Minnesota Valley. Only two short years before it had been the homeland of the Sioux, who ceded it to the government under the treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux in 1851.⁸ Flandrau's first stop was the small settlement which had given its name to the latter treaty. "It was in the winter," he wrote, "but I succeeded in reaching Traverse des Sioux, where I found a collection of Indian trading houses. . . . There was also . . . a missionary station, with a schoolhouse, a church, and a substantial dwelling house, occupied by the Rev. Moses N. Adams," who had been a missionary to the Sioux at Lac qui Parle for many years previously.⁹

At Traverse des Sioux Flandrau also met Stuart B. Garvie, a young Scotchman who occupied "a shanty on the prairie" midway between Traverse and Rock Bend. The two men quickly became warm friends, and Garvie accompanied Flandrau on his townsite explorations. "We went up the Blue Earth, the Le Sueur, the Watonwan, and, in fact, visited all the country that was necessary to convince me that it was, by and large, a splendid agricultural region, and I decided so to report to my principals," wrote Flandrau. He also recommended Rock Bend to Gorman and his associates as a promising place for a great city.

Garvie had urged Flandrau to remain at Traverse and share his shanty. "The proposition was catching," wrote Flandrau, "having a spice of adventure in it." Thus, after making his report, he accepted Garvie's invitation and returned to Traverse des Sioux, where he was "farther west than any lawyer in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, unless he was in the panhandle of Texas."

⁸ A full account of these important treaties may be found in Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:266-304, 352-354.

⁹ Quoted material on Traverse des Sioux here and below is from Flandrau, *Tales*, 270-273.

¹⁰ Flandrau himself built a house in St. Peter and another at Traverse des Sioux, but he seems to have lived mostly at the latter place.

WITH LITTLE legal work to do, Flandrau was free to enjoy a carefree and strenuous life. He soon became inured to the hardships of the frontier, which he at that time shared with the Indians, the traders, and the missionaries. He came to know frostbite, floods, and blizzards, and to experience isolation that lasted for days and even weeks at a time.

During the winter, Garvie and Flandrau amused themselves by shooting wolves. Using a dead pony as bait, they lured the wolves within rifleshoot of their log cabin. At first the two men would step outside and fire their guns, but they learned that the slightest movement of the door would frighten the animals. The friends also had difficulty shooting in the dark, for the wolves did not gather until nightfall. They solved these problems by removing a piece of glass from the window and devising a permanent gun rest aimed directly at the pony carcass. "We brought our bed up to the window, so that we could shoot without getting out of it, while snugly wrapped up in our blankets," said Flandrau. "After this our luck improved, and after each discharge we would rush out, armed with a tomahawk, dispatch the wounded wolves, and collect the dead ones, until we had slaughtered forty-two of them. We skinned them, and sold the pelts to the traders for seventy-five cents a piece, which money was the first of our earnings."

The remoteness of Traverse des Sioux — a condition that appealed to Flandrau — was short lived. With the opening of the river in the spring of 1854, settlers began to pour into the Minnesota Valley. The first house was built in St. Peter that year, and thereafter the new town grew rapidly.¹⁰ Flandrau soon found himself with a widely scattered law practice that kept him increasingly on the move up and down the valley. His tall, sturdy frame became a familiar sight as he traveled by river or trudged long distances over prairie trails and frozen streams. He noted that he once "paddled a canoe a hundred and fifty miles down the Minnesota, to oppose a motion, sold the ca-

noe for three dollars, and footed it home.”¹¹ His enterprise, physical vigor, integrity, and bonhomie quickly won him wide popularity among the pioneer settlers; and a remarkable gift for persuasiveness with juries and forcible arguments at the bar enhanced his reputation even further. In 1854 he was commissioned notary public and deputy clerk of the court and later he became district attorney of Nicollet County.

The frontier lawyer's practice was still largely involved with land transactions, and it was frequently necessary for him to travel to Winona where the United States land office for the region was located. Years later he reminisced about one such winter journey. “In 1855 I walked from St. Peter to Winona in mid-winter, with the snow fifteen inches deep, a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, and back again, to try a lawsuit,” he wrote. The trip took about five days and the young lawyer carried only some blankets and a change of clothes. He was also “equipped with good Red River winter moc-casins, and two or three stout flannel shirts.” He noted ruefully that he “was offered forty acres of land as a fee for my Winona tramp, but declined it and accepted a twenty dollar gold piece instead. The rejected land has since become the heart of Mankato, worth a quarter of a million dollars.”¹²

