

THE STORY OF  
TWO FAMILIES  
AND THEIR  
TIMES



CHAPTER NINE

THE EAGLE LAKE / TWIN LAKES YEARS

We return now to pick up the story of the Nelsons, who went to the Eagle Lake area north of present-day Willmar, MN in 1857, and the Chilstroms, who left Murrhistown in 1861 and moved to Twin Lakes, just west of present-day Spicer, MN. Now the two families were together again, living only a few miles from each other. Both had rolling land that bordered on lakes. Though their places surely reminded them of Småland and had its share of rocks, the land was far more tillable than what they had known in Sweden.

A Flood of Immigrants

In his book “*The History of Minnesota*,” published in 1900, Charles Flandrau cites the comments of J. Fletcher Williams, secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society, writing in 1876 and describing the arrival of the river boats in 1855:

*Navigation opened on April 17<sup>th</sup>, the old favorite, ‘War Eagle,’ leading the van with 814 passengers. The papers chronicled the immigration that spring as unprecedented. Seven boats arrived in one day, each having brought in to Minnesota two hundred to six hundred passengers. Most of these came through St. Paul and diverged hence to other parts of the territory. It was estimated by the packet company that they brought thirty thousand immigrants into Minnesota that season. Certainly 1855, 1856, and 1857 were the three greatest years of immigration in our territorial days. Nothing like it has ever been seen.*

*p. 65*

The very first settlers in the Eagle Lake/Twin Lakes area (between present day Willmar and New London) came in 1856. The whole area from Litchfield and west to the Eagle Lake/New London community was known at the time as “the end of the world” because there were no European settlements beyond it. In the years that followed farms were settled, businesses opened (1858) and schools were started (1859). What is now Kandiyohi County was established as two separate counties in 1858 -- Kandiyohi (meaning “abounding in buffalo fish”) and Monongalia. They were merged into one county -- Kandiyohi County -- in 1870.

We might conjecture that the move to this area by the Scandinavians may have had something to do with what Pastor Eric Norelius says about other Minnesota settlements. A Swede, he wrote,

*considers it almost an indispensable condition for this life to have plenty of space, a lot of forest, lakes, fish, game to hunt and an inexhaustible supply of fresh air; but on agricultural land he sets less value.*

“They Chose Minnesota” p. 249

There can be little doubt that the Pre-exemption Act of 1841 was a major stimulant in bringing families to the edge of European settlement. The Act stipulated that an individual could stake a claim on a parcel of land *before* it was offered for sale. Payment could be delayed until the government placed the land on the market. John G. Rice writes that

*A number of the small Swedish settlements planted in 1856 and 1857 far from markets on the edge of the Minnesota prairies had their origins in this practice. Litchfield and Swede Grove townships in Meeker County and Kandiyohi and Eagle Lake farther west in Kandiyohi County are examples.*

“They Chose Minnesota” p. 254

#### The Nelsons (Nilssons) come to Eagle Lake in 1857

Whatever attracted them, a group of families from the Pine Lake settlement in Wisconsin decided in 1857 to head for the new territory on the frontier. John and Christina Nelson and their children were part of this enormous stream of pioneers heading for the frontier.

The 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary book of Lebanon Lutheran New London, MN indicates that the individuals family heads included Sven Helgeson, Magnus Anderson, Andreas Lorentson Sandland, and Nilson -- my great grandfather. We assume his came with him. It's possible, of course, that the came first and built a shelter and then went back families

It is also suggested in the anniversary book that who settled around Eagle Lake were especially positioned to deal with life on the frontier. Among were a combination of men who brought skills them that could be shared with others, including a operator, a blacksmith, a cabinetmaker. Even the came to the blacksmith to do work for them.



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#### The Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms / Kjollerströms) come to Twin Lakes in 1861

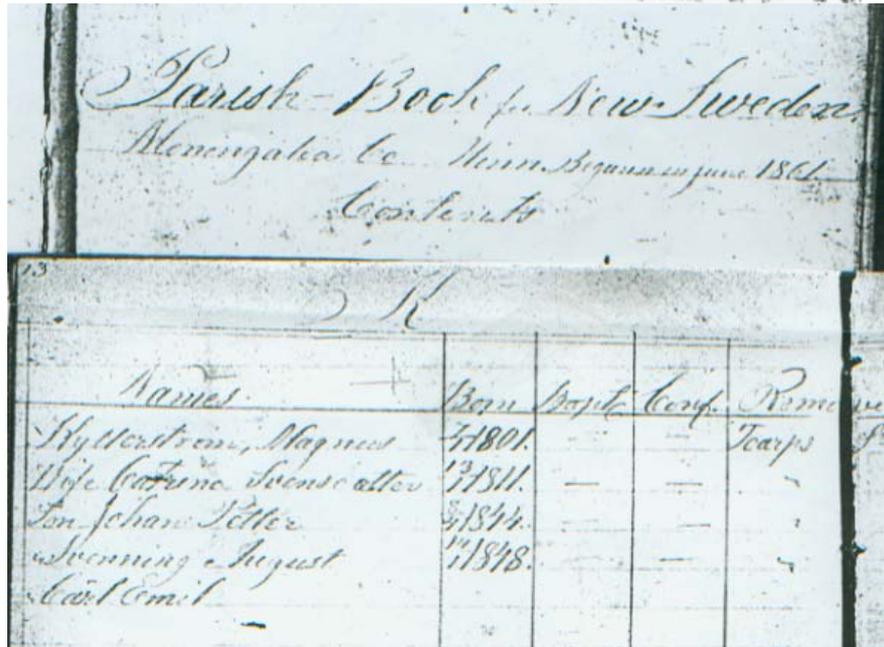
The Lebanon Lutheran anniversary book also says that other families came in subsequent years, including that of “Magnus Kyllerstrom” in 1861.

How did the Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms / Kjällerströms) travel from Wisconsin, first to Morristown and then to Twin Lakes? Probably by the same route as the Nelsons: By rail from Waukesha to Prairie du Chien, by river boat to Hastings, by stage coach Morristown, by oxcart to Willmar, and then on to Twin just a bit west of present day Spicer. It's only a guess, of course. But this scenario would fit the times.



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The congregation first named "New Sweden Church." was organized in 1859. Its records Kjällerström page right) show that Magnus, Catrina, John Peter, Svenning August Charles Emil became members the congregation July 10, 1861. They also indicate the Kjällerströms came to America 1853 and joined



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congregation on July 10, 1861. Magnus' birth year is incorrectly entered as "1801" instead of "1809". John's birthday is incorrectly entered as "April 8" instead of "April 6." Their place of origin is listed as "Toarps," the last place they lived in Sweden before emigrating to America. The congregation met in homes for the first years. The name was changed to "Nest Lake Church" and finally to "Lebanon Lutheran Church." The first building was erected in 1865, several years after the Nelsons and Chilstroms had fled to the Cannon River area.

