

## John Kochendorfer, Jr. Story

As told in the *History of Renville County*: "August 18, 1862, came the terrible events which robbed so many families of parents or children and in some instances wiped out entire families. My father was in the field, haying, when called into the log claim house to partake of the lunch which my mother had prepared. He had stepped into the bedroom when an Indian, as was customary in that locality in those days, called at the cabin and asked for my father. The Indian had a gun in his hand, which he stood near the corner of the house outside. My father then opened the door of the room, greeting with his usual cordiality the Indian, who seemed friendly.

The redskin then took the family axe that stood at the corner of the house, and threw it in the brush, a short distance from the house. Although I was a boy of but eleven years, I noticed that something was wrong and called my father's attention to what the Indian had done. My father then went out and brought back the axe.

In the meantime I noticed that the Indians were gathering in groups in the distance. My father then took up his position in front of the cabin, with one foot on tin bench, ready to protect my mother and us helpless children, of whom I was the oldest. A shot rang out on the air and my father fell backward, the victim of the treachery of a race to which he had always shown the greatest kindness.

Prior to his death he had warned us children to flee for our lives. My mother was washing at the time and while running we heard the screams which showed she, too, had fallen a victim to savage cruelty. My youngest sister, Sarah, was in hiding under the bed. She, too, was dragged forth and cruelly slaughtered.

I took my sisters, named Rose, Katie and Maggie, aged at that time nine, seven and five, respectively, and ran for the woods, running seven miles before we met anyone. Our neighbor, Michael Belter (Boelter), came down the road, and at first we were afraid that he was another Indian. But we were finally reassured and after he overtook us we told him our terrible story. We were informed by him that a party was on its way with wagons following us. Later as we continued our way we were overtaken by them.

We were carried to Fort Ridgely that night and there our whole party remained until reinforcements arrived from St. Paul, two weeks later, when a provision train with a company of cavalry as an escort, took us to St. Peter, from where we were started on a boat for the city of St. Paul.

Editor's Note: Some years ago while excavations were being conducted on the farm of Henry Timms, the bones of a man, woman and child were found. These were claimed by John Kochendorfer, Jr., as those of his father and mother and sister.”