

The following excerpt is taken from:

“Charles E. Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm”.

Edited by Russell W. Fridley and Leota M. Kellett and June D. Holmquist.

New Ulm

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The outbreak was ignited at Acton in Meeker County on Sunday, August 17, when four young Wahpeton braves murdered several settlers. That evening at a large council, held at Chief Little Crow's house near the Lower Agency, the Sioux made their fateful decision to drive the whites from the Minnesota Valley. Little Crow led a large-scale attack upon the Lower Agency the following morning, August 18, killing many of the traders and white there. Others escaped across the river on the Redwood Ferry and carried the news to Fort Ridgely. Captain John S. Marsh, the fort's commander, immediately led a rescue force to Redwood Ferry, where he drowned when the troops were ambushed and virtually wiped out that same afternoon. On the eighteenth also hostilities began at the Upper Agency. Missionaries Stephen R. Riggs and Thomas S. Williamson, residing nearby, were warned of danger by friendly Indians and with about thirty other whites were led to safety at Hutchinson by the faithful Other Day.

After their conquest of the two agencies, a large, organized force of Sioux warriors, under the over-all leadership of Chief Little Crow, swept down the Minnesota Valley. On August 19, approximately a hundred Indians attacked the exposed frontier community of New Ulm, the largest settlement near the Sioux reservation. The townspeople hastily erected barricades and, mustering what few arms they could, successfully beat off the Indians. Little Crow launched two massive assaults on Fort Ridgely on August 20 and 22. Meanwhile marauding parties of Mdewankanton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton, and Sisseton fanned out over much of southwestern Minnesota, leaving behind then a trail of rapine and death.

As the second battle of New Ulm took shape, the uprising was entering its sixth day. By then the Indians were amply justified in approaching the encounter with confidence. In five short days, they had rolled back the frontier to vulnerable Fort Ridgely and to the exposed and hastily constructed barricades of New Ulm. They had killed hundreds of settlers and taken a large number of captives, and they had regained much of the fertile land reluctantly ceded to the whites under the treaties of 1851. The surprised settlers had offered little resistance. Thus the Indians continued their offensive down the valley with increased momentum. On Saturday, August 23, as they again approached New Ulm – this time with a large force, superior weapons, and many seasoned warriors – it is evident that a climatic encounter between Indian and settler was to take place...

The attack was lightly renewed the following morning, and then the Indians withdrew. It was at this point that Flandrau and his officers decided to evacuate the townspeople and escort them to Mankato, for food was running low and disease threatened.

On the mass exodus from New Ulm on August 25, Flandrau wrote: “We made up a train of 153 wagons, which had largely composed our barricades, loaded them with women and children, and about eighty wounded men, and started.