On that same day the congregation voted to call The Rev. Andrew Jackson as their pastor. Jackson had been educated in Sweden and had come to America as a ship mate. He jumped ship in New York and worked for a time at a brick yard and lumber mill in Ohio before moving on to Wisconsin. When some of his Swedish neighbors decided to move to the Eagle Lake/New London area he decided to join them. Because he was the best-educated person in the community he was asked to read the lessons at church services. Eventually he came under the influence of Lutheran pastors in Minnesota and



John and Svenning August Chilstrom as young

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*members of the congregation -- John on the left and Svenning August on the right..*

they decided to send him to Chicago to pursue studies to become a pastor. The women in the Eagle Lake/New London community sent a "load of butter" to the congregation at Carver where it was sold to help finance his education. He was ordained in 1861 and returned to Kandiyohi County to serve the scattered Swedes in that area. After the Sioux Uprising Jackson fled to the Red Wing area where he eventually became principal of St. Ansgar Academy, the forerunner of Gustavus Adolphus College.

I have visited the home sites of both the Nelsons on Eagle Lake and the Chilstroms on Twin Lakes -- also known as "Lake Oliver." According to Victor Lawson's "History of Kandiyohi County," published in 1905, both families are listed as "Squatters and Preemptors." There was an ancient log building on the Nelson site. No one was home to tell me how old it was. On my last visit in 2004 it was gone.

At the Chilstrom site, however, I met descendents of August Moller. Moller took claim on the land after the Chilstroms fled and a Moller family still lives there. They took me to a hillside just west of the house and barn where they pointed to a depression on the side of a hill. The story that had been passed down through the generations in the Moller family is that this was the place where the Chilstroms dug a hole in the hillside, turned their ox cart upside down to cover the excavation and used it as a temporary shelter.

*The indentation in the where it is believed the overturned their oxcart their first months on Lakes in 1861.*

On a more recent visit in 2006 I the hillside was completely over with small trees and one ascertain the place of the excavation.

#### Relationship with the Native

To the best of my knowledge, Nelsons and Chilstroms

(Kyllerstroms) and the other Scandinavian settlers treated the Indians kindly. My aunt Malvina Chilstrom Nygren told me stories she had heard from her parents and grandparents indicating that relationships with the Indians were good, even though they were squatters on Indian land.



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*This map from the booklet "Monson Lake Memorial Observance" (held on August 21, 1955) shows the sites of the John Nelson family on Eagle Lake and the Magnus Kyllerstrom family on Twin Lakes. The "+" marks indicate where settlers were killed. Note that one was killed directly across the small Twin Lake from where the Kyllerstroms (Chilstroms) lived.*

*She said that the Indians were especially fascinated by the way the white women kneaded bread dough and how it would rise. She told of how the Indians would*

try to stuff it back into the pan. My sister Adeline recalls that our grandmother Hattie spoke of her fear when they would find Indians peering in their windows. This was not unusual, however, and was not an indication of any ill will on their part. The Indians were by nature curious. They had little or no understanding of the assumptions of privacy that the settlers brought with them and took for granted.

Though the squatters laid claim to parcels of land, it was not until 1862 that Congress passed the Homestead Act, allowing families to secure their claims to a quarter section of land. How did these families stake a claim on land? The best description I have found is in Flandrau's book:

*... all the settlers on the Indian lands were trespassers, and as the lands were not surveyed, no claim rights could be acquired, but the settlers did the best they could to mark their claims, and gain what right they could by possession. The usual and best way of marking claim lines, was by running a plow furrow around the land. When the prairie was once broken, the line was indelible, because an entirely new growth would spring up in the furrow that never could be eradicated.*

*In 1854 a law of congress was passed, by which settlers in Minnesota were given rights in unsurveyed lands, their claims to be adjusted to the surveyed lines, when they were run, 'as near as may be.'*

*Of course, this condition of things gave rise to many disputes about claim lines and rights, and as there were no legal tribunals to appeal to, we organized claim associations to protect our rights. ... all (members of the association) were pledged to support each other against any one attempting to jump the claim of any member. Protection, of course, meant driving out the intruder and restoring the rightful owner to his possession.*

And just how did the Nelsons and Chilstroms and others go about taming the wilderness and establishing a farm? Russell Fridley in his book "Minnesota: Localized History Series" chooses these words:

*At first the people cleared a few acres of land quickly and then planted crops that would supply them with the bare necessities of life: a few potatoes, some turnips, cabbages and other vegetables. They generally planted a little patch of corn, and, if they could get seed, they raised a small amount of grain.*

*p. 29*

Driving the movement of many of these pioneers was land speculation. It was assumed that if one could get established the value of the land would increase substantially with the flow of new immigrants all hungry for a place to settle. Flandrau says:

*... everybody became a speculator. Towns and cities sprang into existence like mushrooms in the night. Scarcely anyone was to be seen without a town site map in his hands, the advantages and beauties of which fictitious metropolis he was ready to present in the most eloquent terms. Everything useful was neglected, and speculation was rampant. There were no banks of issue, and all the money that was in the country was borrowed in the East. In order to make borrowing easy, the law placed no restrictions on the rate of interest...*

*pp. 67-68*

Unfortunately, the bubble burst in 1857 when the Ohio Life and Trust Company failed. This precipitated a panic across the entire country -- much like the Crash in 1929 that set off the Great Depression. And, like the Great Depression, it sobered the country, including the settlers on the frontier.

*It compelled the people to abandon speculation, and seek honest labor in the cultivation of the soil and the development of the splendid resources that generous nature had bestowed upon the country. Farms were opened by the thousands, everybody went to work, and in ten or a dozen years, Minnesota had a surplus of forty million bushels of wheat with which to supply the hungry world.*

*Flandrau p. 69*

### Life on the Frontier

We can only imagine what life was like for those who pushed on to the edge of European settlement. Unfortunately, the Nelsons and Chilstroms left no written account. We can rely, in part at least, on the scattered accounts of others and on novels like those written by Vilhelm Moberg and O.E. Rølvaag, author of the well-known book "Giants in the Earth."

Although the time and the setting for Rølvaag's novel is several years later and focuses on South Dakota rather than Minnesota, the conditions were similar. He describes the forces or "giants" that kept overwhelming the settlers on the frontier. These included loneliness, crop failures, fear of the native Indians, disease, mental illness, lack of spiritual care from pastors, and much more.

