

The Story of the Bahlke, Frohrip Family

The Dakota Uprising of 1862

Revised June 2013

Our family's story begins in the Mecklenburg area of Germany where Maria Bahlke married Johann Frohriep. They had five daughters, Maria (Mary), Dorothea, Wilhelmina, Frederica, Louisa and one son, Johann (John).

Father, Johann, died prior to 1854, and Maria made the decision that she and her children would travel to America to find a new life along with her brother, Andreas (Andrew) Bahlke.

In April of 1854, the two oldest daughters, Maria (Mary) and Dorothea left Hamburg Germany aboard the barque Oldenburg setting out for a new beginning. On this passenger list their last name was spelled Frohrieb, another of the derivations we have seen of this surname. Also aboard this ship there sailed a Felix Bahlke family. Was this a relative of their Mother's? Perhaps. We are still looking for the answer to this. They arrived in New York on 18 May 1854. At this time, there was no receiving place, so immigrants would simply disembark and go on their way; no questions asked.

On the 10th of September 1855, Andreas (Andrew) Bahlke along with his sister Maria Frohriep and the remainder of her young adult children left Hamburg aboard the Nord Amerika owned by the Hamburg America Line. It was a 3-masted barque vessel of 419 tons built in 1848 of wooden construction. It had accommodations for 20 first class passengers, 200 steerage and crew of 16. We do know that the family traveled in steerage and arrived on 23 Oct 1855, at Castle Garden, which was the newly opened receiving place in New York. On the passenger lists of both of these ships it designates in the "village code" column the village of Oberhof in Germany. We will continue to pursue that designation as well as the possibility of the village of Lublow, which we have found in the 1819 Census as we work our way back into Germany and the history there.

We have found that in 1856, eldest daughter, Maria (Mary) married Lambert Dresselhaus and settled on their farm in Locust Lane, Winneshiek County, Iowa, where they raised their family of three daughters. There was also a baby son who died. They lived out the rest of their lives on this farm. We do have a

family history that has been passed along through one of the Frohrip lines stating that Mary, Dorothea and Frederica settled in Iowa. At this time we are still searching for Dorothea and Frederica.

The next documentation that we have is the 1860 US Census showing Wilhelmina and Maria (Mary) each living with her husband, in their respective home. Wilhelmina was married to Anton Schipple in 1860 and they lived near Mankato, MN. But we also have a July 5, 1860 US Census listing the entire family, including Andreas Bahlke, living together near New Ulm in Cottonwood Township, Brown County, Minnesota. What I believe may have happened in this instance is that the census taker and Maria did not understand each other very well and she listed all of her children as living with her here. At this time in Minnesota history, county and township lines went through several changes and so we are looking at whether the place they were living at the time of this Census was the same piece of land as in 1862.

When the Homestead Act was signed in March of 1862, Andrew Bahlke and Maria Frohrip with her grown children, John and Louisa, claimed their land and lived "on the hill in the southeast quarter of section 25, Beaver." They were midway between Beaver Creek and Birch Coulee, which was originally called La Croix Creek. They must have thought that this was the most beautiful place on earth as they overlooked the entire Minnesota River Valley. I, myself, have stood on this piece of ground, looked around and thought what a lovely place to live, that they couldn't have chosen a better place. Were they told or did they understand that this land had been promised to the Dakota and had only recently been taken from them? Part of the land they lived on is, today, the Morton City Cemetery.

So here, on this lovely piece of land, the family began their new life. Many accounts that have been written about this time period talk about the relationship between the Dakota people and the settlers. They came to know the nearby Dakota people, as did all the neighbors in that area. After all, they lived just across the Minnesota River from the villages of Little Crow, Big Eagle, Mankato, Traveling Hail and Wacouta. It has been said that some of the German settlers didn't like the Indians habit of looking into windows and just coming into their homes. Some considered many of them as beggars. It has also been said that many of the Dakota did not care for some of the German people or as they referred to them, "bad talkers". But it is also passed down by many of the immigrant families that their children played together with the Dakota children and that they would share meals and do trading.

Louisa Frohrip, about 18, and Maria's youngest daughter, got a job at the Redwood or Lower Agency, which was about five miles from their home. The Agency head carpenter, John Nairn, a Scotsman, his wife Magdalene, along with their four young children lived at the Agency. Connection has been made with a descendant of John Nairn and I asked her why Louisa would have worked for them. She told me that Magdalene had a disability perhaps something like a neuro-muscular disease, at times was very weak and would have needed help with the housework and the children. And so, Louisa, being a young, strong girl, was there much of the time. She also came to know Joseph and Valencia Reynolds and their two children. The Reynolds ran the government agricultural school that was located between the Lower and Upper agencies in Shakopee's village. Louisa Frohrip's Great Grandson, Carl Frederick Wolf, has stated that the family story passed down is that Louisa stayed with the Nairn family for some time after the Uprising.

