

History of the Town of Bristol, Grafton County, New Hampshire
In Two Volumes, Volume 1 – Annals, By Richard W. Musgrove, Bristol, N.H.,
Printed by R. W. Musgrove 1904

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TERRIBLE FATE OF EMIGRANTS TO MINNESOTA

Early in the nineteenth century, a boy by the name of Joseph Brown came to Bristol and was given a home in the family of David Powell, who lived in the Locke neighborhood. But little is known of the boy except that he came from Boston. He was kindly cared for by the Powells, and grew up with the nine sons and daughters of the Powell family.

On the 22nd of October, 1816, Joseph Brown married Mary Fellows, a daughter of John Fellows, a Revolutionary soldier from Bristol, then living on Bridgewater hill. They had four children: Lois, who married David Bartlett, of West Plymouth, and died there in 1893; Theodore, who died at two years of age; Jonathan, and Horatio. The mother died in 1841 or '42. Joseph Brown resided for a time on the hill where his children are supposed to have been born, and then removed to New Hampton, where he was for nearly ten years employed by Col. Rufus G. Lewis on his farm. Then he returned to Bridgewater and, about 1855, went with his children, Jonathan and Horatio, to Minnesota, and settled about fifteen miles west of New Ulm on the Cottonwood river, where he took up a Revolutionary War land warrant which his wife's father had drawn from the government.

Here they became extensive farmers, while Jonathan devoted a part of his time to surveying. Near them soon after located two young men from Alexandria by the name of Burns, for whom has since been named the village of Burnsville. In 1862, while enjoying the fruit of their labors with bright prospects for the future, occurred the awful Sioux massacre.

The alarm of an uprising of the Indians had come so often in the past, only to be proven false, that the people had become accustomed to this state of affairs, and when the alarm rang out in 1862, the people were at first incredulous. But, alas! It was then a horrid reality. With the suddenness of a hurricane, a thousand Indians took the war path, and over a vast stretch of territory a carnival of death reigned. Men, women, and children were slain with the bullet and tomahawk, or put to torture; scores of women were carried into a captivity worse than death, and the lurid glare of burning homes lit up the heavens for a hundred miles.

When the truth dawned upon the Brown family they, like the Willey family in the White Mountain Notch at the time of the freshet in 1826, left their home to meet

destruction outside, while their home escaped. Loading as many of their earthly effects as possible into a two-horse wagon, they, together with a hired man, hastened towards New Ulm.

Unfortunately the Indians were at that very moment concentrating about New Ulm to destroy it, and as this little party of four hastened on their way, they were discovered by the Indians and every one put to death. At the commencement of the massacre the two young men, spoken of above, had been boarding for some time at the Brown home, but were temporarily absent on a trip thirty miles distant up the river.

On their return they found two women refugees; one badly wounded, whom they conveyed to the Brown house, and there they left them, and also set out for New Ulm. They were five days on the way, creeping along cautiously, lying in hiding two whole days, but escaped and reached their destination just after the Indians had been repulsed.

When the attack on New Ulm commenced, a company of volunteers left LeSueur for their relief. Among them was Dr. Otis Ayer, well known in Bristol as a native of the Ayer farm on the New Hampton side of the Pemigewasset. With this reinforcement New Ulm made a stubborn resistance and the Indians were finally repulsed after about one-third of the town had been burned.

Six weeks after this fight the soldiers moved through the adjoining country to bury the dead scattered all over the prairie. Dr. Ayer was with those who found the remains of the Brown party and there he found the family Bible in which were the names of the deceased, whom he recognized as old acquaintances.

Near at hand sat the faithful family dog, which for six weeks had kept faithful watch over the remains of his master and family. Every afternoon this dog left his charge, went home, drove up the cows as he had been accustomed to do, and after being fed, so those in the home said, he disappeared, and resumed his guard over the dead.