In one poignant section Rølvaag writes of a husband's concern for a depressed wife:

*Lately he had... begun to notice that she lay awake the greater part of the night; he always dropped off to sleep before she did; yet she would be wide awake in the morning when he first stirred, although he was by habit an early riser. And if by chance he woke up in the night, he would be almost certain to find her lying awake beside him.... One night she had called him; she had been sitting up in the bed, and must have been crying -- her voice sounded like it. ...she had started crying despairingly; he hadn't been able to make any sense of the few words he got out of her. From that time on, he had been scared to show her any tenderness,; he had noticed that when he did so, the tears were sure to come. And that, certainly, was not good for her!"*

*p 202 - 203*

Rølvaag, like Moberg, tells of the raging blizzards that came without warning and locked the settlers in their homes for days at a time:

*An endless plain. from Kansas -- Illinois, it stretched, far into the Canadian north, God alone knows how far; from the Mississippi River to the western Rockies, miles without number... Endless... beginningless. A gray waste...an empty silence....a boundless cold. Snow fell; snow flew; a universe of nothing but dead whiteness. Blizzards from out of the northwest raged, swooped down and stirred up a grayish-white fury, impenetrable to human eyes. As soon as these monsters tired, storms from the northeast were sure to come, bringing more snow... 'The Lord have mercy! This is awful!' said the folk, for lack of anything else to say. Monsterlike the Plain lay there -- sucked in her breath one week, and the next week blew it out again. Man she scorned; his works she would not brook... She would know, when the time came, how to guard herself and her own against him!*

*p 241*

Possibly the most poignant description of life on the frontier comes from the pen of Meridel Le Sueur:

*Crouching together on Indian lands in the long winter, we grew insight and understanding, heard the rumbling of glacial moraines, clung to the edge of the holocaust of forest fires, below zero weather, grasshopper plagues, sin, wars, crop failures, drought, and the mortgage. The severity of the seasons and the strangeness of a new land, with those whose land had been seized looking in our windows, created a tension of guilt and a tightening of sin. We were often snowed in, the villages invisible and inaccessible in cliffs of snow. People froze following the rope to their barn to feed cattle.*

*From "Minnesota Days" Edited by Michael Dregni*

With no means of birth control other than abstinence, most pioneer women spent the first years of their marriage bearing children. As one pioneer woman put it, "the most dependable state of

*affairs I knew during the many years I lived on the prairie was pregnancy.” (Women of the Northern Plains, p. 35) The average wife could look forward to twenty or more years of pregnancy, birth and lactation.*

Though most births were without incident, there was probably nothing quite as frightening as giving birth to a child in these primitive conditions. Again, LeSueur gives this account of one that did not go well:

*I helped the midwife deliver a baby. I held on to the screaming mother, her lips nearly bitten off, while she delivered in pieces a dead, strangled corpse.*

*From “Minnesota Days” Edited by Michael Dregni*

One of the worst pestilences the settlers had to deal with was something we now joke about -- mosquitoes! With no screens or repellants to ward them off, these creatures were a constant irritant to both humans and beasts. Settlers described how it was impossible to even enjoy a meal because the mosquitoes would crawl into their mouths with their food. Some tried to evade them by smoking sending huge billows of smoke into the room. Others dug cellars under their homes and slept in those dark, dank quarters to escape them. One man reported that his eyes were swollen shut for two weeks because of their bites.

Given all these challenges to life on the frontier, we have to wonder, did they have second thoughts about their decision to leave their homeland? How often did they despair that their dreams for a comfortable home, good land, and peace would never come true? Again, Rølvaag captures the reality of what they felt:

*A nameless apprehension tugged at her heart.... For how could folk establish homes in an endless wilderness? Was it not the Evil One that had struck them with blindness? ... here she sat, thousands of miles from home and kindred, lost in a limitless void. Out yonder drifted these folk, like chips on a current. Must man perish because of his own foolishness? Where, then, was the guiding hand?*  
p. 320-321

Fortunately, hope springs eternal, even in the worst of circumstances. And nothing brought hope like the first hints of spring

*... the cyclic renewal and strength of the old prairie earth, held sacred for thousands of years of Indian ritual... taught and nourished us. All opened in the spring. The prairies, like a great fan, opened. The people warmed, and came together in quilting bees, Ladies Aid meetings... The plowing and the planting began as soon as the thaw let the farmers into the fields... Neighbors helped each other. The churches had picnics and baptizing.*

*From “Minnesota Days” Edited by Michael Dregni*

### Spiritual Care for the Settlers

Spiritual care for the immigrants was minimal. They were, for the most part, on their own. The Lebanon Lutheran anniversary book cited earlier reports quite plaintively: “*Very rarely did any Swedish Lutheran pastor visit the settlement.*” One letter from the time of their first settlement notes plaintively,

*We have five unbaptized children. No one has been here to baptize them -- some are 1 ½ years old. We are in a wilderness here and like straying sheep who have no shepherd. Some of us have not received the Sacrament in two years. If it is His will who called us He will doubtless send someone. We are too few and too poor to be able to afford a pastor, but we always expect more who will increase the congregation.*

The Church of Sweden, as I noted earlier, regarded those who left for America as traitors to their homeland. There was a common saying that “The mother was not present when the child was born,” suggesting that the Church of Sweden had little to do with the founding and survival of the Lutheran church in the new land.

Yet, though there was little encouragement from Sweden, the Lutheran church took root. Dr. Emeroy Johnson summarizes how it happened:

*As a result of the work of those few, scattered, penniless pioneers in the 1850s there was a spiritual foundation laid, there was a constitution formulated on confessional Lutheran principals, and there was at least a semblance of an organization ready to tackle the enormous problem of bringing the ministrations of the church to the hundreds of new settlements that were suddenly calling for help when the stream of Lutheran immigration became a flood....*

*Emeroy Johnson, “A Church is Planted” p. 146*

In spite of a lack of encouragement from the Church of Sweden, a few pastors came to America and a few young men trained for the ministry after they arrived. When Pastor Peter Carlson from Carver, MN visited the area north of Willmar in 1859 the Swedish families decided to organize a congregation. On July 22, 1859, after hearing a sermon by Carlson on John 14:6 (“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”) the formal organization took place, calling itself the “New Sweden Lutheran Church.”

As mentioned earlier, a talented young man by the name of Andrew Jackson had come to the settlement in 1858 to teach the children. He was so deeply influenced by Pastor Carlson that he agreed to be the spiritual leader of the congregation, in addition to his teaching duties. As a deacon, he was authorized to conduct services. In 1860 Jackson agreed to go to Illinois to study for the ministry and a year later he was ordained. The record says that “*The young pastor hurried back to his friends on the frontier, and began his work with enthusiasm.*”

One of the pastors who traveled widely in Minnesota to minister to the settlers was Eric Norelius. He might well be called “the father of the Swedish Lutherans in Minnesota.” He was appointed by the church to be a missionary pastor to the scattered Swedish Lutherans in Minnesota. In

January of 1861 he undertook a journey that began in St. Paul and went as far west as the area around Eagle Lake and Spicer where the Nelsons had settled. It was a winter with heavy snowfall. Norelius describes a night he was forced to spend in a settler's home:

*It was a small log cabin, one lone room. It seemed impossible, and the worst of it all was that a number of foxes and wolves and other animals that had been trapped were hanging on the walls and the members of the family were busy skinning the animals. The smell was almost unbearable, but there was nothing else to do but suffer it in silence, for we could not sleep out in the snowdrifts. It was worse the following morning when I could see how everything looked. They made a kind of pancake, thick and heavy on the dirty stove lids, but how I would be able to get those into a protesting stomach was a ticklish question. The only way was to smear them liberally with a thick syrup, look at the ceiling, stop thinking, and then swallow....*

“A Church Is Planted” p. 157-158

In his journal he records what a typical parsonage on the frontier was like:

*It consisted of one room. In this one room they cooked, baked, washed clothes, slept, read, and prayed. I think in all there were a dozen people there during the days I stayed with them. A homemade ladder served as a stairway to the loft. Between the ladder and the wall there was a small window, the pastor had partitioned off a small room for a study. The partitions were of cloth. In this little den he had his books, and though he could not shut out the sound of what went on in the house, he could, nevertheless, imagine that he was alone....*

“A Church Is Planted” p. 148.