On the morning of Monday, August 18, 1862, at 6:45, the sunrise attack began on the Lower Agency. As Dakota were busy plundering and burning buildings, many people had opportunity to make their escape. John Nairn, having secured friendships with many of the Dakota tribe had received a tip from them and escaped in their wagon with his wife and children. Based on his account as well as that of Valencia Reynolds, I believe that Louisa Frohrip was with them. From time to time later in life, Louisa would tell stories connected with that day. She talked about "getting the little children out the window". Would this be the Nairn children? Probably. John Nairn related the story of one of his youngest, 2 and one-half-year-old Maggie, being carried in a kerchief on a neighbor's back. This was probably Louisa. The group started for the Redwood Ferry but saw Indians blocking their escape route. It was then that they were met by Little Crow's half brother, White Spider, who often went by the name John Wakeman. He told them not to cross here and that they should go only by night to New Ulm. Little Crow had given orders to White Spider to save some of the white women and children. John Nairn relates that his wife tried to give him her wedding ring in thanks for this but he refused the gesture saying, "Look at my face and if anything happens, remember it".

The first major attack had been on the Lower Agency but as this was happening, small groups of Indians continued the killing spree across the swath of land on the north side of the river; the land that had so recently been taken from them. They went up onto the bluff and into the yard of Andreas (Andrew) Bahlke and his older sister, the widow, Maria Frohrip. The family

dog came out barking at the Dakotas as they approached the cabin. They shot him. Upon hearing the shot, Andreas came out to scold them and he was immediately shot and killed. Maria Frohrip began to run away and didn't get far when the Indians began to shoot at her. She was seriously wounded and fell after being shot in the back several times. Another story told by daughter Louisa later in her life was that "the Indians nailed Mama's hands to the door". Was Louisa's version what actually happened rather than the account of her trying to run away? Perhaps that is the true story since Louisa and Maria reunited at Fort Ridgely and would have talked about what had happened. Either version would have accounted for the multiple wounds she suffered in her back.

I do not believe that John Frohrip was at home during the time of this attack. The story of his whereabouts is still being studied. Since it was harvest season, he could have been out in the field as many of the neighbors had been, but at this point, we don't know. Had he been at the home, he most certainly would have been killed. There are some histories that say he was captured but a young man of his age would only have been killed. He, with his oxen and wagon, arrived at this scene some time later to find his Uncle killed and his Mother gravely wounded. John loaded his Mother Maria into the wagon and started the flight to Fort Ridgely and safety.

As the confusion and hostilities were growing, Joseph and Valencia Reynolds with their children were on the road to New Ulm in their horse and buggy. They met the John Nairn family and Louisa Frohrip along with other refugees. Nairn asked the Reynolds if they would take their two oldest children to Fort Ridgely with them in their buggy. The Nairns with Louisa helping them could now carry their youngest children and get to the Fort more quickly. The Reynolds drove to a thick wooded area opposite the Fort where Joseph had his wife and the children hide with the buggy. He then unhitched the horse and rode to the Fort where he and John Nairn along with a few soldiers took a wagon and went back to the wooded area. Together they brought the children and Mrs. Reynolds safely back to Fort Ridgely. After the Fort was relieved, the Nairns and Louisa went to St. Peter with many other refugees.

We find both Maria Frohrip and Louisa Frohrip listed as refugees at Fort Ridgely. Nowhere is John mentioned. With all the confusion during the days of that week it would not be surprising that not all of the men would be listed.

The Frohrip family legend has always been that Maria died from her injuries shortly after the Uprising at the home of her daughter Wilhelmina Schippel at

Eagle Lake, Minnesota, which is near Mankato. It was even specifically due to infection of a wound in her ankle. It was only in August of 2011, that we learned that not to be the case. Maria was brought by her son, John, to Locust Lane, Winneshiek County, Iowa, to the home of daughter Mary. They very likely stopped on their way to Iowa and stayed for some time to recuperate at the Schippel home. Daughter, Wilhelmina, had become the second wife of Anton Schippel in March of 1860 and they lived on their farm where they raised twelve children. Wilhelmina died in 1921 and is buried next to her husband in Pilgrim's Rest Cemetery in Mankato.