IT WAS as a lawyer that Flandrau had his first contact with the citizens of New Ulm, a tie that was to develop over the years into a warm mutual friendship. The town was founded in 1854–55 by members of German colonization societies from Chicago and Cincinnati. “Under the law,” Flandrau recalled, “a town site could only embrace 320 acres, but the projectors of New Ulm, laid out an immense tract, comprising thousands of acres. Many of the settlers had not taken any steps toward becoming American citizens, which was a necessary preliminary to preemption, and everything among them was held in a kind of common interest, the Cincinnati society furnishing the funds. It was not long before they discovered that

they needed legal advice in their venture, and called on me to regulate their matters for them.”¹³

In the practical way of the frontier, Flandrau as deputy clerk of the court “always carried the seal and naturalization papers with me, so that I could take the declaration of intention of anyone who desired to become an American citizen anywhere I happened to find him, on the prairie or elsewhere. In this way I qualified many of the Germans for preemption, and took them by the steamboat load down to Winona to enter their lands. I would be furnished with a large bag of gold to pay for the lands, and sometimes . . . I would work off forty or fifty preemptions in a day.” The lawyer added: “I became such a necessary factor in the building of the town that, if any difficulty occurred, even in the running of a mill which they erected and ran by the accumulated water of many large springs, I was immediately sent for to remedy the evil.”

One of the things Flandrau was called upon to remedy was the lack of a post office in New Ulm. This he did in 1855 by writing to Henry M. Rice, a fellow Democrat who was at the time Minnesota Territory's representative in Congress. Before long the answer arrived, complete with “the postmaster's commission, his bond for execution, a key for the mail bags, and all the requisites.” Inviting some friends to accompany him, Flandrau set out for New Ulm to open the new office with appropriate ceremonies.

“The New Ulm people were a very social lot,” he later wrote, “and my visits to the town always included a good deal of fun, so I concluded to make a special event of the establishment of the new postoffice.” Securing a large envelope and an official-

¹¹ Flandrau, “Lawyers and Courts of Minnesota Prior to and During Its Territorial Period,” in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:100 (1898).

¹² Flandrau, *Tales*, 325; Flandrau in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:101.

¹³ The New Ulm material quoted here and below is from Flandrau, *Tales*, 350–353.

looking red seal, Flandrau wrote a letter and signed it with the name of President Franklin Pierce. The party drove up to the house of the new postmaster, and standing in a wagon, Flandrau presented the letter and accompanying paraphernalia with an appropriate speech. Then at the lawyer's suggestion the newly created official produced "a brown jug and a tin cup" from which "all drank a bumper to the health and prosperity of the postmaster general, [and] the town of New Ulm." Flandrau added later that he never learned whether the man "caught on to the joke, or whether he has cherished the executive letter as an heirloom for his posterity."

The popular lawyer's willingness to join his friends in a drink provided the basis for another incident which Flandrau was fond of retelling. It not only offers a vivid glimpse of justice on the Minnesota frontier in the 1850s, but it also illustrates Flandrau's candor and his stature within the small but sometimes divided community.¹⁴

The treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851 had prohibited the introduction and sale of spirituous liquor in the Indian country. A question arose as to whether the prohibition of liquor extended to white settlers. The courts held that it did, and indictments were occasionally brought against violators. Pressure for enforcement of the law ran especially high in the missionary center of Traverse des Sioux where a grand jury indicted a whisky seller. Before a court could be convened to try him, however, a squad of temperance people, headed by the sheriff, attacked his saloon and demolished his liquor. The saloonkeeper, wishing to test his rights under the law, sued the attackers.

Flandrau was retained to defend the temperance forces. He recalled that it was necessary for him "to prove that the prisoner had introduced liquor into the Indian coun-

try, and, to do so, I called a French half-breed who I knew frequented the place, and after the preliminary questions, this examination followed:

"Q. Joe, were you ever in this saloon?"

"A. Yes, many a time.

"Q. Did you ever buy and drink any liquor in there?"

"A. Yes, many a time.

"Q. Did you see anyone else buy and drink liquor in there?"

"A. Yes.

"Q. Who was it?"

"A. I have seen you do it lots of times."

Flandrau won the case. As a reward, the temperance ladies presented him with a handsome gold combination pen and pencil, complete with jeweled head and inscribed "Charles E. Flandrau: Defender of the Right." The presentation of this gift was the subject of newspaper comment as far east as New York City where Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* extolled Flandrau's virtues as an apostle of temperance. In telling the story, the lawyer recalled a friend's comment: "Flandrau is one of the most singular men I ever knew. He invariably makes a temperance speech over his whisky."