Norelius was using a blind horse on this missionary trip. One night his host family put the horse in a pasture, forgetting that there was a steep bank by the lake. In the morning they saw the hoof marks on the bank and discovered the horse had somehow managed to swim across the lake.

Norelius adds this note about his visit with the families at Eagle Lake -- the place where John and Christina Nelson and their children -- Gustav, Hedda (Hattie), Mathilda and Louisa -- lived:

*... there was a little pioneer colony near Eagle Lake, and this place I visited. They were very thankful for my visit, and I felt well repaid for my efforts in plowing through the snow to find them.*

*A Church Is Planted” p. 158.*

Since a visit of this kind was so rare and since Norelius was by that time a man of well-known stature among the Swedish Lutherans, we might safely assume that the Nelsons heard him preach and may have had personal conversations with him.

Among those who were in the first class to be confirmed on November 17, 1861 were my grandmother Hedda Nelson (upper right in photo) and her brother Gustav (Gustaf) Nelson (lower left in photo). By this time Hedda was and Gustav 17. Gustav was old for confirmation. But, as the anniversary book it,

*In some of the families which had left Sweden some nine or ten years before, children had grown into manhood and womanhood without having been confirmed in the faith and admitted to the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper. These husky young frontier men and women must now study the catechism early and late in order to be prepared to pass a satisfactory examination.*



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(An interesting historical note might be added here. My first cousin Edward Chillstrom, son of Anton and Alma Chillstrom, spent a summer at Lebanon Lutheran Church, New London, in the late 1920s or early 1930s teaching vacation church school. He was a student at Gustavus Adolphus College at the time. Edward was the son of Anton Chillstrom, the father of Peter and Sandra and the grandfather of Curtis and Thomas Chillstrom.)

### Guarded Hope

In spite of all the challenges, Flandrau describes the situation in Minnesota in the late 1850s and early 1860s as peaceful and hopeful. “*The state continued to grow in population and wealth at an extraordinary pace, but in a quiet and unobtrusive way,*” he writes. (p. 123) Though storm clouds were gathering on the horizon as tensions between North and South escalated, those problems seemed far off to those who were getting established on their claims on the Minnesota frontier. The Nelsons and Kyllerstroms had every reason to be optimistic about the future.

As I mentioned earlier, the Homestead Act was passed in May, 1862. Under its provisions, any person over 21 who was the head of a family and who was a citizen -- or intended to become one -- could obtain title to 160 acres of public land if he/she agreed to live on that land for five years. The new landowner was also obligated to erect a dwelling and begin to cultivate the land.

Unfortunately, those dreams for a place of their own in the new land, a setting that surely reminded them of their native Sweden, would never be realized, at least not at that time and not in the Eagle Lake/New London community.

### The Civil War

Tragically, the same year the Homestead Act was passed, the whole country was plunged into the depths of the great and devastating Civil War between North and South. Until the settlement of

the Upper Midwest there had been a delicate balance between the North and the South. But as the new lands opened in the North there was great concern in the South that slavery might be in jeopardy. They wanted to preserve their right to have slaves. People in the North were just as determined to make certain that slavery would not spread to these new territories.

It all came to a head, ironically, in a case that centered in Minnesota. Dred Scott, a Black slave, had been brought to Minnesota by his owner. When the owner died, Scott, with the support of many friends, sued for his freedom. In a 1857 case that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, he lost. The ruling, in effect, removed all restrictions on slavery in the new territories. Northern states rose up in holy furor. In the meantime, a member of the family of the man who owned Scott, got title to him and set him free. A little more than a year later, Scott died.

Though Scott was all but forgotten, the issue was not. In the 1860 election Lincoln was the winner. Disaffected southern states voted to withdraw from the union and formed the Confederate States of America. When Lincoln refused the CSA demand that federal troops be removed from Fort Sumter, Confederate troops attacked the Fort on April 12, 1861 -- at about the same time the Chilstroms joined the Nelsons in the Eagle Lake/New London area. The nation was plunged into the bloodiest war in its history.

How did the War affect the settlers on the frontier? Pastor Eric Norelius made this note in his journal:

*War clouds were gathering on the horizon and almost everyone was beginning to ask what this might come to. Even among the pioneers...there was restlessness.... It is an occasion for humiliation and self-examination. However, I do not remember that there was any discouragement, but rather a general willingness to bleed and die, if necessary, for a righteous cause. Many of my countrymen whom I visited this winter went to enlist in the Army the next summer and many of them never returned to their humble little homes in the woods.*

*Emeroy Johnson, "A Church Is Planted" p. 150*

It's important to record these brief notes about the Civil War because this gave hope to the native peoples. The Dakota/Sioux saw this as their opportunity to rise up and drive out those who were encroaching on their land. With many young white men going off to war and with the military preoccupied elsewhere, the younger Indian warriors were convinced that they could drive out the white settlers who had taken their land under what they increasingly saw as unfair treaties.

### The Great Sioux Uprising

Martin Marty, a longtime observer of the history of religious and civil movements in America, puts matters into broad perspective:

*Seldom in history has one nation found itself faced with so many races living near each other. During the colonial and early national period the conquering Whites and Indians lived near each other. Since land was at issue, it was inevitable there would be clashes. The racial groups staked out a claim on American soil and then*

*undertook a course of action that helped them express hopes in religious terms; that the Whites did so with talk of a 'manifest destiny' and 'mission' was always noticed.*

*"The Pro and Con Book of Religion" p. 69*

In 1855 a man by the name of David Humphrey encountered a small group of Sioux in Minnesota. He enjoyed conversing with them and studying their culture. His attitude, however, was typical for those times:

*They are fast fading away and soon will be gone. But another reflection, perhaps no less sad, but a compensating one for the last, if I may so say, is that they are apparently good for nothing, no blessing or good to themselves or to anybody else & in a practical view their decrease is not to be regretted however much romantic sympathy may weep. One thing is certain, the question what we shall do with them is fast being settled, whether right or wrong, & with a rapidity that will apparently put an end very soon to its discussion. That they have been most unrighteously used is true & one cannot blame them for the resistance they are now making against the whites in the west. Their list of grievances is long but the might of the white man is greater than the right of the Indian.*

*Frederick Johnson, "Goodhue County" p. 67*

William Lass analyses the typical settler's view in these words:

*In pushing aside the Indians and breaking the land and building cities, frontier settlers saw themselves fulfilling their destiny. Although they would never have said so -- at least in a derogatory sense -- they were expansionists philosophically as well as physically; by every thought and action American frontiersmen flung themselves against the challenges of foreign powers, against the untamed land and the Indians.*

*"Minnesota: A History" p. 73*

As I look back on my childhood and youth, I see clearly that I grew up with a very prejudiced attitude toward Native Americans -- the Indians. I have no recollection of having been taught anything about pre-European Minnesota history. I'm certain there was nothing in our history or social studies classes about the Indian people, their culture and their history. If there was, I've forgotten it. At the same time, western movies with good cowboys and bad Indians, stories handed down from previous generations, scurrilous remarks about "those Indians" by people in the community, jokes about Indians -- all contributed to my prejudice.

