

Account of the John and Mary Zimmermann Family by their daughter, Elizabeth Zimmermann Hangartner. A copy of this account was obtained from Catherine Wetzel, a great-granddaughter of Elizabeth.

Beaver Bay, Minnesota  
June 27, 1929

New Ulm's Diamond Jubilee & Homecoming,  
New Ulm, Minnesota

Gentlemen:

In reply to you Hearty and Cordial Invitation to attend the Diamond Jubilee of the first settlers in your community which will take place in New Ulm, July 4, 5, 6 and 7<sup>th</sup>. I am sorry that on account of being blind and in poor physical condition I am not able to attend, but instead, will send my life history as I remember it.

My parents, Mr. & Mrs. John Zimmermann, and children, John, Godfrey, Sam, Mary, and myself, Elizabeth, moved from Parishburg, Ohio, to Beaver Bay, Minnesota in 1857. On account of hardships at Beaver Bay we had to take our oxen and belongings and move to New Ulm.

The land which we acquired [in Renville County] was a half mile from a small town called [Lower Sioux] Agency about ten miles up Minnesota River from Fort Ridgely and on the same side. Through much difficulty, father built a small house about a half block away from the river.

We children used to go fishing and swimming in the river. I often remember catching cat fish that weighed 50 pounds more or less, and had to have father help me pull them in. Father sold several of these fish for one cent a pound which was a very good price at that time.

Rattlesnakes were very plentiful. Having a good dog for a companion, he saved our lives many a time.

We used to have great enjoyment picking wild plums and grapes. This fruit was a great help to the folks in those days because of hardships. They were used as preserves and to make wine from.

As I remember, it was the third summer that the Indian War broke out. Early one morning, a man came to our house and said the Indians were shooting down the town of Agency. Father was not home at the time, but was helping one of the neighbors to make hay. Later a half-breed came across the river and warned us to go away, for the Indians were breaking loose. When father got home, he took his oxen team and necessary belongings and started for the Fort. My brother, John, also drove a neighbor's oxen team. This neighbor happened to be a

blind woman who had three children. We went about a half mile with the oxen teams past the first neighbor when we met two Indians. When they saw us, they clapped their hands together and gave the "Indian War Whoop."

There was a man that ferried people across the river, that father knew real well. He came to tell father that the Indians were shooting, but on his way was killed. We found him dead with a little dog sitting along side of him.

We went about a half-mile further, while passing a farm house, two Indians ran out. They stopped the oxen and told father they were going to shoot him. My father insisted on giving the Indians the oxen and belongings, but they said, that they were going to shoot all the men and boys so they could not farm anymore. My mother, who was blind, told the Indians to shoot her as father could take better care of us children. Meanwhile more Indians including the chief came and immediately killed father, who was sitting in the wagon along side of mother. Frightened, my brother John, who was driving the other oxen team, ran for shelter, but in doing so, was shot three times in the back and fell head-long into the creek [likely Birch Coulee Creek]. Godfrey started to run for the woods when he was shot, and dropped right near my father.

Our blind neighbor woman, who was with us, went to get her money from the wagon which was in the cigar box. The Indian chief saw this. He quickly came to her and began pulling at the cigar box but she would not give it up. He held his hatchet ready to split her head when my sister Mary told her to let it go. He broke the box with his hatchet and put all the silver and gold in his long tobacco pouch. It just about filled the pouch which was a foot long. He took a penny and threw it at the blind woman's head which I picked up later for a gold piece.

During the excitement the oxen ran into the woods with the wagon and that was the last I saw of them. Tired and fatigued we kept on going toward the Fort. When we were half-way up a long grade an Indian on a pony came and drove us back to a farm house. At this time, I was carrying the blind woman's three year old child. Being overloaded I was a little behind and the Indian lashed me with his whip. I yelled at the blind woman to take the child, so she did. As we were all in the house, the Indian looked all over, including the pantry, for matches but could not find any. Their intentions were to burn us up. Mother told us to run out if you see that they are going to burn us because being shot was a much easier death than burned. They told us to stay there until tomorrow morning. I said to the Indian, "we have nothing to eat," in their language. He told us he would bring enough to eat the next morning, so we wouldn't be hungry again.

Two other Indians came and asked me who shot those three persons. I told them that it was the Indians, and he said, it was too bad. They asked me if I wanted something, and I said, "I

would like a drink of water.” The Indian asked for a dish. I went into the pantry and gave one to him. He went down to the creek and got some water. He warned us to go away and not stay there any longer. In a short while the soldiers [under Captain John Marsh] came. There were sixty of them in all. The Indians that were left were hiding in the bushes along side of the road and shot at the soldiers as they went by. One of the men had a stove pipe hat on that was amongst the soldiers, and a bullet went through his hat. He only laughed and said to us, “THAT DEVIL THOUGHT I HAD A LONG HEAD.” He picked up his hat and ran for life to catch the rest of the soldiers. This man told us to walk toward the Fort, and so we did. He made the Fort before us and returned with a team of horses to our aid.

As we reached the Fort, it was almost dark. Supper surely tasted good as we had nothing to eat all day.

The next morning there were several Indians around the Fort. We were sitting on the floor with our backs toward the wall. One of the soldiers looked out of a window beside me to get a shot at an Indian, but instead, the Indian shot first and hit him in the cheek. He suddenly dropped his gun, put his hand to his face, and went downstairs.

A woman who sat close to me with her feet outstretched was shot in the legs. For sometime it looked as if the Indians were getting the upper hand. They were shooting horse, cattle, and everything that came in sight.

Whiskey was the Indians best friend. The Captain ordered the soldiers to put the same in the house not far away. They displayed the whiskey bottles so the Indians could easily see it through the windows from a distance. It did not take long before the Indians spied the whiskey and they crowded in that building like bees. In a short while the Captain gave orders to the soldiers to take kerosene and set the house a fire. At the same time the doors were closed and not one Indian escaped. YOU OUGHT TO HAVE HEARD THE NOISE THEY MADE. THAT IN PARTICULAR I SHALL NEVER FORGET. It looked to me that the Indians on the other side of the river always wanted to make peace. I am sure that is what brought the war so quickly to an end. They put a flag up, but when the soldiers went over, they shot them.

One of the generals [Captain John Marsh] was drowned in the river while going over. Before we left the Fort there were plenty of soldiers as far as I could see but he war was close to an end.

From Fort Ridgely we went to New Ulm [St. Peter]. They called it nineteen miles at that time. I don't remember how long we were in New Ulm but from there we went to St. Paul. We stayed there about two years. From so much worry my mother, Mary, lived only one and a half years after the war. Later, my uncle, Mr. Tisher, sent for us to come and live with them at Duluth.

A family by the name of Merritts whose children had interest in the Iron Ore Mines of the Arrowhead Country kept me until I got married.

At present there are only Sam, my brother, and I living. Sam Zimmermann lives at Grand Marais, Minnesota. The reason that he was not killed was because he wore a dress at the time of war, and they took him for a girl.

Those killed in the war were John Zimmerman, Sr., John Zimmermann, Jr., 21 years old, Godfrey Zimmermann, 10 years old.

I married Jacob Hangartner and went to Beaver Bay, Lake County, Minnesota and lived on a homestead. I have lived 72 years in this county.

When they had the Grand Opening of the Babcock Highway from Two Harbors to the Canadian Border, I was honored as the oldest settler in Lake County. I am 80 years of age, and am a mother of nine children, two dead and seven living.