WITH HIS genial, gregarious temperament, and his law practice throughout the valley settlements, it was inevitable that Flandrau should be drawn into politics. As early as 1855 he had stumped the territory on behalf of Rice, who emerged as the Democratic winner in a three-cornered race for delegate to Congress. In 1856 the tenth legislative district, comprising the counties of Le Sueur, Steele, Faribault, Blue Earth, Brown, Nicollet, Sibley, Pierce, and Renville, chose him for its representative in the territorial council.¹⁵

In the following year he was elected a delegate to the constitutional convention from Nicollet County, and on July 17, before the convention opened, he also received an appointment from President James Buchanan as associate justice of the territorial supreme court.¹⁶ Thus, by the time Minne-

¹⁴ Flandrau tells the story below in *Tales*, 332.

¹⁵ On the composition of the tenth district, see Minnesota Territory, *Session Laws*, 1855, p. 36.

¹⁶ Fridley et al. eds., *Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm*, 15, 17.

sota achieved statehood, Flandrau might easily have qualified as the "first citizen" of the Minnesota Valley. Though he was known throughout the area as "Major," or "Judge"—those being days in which custom accorded titles freely—a contemporary reports that he was "often referred to, but always with respect or affection, as 'Charlie' Flandrau."¹⁷

During this time he held one other appointive office—a post which brought him into direct contact with a large but generally ignored segment of the valley's population. From April, 1856, to September, 1857, Flandrau served as United States Indian agent for the Upper and Lower Minnesota Sioux.

He assumed the post at a time when the last Sioux bands were reluctantly moving to the new reservation that had been provided for them in the treaties of 1851.¹⁸ Accustomed to living by hunting, the red men found themselves constricted into a prairie area devoid of large game. To exist they were compelled either to take up farming, range over the prairies to the west, or frequent their former hunting grounds, which were now in the possession of the whites. Flandrau summarized the situation when he observed that the "hunting grounds of the Indians have been taken from them before they have had time to become fully domesticated on their reservations"—a circumstance that was to become apparent to other Minnesotans when the Sioux took the war-path in 1862.¹⁹

THE NEW Indian agent gradually crystallized a program to cope with some of the many problems he saw. He felt it essential that the Sioux be trained for skilled vocations—of which he considered farming the most important—and that immediate provision be made to educate the children and win them away from the nomadic life and native customs of their parents. On January 13, 1857, he urged the immediate establishment of boarding schools at the Lower or Redwood Agency and at the Upper or Yel-

low Medicine Agency. "My chief hope of the civilization of these Indians," he wrote, "is based upon such a system of education." To his deep disappointment, his superiors failed to implement this recommendation, and—like most humanitarian and well-intentioned whites of his time—Flandrau himself failed to appreciate the depth and tenacity of the native Indian culture.²⁰

His official correspondence reflects frustration over the shortage of funds, the continuing demands of the Indians for more support, the lack of sufficient farming tools, and above all, the problems caused by the uncertainty and lateness of annuity payments provided for in the treaties. Feuds between the Sioux and their old enemies the Chippewa caused occasional incidents; white settlers ignored the reservation boundaries and squatted upon Indian lands; hungry Sioux stole cattle from white settlers; and a continual flow of claims came to the agent.

The most serious problem that faced Flandrau during this eventful year was brought to him on March 18, 1857, by two men from the settlement of Springfield (now Jackson) in southern Minnesota. They reported that settlers had been killed near Lake Okoboji and Spirit Lake in northern Iowa by a renegade Sioux band and that

¹⁷ Salmon A. Buell, "Judge Flandrau in the Defense of New Ulm," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 10, part 2, p. 784. The Sioux called Flandrau "the tall American who combs his hair back." See Flandrau, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9:216.

¹⁸ The removal of the Sioux to the reservations began in the fall of 1853, but it proceeded so slowly that Flandrau's predecessor as agent reported in 1856: "Three of the upper bands still remain off the reserve, and in the midst of white settlement." Indian Office, *Reports*, 1856, p. 606. See also Fowell, *Minnesota*, 1:353; 2:394 (St. Paul, 1961).

¹⁹ Indian Office, *Reports*, 1857, p. 57.