We weren't aware of it, of course. Prejudice is subtle. We could condemn Southerners for their prejudice against and ill treatment of Negroes. But we were blind to our own prejudice and ignorant of the history of abuse of the Indians. I was taught to think of them as savages and of my own people as innocent refugees from unbearable conditions in Sweden. The Indians were thought of as sub-human, without a culture of their own, unintelligent, crude.

For this reason, I've had to reconstruct my whole view of the events that led up to the Sioux Uprising and the role people like my great grandparents played in that history.

### The Root of the Problem

As I indicated earlier, the U.S. government was eager to settle the Indian lands with Europeans. They pressured the Indians into making treaties, offering them paltry sums of money in exchange for huge areas of native land. The Indians, in turn, were eventually restricted to small reservations. Where they had roamed freely to hunt animals and to fish, they now encountered the squatters and preemptors like my great grandparents. Before long the settlers far outnumbered the Indians.

While all this was happening 25,000 Minnesota men enlisted in the Army of the North to fight in the Civil War. One regiment played a key role at the Battle of Gettysburg, turning the tide of that battle and the War in favor of the North. Nine of every ten men in the regiment died. In all, more than 2,500 Minnesota men -- one of every ten -- died in the Civil War.

Meanwhile, the Indians in many parts of the Minnesota Territory were being treated badly by some of the settlers. Store keepers and agents would provide goods to the Indians but would treat them shamefully when they were unable to pay their bills. Government grants to the Indians, an important part of the treaties, were always slow in coming. Congress was preoccupied with the Civil War and affairs on the frontier were probably seen as a distraction.

There also was pressure on the Indians to become farmers on the reservations. Some succeeded. Others found this way of life completely alien to their traditions and found the transition impossible. Disease was also a plague on the Indians. They had no built-in resistance to the common diseases brought by the Europeans. Whooping cough, diphtheria, measles and other communicable diseases wiped out much of the native population.

Three immediate factors led to the Uprising: First, the U.S. government failed to deliver on its promises of food and money; second, hunting was poor, due in large part to the disappearance of forest land that the new settlers were turning into fields; third, crops were being destroyed by pests. The Indians were starving on the very land that had been their Mother for centuries. Though individual settlers like the Nelsons and Chilstroms may not have been aware of all these things, when mingled together they created a boiling cauldron of resentment in the Indian community. In hindsight, we would have to say that some kind of explosion was inevitable.

One man who saw the coming conflict long before others was Henry Hastings Sibley. He had lived among the Indians since he was 23 as a fur trader. In subsequent years he became a politician. He knew that the ill-treatment of the Indians would bring sorry consequences.

*Your pioneers are encircling the last home of the red man, as with a wall of fire... You must approach these [Indians] with terms of conciliation and friendship, or you must suffer the consequences of a bloody and remorseless Indian war.... The time is not far distant when, pent in on all sides, and suffering from want, a Philip, or a Tecumseh, will arise to band themselves together for a last and desperate*

*onset upon their white foes.*

*Frederick Johnson; "Goodhue County", p. 29*

### The Acton Massacre

It wasn't long in coming.

The Great Sioux Uprising, a conflict that lasted for decades, started on an otherwise quiet Sunday morning -- August 17, 1862 -- at a place called "Acton" about 15 miles southwest of the town of Litchfield. (Ironically, John Peter and Hattie Chilstrom, my grandparents, would claim a homestead seventeen years later just a few miles east of this site.) The Acton massacre is described by Duane Schultz in this book, "Over the Land I Come":

*There were four of them. Their names were Brown Wing, Breaking Up, Killing Ghost and Runs Against Something When Crawling. Two were dressed like Indians and two like white men. They were from the village at Rice Creek of the Lower Sioux. All were in their twenties.*

*They were hunting that Sunday morning but with no success. They were hungry. At eleven o'clock, without intention, design, or desire they started a war.*

*Near the tiny settlement of Acton Township they came to the property of Mr. & Mrs. Robinson Jones, who ran a combined store and post office. Near the split-rail fence that marked the boundary of Jones' s land, the four Indians found some eggs in a hen's nest. One of the braves picked up the eggs. 'Don't take them,' another said, 'for they belong to a white man and we may get in to trouble.'*

*The first Indian, angered by the remark, threw the eggs down. 'You are a coward,' he shouted. 'You are afraid of the white man. You are afraid even to take an egg from him, though you are half-starved. Yes, you are a coward, and I will tell everybody so.'*

*'I am not a coward. I am not afraid of the white man, and to show you that I am not I will go to the house and shoot him. Are you brave enough to go with me?'*

*'Yes, I will go with you and we will see who is the braver of us two.'*

*'We will go with you,' the other two said, 'and we will be brave, too.'*

*None of them, it turned out, was sufficiently brave when they got to the store. They were noisy and acted tough, but Jones decided they were no threat. ... so he left, telling young Clara he would be at the Bakers' house. He took his rifle with him... The four Sioux followed Jones... When they all reached the Bakers' house, the Indians suggested to Jones, Baker, and his friend Webster that they engage in some target shooting... They took turns firing at a block of wood set atop a tree stump. The Indians reloaded after each shot, but the whites did not. Suddenly, all*

*four Indians turned on Jones and shot him. One took aim at the women watching from the doorway of the house. Baker jumped in front of them and took the bullet instead. The Indians quickly brought down Webster and Mrs. Jones.*

*The Indians fled immediately, realizing the punishment their action was likely to bring. The settlers would hang them from the nearest tree when they caught them. They ran back toward Acton Township, back past Jones' store. Clare Wilson saw them from the doorway. One Indian stopped, took aim, and fired, killing her instantly. The baby remained asleep inside.*

*Pp. 30-32*

Word of the massacre spread rapidly. Many refused to believe it. They had enjoyed mostly good relationships with the Indians and could not conceive of such a thing. In August of that year a man wrote to his family, "*I don't believe a word of it... I consider the whole thing another humbug.*" Because of this, they were completely unprepared to defend themselves and their families. Those who believed the account dismissed it as a minor incident, blaming it on a few drunken Indians who would be brought to swift judgment. That might have been the case, had not the other factors already mentioned been in place, had not the entire Indian community been so enraged by their ill treatment by some of the white settlers and their leaders.



