

Henry's Death, August 1862
Birch Coulee Township, Minnesota (written by Jay Clasen, GGG-grandson of Henry)

The sun lowed beyond the horizon,
the day's work accomplished,
a glaze of earth-dust upon his
hard worked arms.

Farming where the tendrils of survival
are the fragile tendons of life itself,
glorious drama of dreams and desire.

Shattered window rattling in the wind,
Caroline had the hearth fire aglow.
The mud-chinked log and sod house
safe from the harsh frontier,
a fortress of sanity,
security in a foreign land.

Harvest was afoot, the time
to reap the reward of righteous bounty,
the time to enjoy the windsong melody
of hymn and hope.

Spirit-smoke stalking in the haze
brought the scent of death,
ominous dread slowly closing
on muffled hoofbeats.
The precious elixir
of harmony and love
soon to be poured onto the
waiting barren land.

As an unwheeled cart with broken yoke,
destiny unfulfilled,
anticipation of vulnerable nakedness,
the fragile, terror-eyed woman
prayed for deliverance.
Caroline witnessed the shock and shame
of her beloved husband
facing the mounted apparition,
accepting the death missile
with awe.

Caroline,
meek, naïve, fearful,
sensed the spirit of her father beckoning,
an image of homeland with
rough-hewn crags in the shoreline.
Fainting, lost in abandonment,
she faced eternity in the grasp
of those who had stolen her
everything.