

Amanda and Jonathan Earle Family

Fifteen year old Radnor Earle and his family lived in Renville County, Minnesota in 1862. They lived on a claim across the Minnesota River from the Dakota Indians. The Dakota were frustrated with their situation for a variety of reasons, and on August 18, 1862, they decided to go to war against the whites. That morning, they attacked the Lower Sioux Agency and also settlers living in Renville and Brown Counties. Upon hearing word that the Dakota were killing whites, a party of about 27 or 28 settlers gathered at the home of Radnor's parents, Jonathan and Amanda Earle. The group decided to flee to safety at Fort Ridgely, which was about 18 miles to the southeast. However, Dakota warriors were soon in the area, and the fleeing group did not get far before the Dakota challenged them, and then fired on them. A number of the settlers were killed, some taken captive, and yet others fled. Jonathan and Radnor were among those who fled. But they had not gone far when the Dakota were closing in on them. Jonathan told Radnor, whose gun was loaded with pebbles as he did not have any ammunition, to turn and fire on the Dakota, and then run. Radnor, however, dropped down in the grass facing the Dakota, which slowed them down. This gave Jonathan a chance to get away. Radnor then shot, and the Dakota came up and killed him. Jonathan and two other sons were able to make it to safety.

These two sons, Chalon and Ezmon, were with the Joseph R. Brown burial party which was sent forth from Fort Ridgely on August 31, 1862. They found Radnor's body on the prairie, and buried him there. They were both fortunate to survive the battle of Birch Coulee, when the Dakota attacked the burial parties encampment on September 2. Sometime in the 1860's, the family erected a gravestone with a lamb on top over Radnor's lone grave, facing in the direction from which the Dakota had come that fateful morning. The surviving family then moved to LeMars, Iowa. Jonathan died there in 1874, and it was his wish that Radnor's gravestone be moved to be next to his in LeMars.

But oddly enough, Radnor's remains were left there. In 1907, another marker was placed on Radnor's grave, but it too was moved in the early 1980's to a nearby roadside rest. This roadside rest is on U. S. Highway 71, about 3.6 miles north of Minnesota Highway 19 at Morton. So Radnor, who at different times had two gravestones or markers, now has none. The inscription on the gravestone at LeMars reads "In Memoriam. Radnor Clifton, Son of Jonathan W. Earle, Amanda M. Earle, Born Feb. 17, 1847, Massacred Aug. 18, 1862 By the Sioux, while defending his father. Noble boy, too good for earth, In Heaven rest evermore." The Dakota were also called the Sioux. The marker in Renville County reads "Erected by the Renville Co. Pioneers, Aug. 18, 1907. In Memory of Radnor Earle who was killed by the Indians in the Massacre of Aug. 18, 1862, while saving his Father's life." Findagrave Memorial by Curtis Dahlin.