News of the Acton murders also spread rapidly in the Indian communities. Chief Little Crow (to the left), who had worked hard to maintain good relationships between his people and the white settlers, tried to calm the Indians. He and other leaders insisted that it was folly to make war with the whites. Little Crow pleaded:

*We are only little herds of buffaloes left scattered; the great herds that once covered the prairies are no more. See! The Whitemen are like locusts, when they fly so thick that the whole sky is a snowstorm. You may kill one, two, ten, yes, as many as the leaves in the forest yonder, and their brothers will not miss them. Kill one, two, and ten times ten will come to kill you.*

*Count your fingers all day long and Whitemen with guns in their hands will come faster than you can count.*

*Kenneth Carley - "The Great Sioux Uprising" p. 11*

But the younger men overruled Little Crow and the older leaders. It soon became apparent that resentment among the Indians was so deep that war was inevitable. Andrew Myrick, a trader at Granite Falls and Morton, enraged the Indians when he dismissed their pleas for food. He is reported to have said, "So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry, let them eat grass." When war broke out he was killed and was found with grass shoved down his throat.

Many Indians, knowing that Lincoln and the U.S. Congress were preoccupied with the Civil War and that many young men from Minnesota had gone off to fight, saw this as the right moment to

rise up against those who had encroached on their land and who had treated them so shamefully. In spite of the odds against them, many believed they could actually drive back the white settlers and reclaim their lands.

As for Chief Little Crow, few understood at the time how he longed to bring peace and understanding between his own people and the white settlers. Typical of the white attitude is what A.C. Smith wrote in 'History of Meeker County' in 1877: "*Little Crow was a small-sized man and a savage chieftain of singular power and genius, always evil disposed to the whites....*"  
p. 49

Schultz writes this sad epitaph on his life:

*Little Crow tried to integrate the two cultures, to balance his life and that of his people with (the whites), and to make use of the best from each. In the end, he belonged to neither and felt betrayed by both.*

p. 35

After the killings in the Acton area the bodies were collected and entered in a common grave at the Ness Lutheran Church where a memorial can be seen today .

*Ness Lutheran Church, where the  
who were killed are buried in a  
grave.*



*settlers  
common*

### The Uprising in the Eagle Lake and Twin Lakes area

As the Uprising spread all along the frontier, the Indians struck some of the more remote areas, including the Scandinavian settlement where the Nelsons (Nilssons) and Chilstroms (Kjöllerströms) were living. Given the lack of communication, the settlers had no warning of what was to come. The Lebanon Lutheran anniversary book suggests that there was high

enthusiasm and optimism among the members of the congregation. A new group of immigrants had just arrived from Sweden. A wedding was to be held in a few days. On the afternoon of August 20 the congregation was gathered at the Lundborg home. This account follows:

*At the close of the service, a little boy, Peter Broberg, came running all out of breath, and told that the Indians had arrived at the Broberg cabins about two miles away, and that they were abusing the children that had been left at home. The visit of the Indians was nothing new, and no particular alarm was felt.*

Schultze describes what actually happened in the West Lake/New London area during the next days:

*Lars and Gure Anderson (also spelled "Endreson") and their children lived on Eagle Lake....(actually on "Solomon Lake"). At seven o'clock on Thursday morning, four Indians came to the Anderson home. One was called John, because he spoke some English, and all four had visited there. The Andersons gave them food. These Indians kept their hair trimmed and dressed in white man's clothes. Each one carried a double-barreled shotgun, but that was not unusual. Indians were always armed when they went hunting. None of the white families around Eagle Lake knew about the uprising.*

*The Indians shook hands with Anderson and asked for some milk to drink. He brought them a fresh pail, and when they finished drinking, they shot him. They went out to the garden, where one of the sons was digging up potatoes, and they killed him. Another son ran to the doorway to see what was happening. The Indians shot him in the shoulder, leaving him for dead.*

*Gure Anderson grabbed her three-year-old daughter and rushed into the cellar, but her other daughters, a teenager and a ten-year-old, ran hand in hand into the prairie grass. The Indians caught them and dragged them away. Gure watched helplessly from the cellar door, hearing their screams. She waited in the cellar until dark, then took her child in her arms and left the house. She walked aimlessly through the night and most of the next day, dazed by the suddenness with which her life had changed, she lost her way, unable to find a road or trail that looked familiar. Continuing on through the evening and the following morning, she found herself back within sight of her own house. At first, she was afraid to go inside, but hunger changed her mind. And she decided that if she was to die, it might as well be in her own home. When she crossed the threshold, she saw that the Indians had gone, but they had taken all the food and destroyed or stolen most of the family's possessions.*

*Mrs. Anderson hitched two oxen to a small sled, shed a few tears over the bodies of her husband and son, and returned to the house for a last look around. Poking behind the stove, beneath a pile of rubbish left by the Indians, she found her other son, the one who had been shot in the shoulder. He was, she said, 'nearly crazy with fear and pain.' She carried him outside and placed him on the sled with the three-year-old. Feeling more purposeful about what she had to do, Gure mounted*

*the sled and made for her son-in-law's home, some five miles away.*

*The son-in-law, whose name was Erickson, was at home with his wife, his father and two friends -- Mr. & Mrs. Solomon Foote. On Thursday morning, they had been visited by some Indians, whom they knew and welcomed as usual. The Sioux asked for some potatoes, and when Erickson went into the garden to dig them up, they shot and scalped him. They also shot his father and cut his throat. Solomon Foote was caught in the cabin doorway by buckshot. As he fell, his wife grabbed him and dragged him inside. She fetched his rifle and propped him up at a window. Foote fired at the Indians, killing one with his first shot. He wounded another but took a bullet through the lungs. As he collapsed on the floor, he passed the rifle to his wife and urged her to keep firing. Mrs. Foote kept up a steady fire at the Indians for the remainder of the day, and prevented them from storming the house.*

*After the braves left at dusk, Mrs. Foote and Mrs. Erickson went outside and found that Erickson was still alive in the potato field. They carried him into the house and up the stairs and placed him on a bed. He was bleeding so heavily that drops of blood seeped through the floorboards to the room below, where, Foote was resting on blankets on the floor. The women did their best for their husbands, but both appeared to be beyond help. By noon on Friday, they decided that neither man was strong enough to survive, and that they had better leave if they hoped to save themselves. They headed for Forest City...arriving two days later."*

*pp. 137-139*

By the time the conflict in the area was over 20 of the white settlers had been killed. It is not known how many Indians died.



*A Kandyohi County settler's home  
1859.*

*built in*

### How the Nelsons and Kyllerstroms Survived the Uprising

And what about the Nelsons and Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms)? What was happening to them as all

of this chaos was unfolding around them? It's helpful to recall the ages of the Chilstroms and Nelsons. Magnus Chilstrom is 53, Katrina is 51, my grandfather John is 18, Svenning is 14 and Charles has just turned 11. John Nelson has just celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, Christina is 51, Gustav is 18, my grandmother Hedda (Hattie) is 15, Mathilda is 12 and Lovisa is 8.

As we learned from the Schultz account, the first attack happened at the Lars and Gure Anderson (Endreson) home on Solomon Lake. This was only a mile or two west of where the Nelsons lived and three or four miles southwest of the Chilstrom (Kyllerstrom) home. Others were killed just a half-mile south of the Nelson home and just across the small lake from where the Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms) lived.

Fortunately, we have two reports of what happened to the Nelson and Chilstrom (Kyllerstrom) families, one for each.