Maria lived the rest of her life in the Dresselhaus home in Iowa. She died in 1887, and is buried in the Locust Lane Salem Cemetery beside Mary, who died in 1907. I have connected with descendants of Lambert and Mary Dresselhaus and am hoping to find out more about the time that Maria and John spent with them.

It was from Locust Lane, Iowa, that John wrote the following letter to Governor Alexander Ramsey. I do not know whose handwriting it was. I doubt that it is John's since he hadn't been in this country very long. The signature looks to be of a different hand and perhaps may be his. This letter was found in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society after much searching since there are many boxes of documents that have not yet been catalogued. I have transcribed it exactly as it was written.

November the 14th 1862

To His Excellency Govenor Ramsey Dear Sir

I Understand that there is Twenty five Thousand Dollars Appropriated to the Relief of those That Suffered by the Indians in the Late Outbreak I lived in Raneville County and I lost Nearly Every Thing I Had I saved My Oxen and Waggon and the Clothes on My Back and that is All The Indians Killed one of My Family and Wounded My Mother and I am Here in the State of Iowa in Very Destitute Circumstances Now if the State of Minnesota Has Appropriated that Sum of Money to the Sufferers Please Write to Me and let Me know What Course to Pursue to Avail Myself of the Benefit of it Direct Your letter to Locust Lane Winneshiek Co State of Iowa and I will Ever Remain Your Humble Servant John Frohrip

There is a handwritten note on the back of this letter saying: Letter John Frohrip Ans: Dec 11 by PB cannot help him (Note: PB is Capt Peter Berkley

who was put in charge of the Depredation Claims by Governor Ramsey. I have not yet found the letter referred to here.)

We also have a record listing depredation claims that have been compiled by Mary Bakeman in her Index to Claimants for Depredation following the Dakota War of 1862. Here it lists that John Frohrip filed a formal claim #472, File location: not known. Total claimed \$600.00; Full payment of claimant for relief of depredation damages.

We don't know at this point, how long John stayed in Iowa, but do know that he was at Louisa Frohrip's marriage to Valentine Bott on September 14, 1864, in St Peter, Minnesota, at the North Western Hotel. He was listed as a witness along with Valencia Reynolds. Louisa and Valentine settled in the Redwood Falls, Minnesota, area where they raised their twelve children. Louisa took her own life in 1921, and is buried next to her husband and son, Willie, in Lamberton City Cemetery.

John married Carolina Maria "Mary" Sundermann on April 18, 1866, in LeSueur County, Minnesota. They raised their seven children and farmed in the area near Fort Ridgely. John died in 1881, and is buried next to his wife in Fort Ridgely Cemetery.

And still, in order to more complete our story, the search continues for Maria's daughters, Dorothea and Frederica.

Resources used in this story:

Outbreak and Massacre by the Dakota Indians in Minnesota in 1862 as edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, 2001

The Dakota War of 1862, Minnesota's Other Civil War by Kenneth Carley, 1976

Dakota Dawn, The Decisive First Week of the Sioux Uprising, August 17-24, 1862 by Gregory F. Michno, 2011

North Country, The Making of Minnesota by Mary Lethert Wingerd, 2010

The History of the Wichmann, Schippel, and Burginger Families in America by Katherine Dokken, 2003

John Nairn recollection, Microfilm Reel 3, Dakota Conflict, Minnesota Historical Society

History of Renville County, II & Curtiss-Wedge, 1916, I

Great Massacre, Bryant and Murch

Index to Claimants for Depredations following the Dakota War of 1862, Mary Hawker Bakeman. I also thank Mary for her personal help in finding the letter written by John Frohrip.

The Dakota Uprising, A Pictorial History, Curtis A. Dahlin, 2009. I also thank Curt for personally helping as I researched my family.

Great assistance by cousins, Carl F Wolf, Emmett R Smith, Carolyn Knuth Gupta.

Brown Historical Society, New Ulm, MN

Renville Historical Society, Morton, MN

Winneshiek County Historical Society, Decorah, Iowa

Minnesota Historical Society, St Paul, MN

Nicollet County Courthouse, St Peter, MN

Decorah Chamber of Commerce, Decorah, Iowa

Nairn, John and Magdalene (Nisbet) by Peggy Troy, from The History of Woodbury County, Iowa, compiled by the Woodbury County Genealogical Society and National ShareGraphics, Inc, 1994