

EARLY PIONEERS

Grandfather was born in Germany and when he was twenty years old he came to the United States. He then came from Buffalo, New York on a steamboat to Minnesota. He made his home first in Mankato, then in Birch Coulee Township.

Grandfather plowed the land and established a homestead. He built a log house which he plastered inside and out with mud. He banked it on all sides with sod to provide more warmth. They began their residence on the homestead in 1859. This homestead was at the bottom of the Buery Hill, which we now call the Greenslit Hill.

During the first years on the homestead he plowed with a walking plow drawn by oxen. These oxen had to be led a great deal of the time. He sowed the grain by hand, cut it with a scythe and threshed it with a flail.

It was at this time that my grandfather became friendly with the Indians who lived on a reservation. Many times the Indians and their wives would bring groceries to trade for garden vegetables. There was very little money at this time and the Indians were very honest with my grandparents.

My grandmother helped her husband with the outdoor work. When they stacked hay she would take the children along to the hay field, lay them down at the stack and begin to work. One day as they were stacking hay, a man came along on horseback and told them to start for Fort Ridgely. This man was Dietrick Wickman. He told them the Indians had started attacking the white people. Grandfather said that he had never harmed the Indians and that he didn't think they would harm him. However, he finally decided to go. He drove to the house, replaced the hayrack with the wagon, loaded his family into the wagon, provided himself with provisions and a Bible and started for the fort.

On the way to the fort they stopped for relatives. After driving about five miles, a band of Indians met them and commanded them to get off the wagon and go to the fort. They wanted to take some bread with them for the children but this was refused. The Indians turned my grandfather's team around and continued on the trail. It is believed that due to the fact they did not carry a gun and kindness had been shown to one of the Indians the day before, they were not killed. Tired and footsore, they finally reached Fort Ridgely at the close of the day.

Many of our early pioneers encountered much the same. Some, however, did not make it to the fort.

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