In the obituary for Gustav Nelson in the Canon Falls, MN weekly newspaper this account appears. No doubt it had been passed down to his family:

*On a Sunday morning (one week after the Acton massacre) in August, 1862, when the entire neighborhood was attending services, they were informed by the minister, Rev. A. Jacobson, that the Indians were on the war path and were on the way to their settlement. The settlers all rushed to their homes to prepare for flight. When the Nelson family reached home, they found that a neighbor had borrowed the only yoke they had. Another neighbor who had an extra yoke loaned this to them but after they proceeded a few miles demanded that they return the yoke. It looked as though a terrible death was to be theirs but another settler happened along who had an extra yoke and gave it to them, so they proceeded on their flight to St. Cloud.*

*A week later, Gustav Nelson, together with some of the other settlers returned to the settlement where they found everything in ruins and the bodies of a number of their friends who had not fled and who had been killed by the Indians.*

As for the Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms), there is a note at the end of the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book for Lebanon Lutheran Church, New London, MN which reads:

*According to a letter from Mrs. David Swedell, a granddaughter (of Magnus and Stina Chilstrom and daughter of Charles Emil Chilstrom), when word of the Indian uprising reached the Magnus Kyllerstrom family who lived on what later became the Moller place, they were reluctant to believe the report as the Indians had always been friendly. (Svenning) August, fifteen years of age, was sent on horse-back to warn the neighbors. It happened with the Kyllerstroms exactly as it did with Mons Olsons: the mother was baking bread at the time, and she put the hot kitchen stove in the wagon and the baking was finished on the way. Before leaving, a lot of their things were dug down in the yard. The Kyllerstroms never came back to live there. About thirty years ago, some of the family called at their old place while visiting in these parts. The Mollers informed them that the buried articles had all been found by them.*

Another account of the Chilstrom (Kyllerstrom) family flight comes from the youngest son Charles Emil, through daughter Ethel Chillstrom and then by way of a report that James Chillstrom, son of Oscar Chillstrom, wrote for a class project when he was a student at Wisconsin State University - Eau Claire.

*Charles remembered the early warning given by his father and the enthusiasm with which the entire family loaded their wagon with anything and everything they owned. They headed toward Fort Snelling in St. Paul and arrived, tired, weary, but alive. As they heard reports of the brutal massacre of their friends and neighbors, they wished never to return to the area. Many weeks later, when it was once again safe to travel, they migrated southward to Cannon Falls.*

The only other story I have is the one my aunt Malvina Chilstrom Nygren once told me. She said that when the Indians attacked the settlers took refuge in the barn. They had only one gun. They went from window to window firing at the Indians, hoping to give the impression that they had many guns with them. When the last bullet had been fired, the Indians gave up and left. (I'm not certain if she was referring to the Nelsons, the Chilstroms or another family. I suspect it may have been another family since the accounts from the Nelsons and Chilstroms make no mention of an encounter with the Indians.)

One of the unanswered questions I have is whether my grandfather John Chilstrom was at home at the time of the attack. According to one account, many of the younger men from the community had gone off to work in the harvest fields on large farms near Watertown west of Minneapolis. The fact that Svenning August, John's younger brother, was sent off to warn the neighbors may indicate that John wasn't at home. Had he been at home it seems that he would have been the one sent off to warn the neighbors.

Since she was only 15 at the time of the attack, it's probably safe to assume that my grandmother Hedda (Hattie) was at home with her family. Yet, I recall aunt Malvina (Chilstrom) Nygren telling me that Hedda went to St. Paul when she was a young girl to work as a housemaid. Was she already there? We will never know for certain.

My aunt Malvina also told the story of how Charles, the youngest Chilstrom who became a pharmacist in Minneapolis, returned years later to the site of the Chilstrom home on Twin Lakes. As they approached the site he became so excited to see it again that he leaped from the automobile and ran to see the home site again.

### Refuge in the Stockades

Gustav Nelson's account states that the Nelson family fled to St. Cloud. I have always been of the impression that the Chilstroms went to the stockade at Forest City. One account says that those heading for Forest City were attacked by a band of Indians who "rode out from the Diamond Lake woods." Wagons were placed in a circle for protection and anyone with a pan or shovel or tool of any kind dug trenches for protection while two men with rifles held off the attack. "There was an indescribable panic of crying, praying and defenseless people."

The Forest City stockade was built in only 24 hours -- September 3, 1862 -- by settlers in the area and completed just before an Indian attack. A double row of logs were set 3 feet into the ground and extended to about ten to twelve feet in height. It was about 120 square feet in size. There were holes in the wall from which to shoot. The Forest City stockade became a temporary haven for 240 people. The Indian attack lasted for ten days before the stockade was secured by Company B of the Minnesota Volunteer Regiment.

The stockade at St. Cloud actually had three fortifications, including one called "Fort Holes." Unlike the others, it was circular, about forty-five feet in circumference, with a bulletproof tower for sharp shooters. The fort at St. Cloud was never attacked.

Gustav Nelson's report of a return trip to the New London area is corroborated by other accounts that state that a group of men went back and recovered some cattle and a few belongings. Records indicate, however, that the area was abandoned after the conflict with the Indians and was not resettled until several years later.

Fleeing settlers from all along the frontier, from Breckenridge in the north to New Ulm in the south, swelled the population of places like St. Cloud, Minneapolis, Hastings, Red Wing and Winona. Uneasiness even spread to other states to the east. Many citizens left Minnesota and never returned.

As word of the Uprising spread to other parts of the State and beyond voluntary offerings began to pour into the hands of leaders like Norelius. About seventy families were aided through these offerings -- possibly the Nelsons and Chilstroms among them.

### The Fate of the Native People

As the conflict went on from place to place it was clear that the reaction of the government was to push the Indians off the land. Governor Alexander Ramsey, described as a "blunt and energetic" man, stated that the overall objective would be to free the settlers held captive by the Indians and then "exterminate" or drive the Indians "forever beyond the borders of the state." General Pope, head of federal troops, made clear his intentions. There must be no treaty with the Indians, he said.

*It is my purpose utterly to exterminate the Sioux.... They are to be treated as maniacs or wild beasts.*

*Frederick Johnson, Op. cit., p. 71*

Indians were put on trial for the killings. But the task proved to be impossible. There were too many of them. Kenneth Carley sums it up in these sobering words:

*Reading the records today buttresses the impression that the trials were a travesty of justice. It is true that those in charge had to resist public pressure to do away with all the Indians, guilty and innocent alike, and it must also be pointed out that the trials were conducted by a military commission and not by a court of law. Nevertheless, many were condemned on flimsy evidence. Many Indians who had*

*expected to be treated as prisoners of war were sentenced to death merely for being present at... battles.... As soon as a prisoner admitted firing a shot at whites, no matter where, the commission with seeming haste sentenced him to hang.*

“The Sioux Uprising of 1862” p 69

In the end, President Lincoln was the one who reviewed the convictions and decided that 39 should be hanged at Mankato. This was a great disappointment to many on the frontier who had hoped many more would be put to death. It was in large part the intervention of Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple that convinced Lincoln that a great injustice would be done if more were hanged. The Mankato hangings still stand as the largest single execution in the history of the United States.

