

This narrative is believed to be the recollections of William H. Kumro [Sep 1857 - 13 Sep 1934] as told to his daughter Geneva [26 Mar 1908 - ??].

William was the eldest child of John and Marie/Mary/May Kumro who were farming in the La Croix Creek [Birch Coolee] area near present-day Morton, Minnesota in August, 1862.

The Kumro family was forced to flee to Fort Ridgely to escape from the Sioux Indian Uprising and returned in 1865.

The Kumro family is listed as follows in the book "Outbreak and Massacre by the Dakota Indians in Minnesota in 1862", by Marion P. Satterlee, edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Copyright 2001:

List of Refugees at Fort Ridgely

Comro, J., 37, home LaCroix Creek. Wife May 32 yrs, son W. 6, dtr L. 3, F. an infant.

William would have been 78 years old in 1936 when this narrative was published in the Morton Enterprise.

Mrs. Kumro [Marie/Mary/May née Coffman/Kaufman] was a sister of my gg-grandfather's, George Buery, second wife, Salomé/Sally née Coffman/Kaufman.

Morton Enterprise, Morton, Renville County, Minnesota), 27 February 1936, page 11, columns 1 and 2; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul:

Indians Come to Pioneer Home of John Kumro on August 17, 1862

A Brief Story of the Outbreak as Related by William Kumro to His Daughter, Geneva

Sunday, August 17, 1862, a group of Indians came to the John Kumro homestead near the Minnesota River. They wanted something to eat and Mrs. Kumro gave them bread and carried water for them to drink. They lay around the yard smoking and talking and one old squaw came to the white woman and said, "War, go 'way." She repeated this in an [earnest] manner but Mrs. Kumro thought the Indians were afraid of war with the Cherokee tribe and did not attach any importance to the warning.

Minnesota was wild in those days, sparsely settled and overrun by Sioux Indians. Settlers took up homesteads and often they were without any neighbors for miles around. Houses were built of logs. The one on the Kumro homestead was built into the side of a hill, the back dug out into the hill, the front made of logs and a shake roof made of split slabs of

trees completed the house.

John Kumro had threshed his grain with a flail; then he had to take it to New Ulm, the nearest town. Sunday he walked to a homestead near Beaver to see a man named Shepard who he heard had an ox team and wagon he might be able to borrow, All the early settlers were always willing to help each other and he found the man would lend him his team and wagon although he had never seen him before.

Monday he started out with two teams of oxen hitched to a wagon load of grain for New Ulm. He had only gone about a half mile when he met two men who told him to go home and get his family as the Indians were massacring everyone.

He gave them the wagon and told them to drive it to Fort Ridgely and he started back home on foot.

After reaching home and telling the news, their first thought was of their relatives, the George Buery family. Mrs. Kumro and Mrs. Buery were sisters. Mrs. Kumro wrapped some bread in a shawl to take with her, they went to warn them.

They found them in the field getting a load of hay unaware that a terrible massacre was taking place for miles around. They hastily threw off the hay and prepared to go to Fort Ridgely which was about 18 miles away.

They had not gone very far when they were halted by a band of Indians and made to get out of the wagon. George Buery, Jr., a young boy of three, clung to the wagon and began to cry and an Indian raised his tomahawk to kill him when John Kumro grabbed the boy away. The leader of the Indians told them to go to the fort and so they started, marvelling at their escape. As they hastened away they saw the Indians stop the next wagon load of people and kill them.

Further on they saw the body of a trader lying where he had been scalped.

They had nothing with them to eat and already the little children were crying for food. John Kumro said he was going back to ask the Indians for some bread in the wagon. He went back and asked the leader for some bread and was given two loaves and again allowed to go unmolested.

Kindness to the Indians had always been a rule with Mrs. Kumro and the leader of that party was one they had often fed so he repaid them that day.

Afraid to follow the beaten track to Fort Ridgely they took to the swamps hiding themselves as best they could. The mosquitoes were terrible and the little children had to be carried except one, a boy of four, who walked all the way to the fort barefooted. It was a weary, bedraggled group that at last reached the fort.

There was scant protection at the fort; it is well that the Indians did not know the weakness of Fort Ridgely. Nearly all the soldiers there but ten or eleven had gone out with Capt. Marsh to quell the outbreak. Everyone knows how that expedition ended, but one man escaped with his life. The fort had one small howitzer (a cannon) which they kept firing. That is really what saved Fort Ridgely for the Indians were afraid of the big gun.

The women and children were sent to the upstairs room, little more than an attic, while the men stayed below to defend the fort.

Bullets were spattering against the stones of the fort all the time and William Kumro and his cousin, George Buery, slipped outside to pick up some of the bullets. Then they took them upstairs to play with, little knowing they had come near death.

The Indian wife of Louis La Croix was at the fort and she became violently angry at another woman and fought with her. Then she attempted to leave the fort and go to the Indians but was stopped and brought back.

To get water they had to go to a spring some little distance from the fort and the Indians fired on every party endeavoring to get water. John Kumro was one of a party made up to go for water and his small son seeing him leave the fort ran after him in an effort to go too.

The men did not see the boy and he followed them. When they had to run back he was locked outside the gate and he set up a loud cry. The man on guard heard him, opened the gate and dragged him in and gave him a good spanking. So once again he narrowly escaped death.

For eleven days the people were shut up in the fort with nothing but coffee and crackers to eat and very little of that. Then they were relieved by General Sibley and his soldiers. After the outbreak had been quelled the pioneers who survived found a dreary prospect when they went back to their homes. Most of the houses had been burned, all the cattle driven off and what little machinery they had was stolen. Many families had been killed and the ones who had escaped were suffering bitterly from a knowledge of the cruel fate that had been [dealt] their loved ones.

It took real courage to go back and start again after anything like that and in a country that was as full of hardships as Minnesota was in the early days. The early settlers knew cold like we do not experience now, blizzards that were man killers, grasshoppers, mosquitoes in swarms that nearly ate up the cattle, were often without enough to eat.

Of unceasing toil and such steadfast courage our state was built on.

Morton Enterprise (Morton, Renville County, Minnesota), 27 February 1936, page 11, columns 1 and 2; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. [The Indian Uprising of 1862 — or the Dakota Conflict, as it is called nowadays — swept across southwestern Minnesota. Over 500 whites and untold numbers of Indians died before troops and militia restored order to the new state.]