

## Mary Schwandt and William Schmidt

Mary, the 14-year old daughter of Johan and Christina Schwandt, was working at the Joseph Reynolds home on the west side of the Redwood River, south of the Minnesota River on August 18, 1862, the day of the uprising. Six of her family members died that day at the family homestead at Middle Creek Township in Renville County, and their young son, August, age 11, crawled away, ran to the nearby brush and escaped to Fort Ridgely. Mary's parents were Prussian immigrants and had just come to "the beautiful valley of the Minnesota river to above the mouth of Beaver creek and above where the town of Beaver Falls now stands," in May, 1862, according to her memoir. She was taken captive while trying to escape with the Reynolds family and released at Camp Release six weeks later. In her memoir, she tells about an Indian woman named Snana, also known as Maggie Brass who saved her life. Snana hid her by digging a hole in her tepee, and put Mary in it, covering the hole with sticks and a blanket.

After her release, she was sent to St. Peter and then to family friends in Wisconsin where she was reunited with her brother, August. A year later, Mary testified at the military commission trials for the property of her parents that had been taken by the Dakota. In 1866, Mary married William Schmidt of St. Paul. It was there in 1894 that she wrote her story; it appeared in the Minnesota Historical Society Collections that same year.

The Minnesota Historical Society has a file of her letters written to Marion Satterlee, noted Minnesota historian, between 1917-1927. These letters told how she yearned to have a monument erected to honor "those first Pioneers that are sleeping in unmarked graves for half a century. At least they were all good and God-fearing people and well deserve a monument." The Schwandt Monument, built by the State of Minnesota in 1915, had already been dedicated when she wrote Satterlee, and she probably was a driving force to get that done.

It is located on Renville County Road 15, south of Sacred Heart. Here is the inscription: "Erected by the State of Minnesota 1915 In Memory of Martyrs for Civilization, Johann Schwandt, Christina Schwandt and Their Children Fredrik and Christian, John Walz, Karolina Schwandt Walz & John Frass. Murdered by Sioux Indians August 18, 1862."

(Coincidentally, The Schwandt family farm was purchased in 1870 by the Carl Tolzmann family, great-grandfather of Don Heinrich Tolzmann, who was the editor of "German Pioneer Accounts of the Great Sioux Uprising of 1862." This book contains both Mary's story and that of Wilhelmina Busse Carrigan.)

She never lived to see her dream of an all-inclusive settler monument. Her other wish was to have her Dakota friend, Snana who saved her life, honored by adding her name to the Friendly Indian Monument in Morton. That did come to pass in 1908.