When the Uprising finally died down, more than 500 white settlers and some 200 Indians had been killed in the conflict.

Many Indians were incarcerated at Fort Snelling. It was decided that the best solution would be to ship many of them to another part of the country. Now it would be a reverse of the “Grand Excursion” of 1854. Instead of wealthy Americans sailing up the Mississippi to view the new land or eager settlers coming to settle the land, now in 1863 it was impoverished and starving Indians who would be crowded on to riverboats to travel down the Mississippi. Almost 800 were put on a boat meant to accommodate only a fraction of that number. Peg Meier describes the scene as they passed through St. Paul:

*When the boat stopped in St. Paul to take on cargo, a crowd gathered and threw rocks at the Indians.... Many were Christian, and at the time of the attack were singing hymns and praying. Those crowded on the boiler deck couldn't escape; several women were injured. The crowd quieted only when the captain threatened a bayonet charge.*

*Star Tribune July 3, 2004 p. 3*

As the riverboat steamed south some of its passengers died. Their bodies were pushed overboard into the River. Eventually, by boat and rail, more than 3,200 Indians were moved from the Minnesota Territory and resettled along the lower Missouri River. The land was poor. Life deteriorated rapidly. A proud people who once roamed freely over a land that had been inhabited for countless generations were now reduced to almost nothing.

The frontier itself was a shambles. The same man who wrote to his family in August and said he did not believe the reports about the uprising and called it “humbug”, wrote again to his family in November with this description:

*... to the west of us all is desolation -- prairie fires have mostly destroyed what the Indians didn't burn and the inhabitants abandoned in their fright. ... lots of farm animals were abandoned or stolen or have been lost or killed by soldiers. All this can be repaired in the course of time if the Indians are taken away to some place where they won't be able to do anybody any more harm.*

Ralph Bowen; "Frontier Family in Minnesota"; p. 220

In ensuing years hundreds of whites and Indians were killed in skirmishes all across the Upper Midwest. The most infamous of the battles was at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890 where federal troops fired on innocent women, children and the elderly, abandoning them when a blizzard threatened. Days later some of the wounded were found alive in the snowdrifts. Others froze to death. This sad story is recaptured in the book, "*Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee.*"

The final skirmish between Indians and the U.S. military happened in 1896 when Indians in the Leech Lake area of northern Minnesota rose up to protest aggressive logging practices and loss of land at Sugar Point. Seven federal soldiers were killed over a three day period. The government was so relieved that the conflict did not spread beyond Leech Lake that they pardoned all of the Indians.

### The Indian Perspective

There are many accounts of what happened to the white settlers. But what about the native people, the Indians? What impact did all of this have on them?

By far the most moving account comes from the pen of Charles Alexander Eastman. Born into the Wahpeton Dakota tribe, he was named Hakadah -- "Pitiful Last One." He was only four years old at the time of the Sioux Uprising. His father, Many Lightnings, was a warrior who fought against the whites. After the Uprising he was convicted and condemned to be hung with others at Mankato. His family fled to Canada, assuming he was dead. Hakadah was adopted by his uncle. Years later he learned that his father was alive and was among the Indians who had been moved to Missouri after the war. There he tried to acclimate himself to the way of the white world. Hakadah was reunited with his father and took his name -- Eastman. Among his writings is this account of a conversation he had with his uncle. His uncle's perception of the white settlers underscores how incompatible the two cultures were -- that of the Indians and that of the white settlers:

*Certainly they are a heartless nation. They have made some of their people servants -- yes, slaves! We have never believed in keeping slaves...*

*The greatest object of their lives seems to be to acquire possessions --- to be rich. They desire to possess the whole world. For thirty years they were trying to entice us to sell them our land. Finally the outbreak gave them all, and we have been driven away from our beautiful country.*

*They are a wonderful people. They have divided the day into hours, like the moons of the year. In fact, they measure everything. Not one of them would let so much as a turnip go from his field unless he received full value for it. I understand that their great men make a feast and invite many, but when the feast is over the guests are required to pay for what they have eaten before leaving the house.*

*I am also informed, but this I hardly believe, that their Great Chief (the President) compels every man to pay him for the land he lives upon and all his personal*

*goods -- even for his own existence -- every year!*

*There were some praying-men (missionaries) who came to us.... They observed every seventh day as a holy day. On that day they met in a house that they had built for that purpose, to sing, pray, and speak to their Great Mystery. I was never in one of these meetings. I understand that they had a large book from which they read. By all accounts they were very different from all other white men we have known, for these never observed such day, and we never knew them to pray, neither did they ever tell us of their Great Mystery.*

*“Minnesota Days” pp. 18-20*

A lament that summarized the whole sad chapter of white/Indian relations from those times is expressed by Jerome Big Eagle in an interview from 1894:

*The whites were always trying to make the Indians give up their life and live like white men -- go to farming, work hard and do as they did -- and the Indians did not know how to do that, and did not want to anyway. It seemed too sudden to make such a change. If the Indians had tried to make the whites live like them, the whites would have resisted, and it was the same with many Indians. The Indians wanted to live as they did before the [1851] treaty of Traverse de Sioux -- go where they pleased and when they pleased; hunt game whenever they could find it, sell their furs to the traders and live as they could.*

*Star Tribune July 3, 1904*

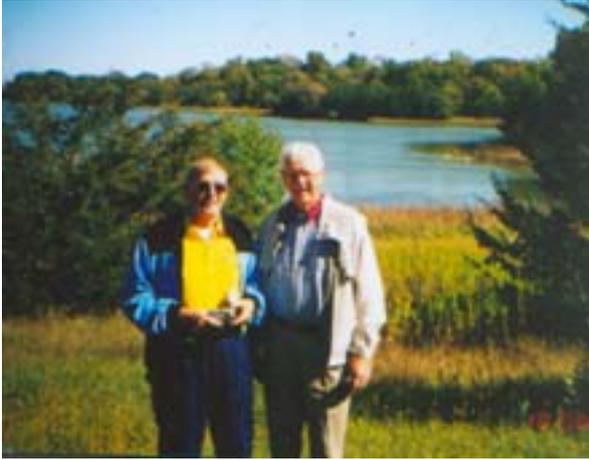
### Where are the Chilstroms (Kyllerstroms) and Nelsons?

We can only guess at how the Chilstroms and Nelsons moved from New London to the stockades at Forest City and St. Cloud and then on to the Canon Falls/Red Wing area via Fort Snelling. I'll pick up that part of their lives in the next chapter.

*Stones along the shoreline  
Lakes where the  
Chilstroms lived. If stones  
speak, what stories might  
us about the Native  
Americans, the Chilstrom  
and all who have walked  
them?*



*at Twin  
could  
they tell  
family  
among*



*Bengt Kjällerström and Herbert Chilstrom (sixth cousins) in 2004 at the Twin Lakes site where Magnus and Katrina Chilstrom (Kjällerström) settled in 1861. Bengt's comment: "This could be Småland."*