

Sophia Schweer (born February 4, 1837, in the south of Germany) was married to Wilhelm Lammers in 1855. Because I'm uncertain about when they came to the U.S. I don't know if they were married in Germany or in Ohio.

Many of their friends and relatives sailed to America in the mid-1850s, settling first in Ohio (where they were able to find employment) and heading west to Minnesota soon after. I have learned that Wilhelm and Sophia were in Ohio by 1860, and came to Minnesota in 1862 where, in the month of May, they homesteaded in the northwest quarter of section 19, Flora Township, Renville County. This piece of land was near the Minnesota River, about 24 miles above Fort Ridgely. By this time they had two sons, Fred (born March 7, 1856) and Charles (born April 8, 1861).

Wilhelm built a log cabin for his family and was considered a good provider. In early August, he went alone to make hay for the military at Fort Ridgely. He returned to his homestead to fetch Sophia, (then a few months pregnant), Fred and Charles on August 18 when he heard that the Indians were attacking settlers. He thought he could get his family to the safety of the Fort before trouble erupted in his area. They gathered some of their neighbors together and all started south.

They were waylaid by Indians who demanded food, which they gave them. Shortly things turned ugly and the Indians began killing the white folks. Sophia was spared (perhaps because of her condition) along with Fred and Charley. All the others were killed.

What remained of Wilhelm's family was taken prisoner. Sophia and her two boys were kept on the move by a small group of Indians who didn't seem to want to harm them. (The bloodthirsty braves were on their way.) Sophia was made to do chores like carrying water and collecting wood for their cooking fires. Charley was quite young and cried a lot because they had no cow for milk. This annoyed the captors and when Sophia was away doing chores, one of them threw Charley in the fire. Fred saw this and pulled him out.

Another time, they tried to shoot the boys; Sophia put herself in front of them and when the guns didn't fire (these folks didn't know much about guns!) they must have decided the family was being protected by the Great Spirit and they didn't try to get rid of them again. They took a shine to

Fred and gave him Indian clothes to wear. (Fred wrote about these things as an adult).

Sophia and her boys were prisoners for about six weeks and were released in late September at Camp Release. Sophia was cared for by friends and other Lammers family members, giving birth to her third son in the early spring of 1863. She named him William in honor of his father.

Sophia married George Rieke on September 26, 1864, and they made their home at the Rieke Homestead near Mud Lake in Cairo Township, where George, his parents, and other family members had been living. Sophia and George had a family of seven children, four boys and three girls. First born was August Victor, known as A.V., the first white child born in Cairo Township. He later became a state legislator and prominent attorney in Minneapolis. Their second child was Gustav Adolph, my grandfather, who was known as G.A. He lived his entire adult life in Fairfax MN, where he was a business and community leader.

*Written by Dorothy (Johnson) Busch
February 2013*