²⁰ See Flandrau to Francis Huebschmann, January 13, 1857, in records of the Department of the Interior, Northern Superintendency of Indian Affairs, Letters Received from Sioux Agency, 1856–57, in the National Archives, Washington, D.C. The Minnesota Historical Society has a microfilm copy of Flandrau's portion of this correspondence, which is filed in the Flandrau Papers. It will be cited hereafter as "microfilm, Flandrau Papers."

several more whites had been murdered near Springfield. Led by Inkpaduta or Scarlet Point, this group had left the main body of Wahpekute Sioux and had refused to participate in the treaties of 1851. Early in March, 1857, Inkpaduta and his followers had been hunting near the Rock River settlement in Iowa, where one of the Indians was bitten by a white man's dog. The red man killed the dog, and its owner gave the Indian a severe beating. A group of whites then went to the Indians' camp and disarmed them. After somehow regaining their arms or securing new ones, the starving Indians went to the Lake Okoboji-Spirit Lake area, where they massacred over thirty settlers and took four women captive. Then they proceeded northward across the Minnesota border and killed seven settlers near Springfield.²¹

The two messengers from the panic-stricken settlement asked the Indian agent for protection. Flandrau went immediately to Fort Ridgely, where he consulted with the commandant and procured troops to pursue Inkpaduta.

With a company of forty-nine soldiers commanded by Captain Barnard E. Bee, the agent set out. Well outfitted with a team and sleigh, Flandrau and an interpreter started in advance of the troops and reached the cabin of a settler near the headwaters of the Watonwan River. There they found the snow too deep for effective pursuit and turned back. Flandrau advised Bee to abandon the expedition, but the officer declined and with great effort pushed on across the trackless prairie to Heron Lake. When the soldiers arrived, they found that Inkpaduta and his band had departed. In

spite of their gallant efforts, it was Flandrau's opinion that the "poor troops . . . were about as fit for such a march as an elephant is for a ball room," since they had no snowshoes and attempted to make their way through deep snow on foot driving a mule train of provisions and camp equipment.²²

On April 27, 1857, the territorial legislature met in extra session and appropriated ten thousand dollars to effect the release of Inkpaduta's four female captives "by purchase, stratagem, or otherwise." About May 20 one of the captives, Mrs. Margaret Ann Marble, was delivered to the missionaries at Yellow Medicine by two Wahpeton hunters in exchange for shot, powder, blankets, and other supplies. The hunters also made a formal claim to the agent for five hundred dollars apiece in cash. Flandrau deemed it wise to pay the sum, but he was able to raise only half of it. With characteristic resourcefulness he therefore devised a bond pledging the territory to pay the two Indians another five hundred dollars within three months. The traders cashed it without hesitation.

Flandrau lost no time in trying to rescue the other three women held prisoner. For this task he selected a trio of trustworthy Wahpeton — John Other Day, Paul Mazakutemani, and Iron Hawk. Outfitted by the agent, they left for the Big Sioux River country on May 23. They found the dead bodies of Mrs. Elizabeth Thatcher and Mrs. Lydia Noble, and on May 30 they rescued Miss Abbie Gardner from a Yankton camp.

Less than a month later Flandrau received word that Inkpaduta was in the vicinity of the Upper Agency. He immediately drove to Fort Ridgely, obtained a detail composed of a lieutenant and fifteen men, and set out on June 30 for a night march of thirty miles. Aided by John Other Day, the troops found a small group of Inkpaduta's people camped some distance up the Yellow Medicine River.²³ Reaching the Indian camp early in the morning, they succeeded in shooting one man, who proved to be the oldest son

²¹ For Flandrau's accounts of these events, see Indian Office, *Reports*, 1857, p. 69-71; Charles E. Flandrau, "The Ink-pa-du-ta Massacre of 1857," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 3:386-407 (1880). See also Arthur P. Rose, *An Illustrated History of Jackson County*, 57 (Jackson, 1910).

²² For a good discussion of the Inkpaduta chase, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:400-415. Quoted material here and below is from this source.

²³ See Flandrau, *Tales*, 374; Flandrau in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 3:404.



AN artist's view of Flandrau leading the evacuation of settlers to Mankato

of Inkpaduta and the murderer of Mrs. Noble, and captured a woman.

On the way back to the Upper Agency Flandrau and his party were surrounded by hundreds of armed Sioux. Their appearance was so threatening that Flandrau believed it wise to release the prisoner. At the agency he and his party took refuge in a log house, where they were forced to remain for three days until a battery arrived from Fort Ridgely. As punishment the annuity payment was suspended, and "in order to regain the position their bad conduct had lost them," wrote Flandrau, a delegation of Indians led by Chief Little Crow "volunteered to go in search of the murderers, and succeeded in killing four men; and several women and children were drowned by fleeing into the lake in the night." Finally, late in September the Indian annuities were paid.²⁴

The failure of the Great White Father to capture and punish Inkpaduta and his men was to have unfortunate repercussions, for it led some Sioux to think they might threaten the government's authority with

impunity. Flandrau believed that the sure, prompt eradication of the Spirit Lake murderers would have set a good example for other troublesome Indians. From the Inkpaduta incident, too, Flandrau learned a further lesson—to fight the Indian on his own terms. He recommended that cavalry equipped with rifles be used in open prairie country, "where running and not fighting is the contest." The employment of infantry to fight Indians was, to Flandrau's mind, a waste of time.²⁵

In retrospect, the Inkpaduta affair of 1857 provided a striking preview in miniature of the large uprising that was to follow five years later. The "recent trouble at Spirit Lake," wrote Flandrau from Fort Ridgely on April 16, 1857, "has given rise to an intense panic all through the country. . . . I think the alarm is all false . . . but news has reached me to-day that large bands of citizens have armed and gone into the field from Mankato, St. Peter's, Traverse des

²⁴ Indian Office, *Reports*, 1857, p. 58.

²⁵ Flandrau to William J. Cullen, August 7, 1857, microfilm, Flandrau Papers.

Sioux, and other settlements; that the people are flocking in from the country by hundreds, terribly frightened, and that these volunteers have killed five Indians."

THUS, in August, 1862, when the great uprising broke like a thunderclap over the Minnesota Valley, Flandrau was no novice at dealing with Indians and panic-stricken settlers. Like Sibley, he was acquainted with the Sioux, had experience with their ways, and respected them. He also knew well the heterogeneous valley settlers, many of whom were gathered under his command at New Ulm. The Germans, especially, separated by a language barrier from their Yankee neighbors, regarded him as an old and trusted friend. They willingly accepted his leadership, even when, following the successful defense of the town, he decreed that their homes and belongings must be abandoned and their families evacuated to Mankato, where they would be safe from further attack.

Of this mass exodus, Flandrau wrote sadly: "A more heart-rending procession was never witnessed in America. Here was the population of one of the most flourishing towns in the state . . . starting on a journey of thirty odd miles, through a hostile country, with a possibility of being massacred on the way, and no hope or prospect but the hospitality of strangers and ultimate beggary."²⁶

The forlorn caravan reached Mankato safely, and Flandrau hastened on to report

to Sibley, whose relief force had progressed no farther than St. Peter. At the same time he wrote to Governor Alexander Ramsey, telling of the battle of New Ulm and pointing out immediate requirements for the further defense of the valley settlers. "I cannot hold any commission, and don't want any, but desire to be useful at this crisis of the state," he concluded. "Give me some kind of a roving irregular commission."²⁷

Ramsey responded with the following executive order: "The Hon. Charles E. Flandrau is hereby authorized to proceed with expedition to the Blue Earth country . . . and to take such measures as in his judgment he may deem advisable to secure that portion of our frontier and restore confidence to the settlers."²⁸

Having thus received official military authority for the first time, Flandrau quickly established a cordon of posts from New Ulm to South Bend (now a part of Mankato), then up the Blue Earth River south to the Iowa line. The hastily built forts were about sixteen miles apart, with two advance posts at Madelia and Martin Lake to the west. Couriers ran the cordon each day, carrying dispatches to and from the commander. By this means he stabilized the frontier, leaving Sibley free to pursue the main body of the Sioux.

Flandrau remained on duty until October 5, 1862, when he relinquished his command to Colonel Milton Montgomery of the Twenty-fifth Wisconsin regiment and returned to his seat on the bench.²⁹ In his brilliant seven-week career as a frontier soldier he had turned back the Sioux, averted what might have been the greatest massacre of the war, and emerged as the ablest battlefield commander on either side.

²⁶ Flandrau, *Tales*, 157.

²⁷ *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:203.

²⁸ *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:208.

²⁹ *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:266.

THE PORTRAIT of Flandrau on page 117 was taken by Joel E. Whitney, a St. Paul photographer. It is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. The original of the oil painting reproduced on page 118 is in the possession of the Brown County Historical Society, and the illustration on page 124 is a scene from the Sioux War panorama by Gág, Heller, and Schwendinger, all New Ulm artists. This panorama, discovered in an upstate New York barn in 1954, was presented to the Minnesota Historical Society by James Taylor Dunn.

THE INDEX for volume 37 of *Minnesota History*, covering the eight issues published in 1960 and 1961, is now ready for distribution. Copies will be sent to members and subscribers who ask for them as long as the supply lasts. Requests should be addressed to Mrs. Phyllis Sandstrom, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul 1.



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