

## Interesting Letter From Mrs. Collins

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here made of their actions and sufferings and the heroism of these matchless women—in our pioneer days, has been well deserved.

INTERESTING LETTER FROM MRS. COLLINS.

LIVERMORE, IA., SEPT. 3, 1887.

*Editor Freeman:*

Permit me through your columns to express my regret at not having been able to be with the company that assembled in and around the court house in Webster City to witness the inauguration of the Memorial Tablet that shall be to the generations to come an everlasting reminder of the heroism of the fathers and mothers who will soon have passed away. Residing as we did, during the winter of 1856-'57, so near the confines of the Indian atrocities, and hearing as we did, much from the lips of those who proved to be our guests, who were on the terrible march toward their homes in and about your city, the narration of the events as given by the survivors would have been, and are now, of double interest to us. We cheerfully accept the sincere thanks of Frank R. Mason and his comrades. We are glad to have a place in their memories. I have many times thought over the events of that night and told them to my children; how husband and I, after having stayed later than usual at a neighbor's, started for home, he with our first babe in his arms, and kept along the beaten path in the snow. All at once the outline of dark objects appeared before us. They were not moving, and we heard no noise. I at first thought we might be upon a company of Indians! We were too near to retreat, and true to our inclinations we stepped forward to meet what might be danger and trouble. I then heard groans of distress, and I thought sobs. All fear was gone in a moment, and I hastened to know who could be at that time of night in so deplorable a condition. We had a lantern, and as the light shone upon the place my pity was truly stirred. There, with the snow crushed beneath them, were eight men; some sitting, some reclining, and others lying flat upon their backs! I need not say how gladly we ministered to their wants; that has been already enlarged upon by my friend Mason. But one thing I wish to say, is, that we count it all joy that we were enabled to take part (though a humble one) in that heroic task. I think your memory served you well, friend Mason, as to the "bill of fare" set before you on the night and morning in question. I remember the biscuits well. Mixed up with sourings and water, and with no shortening. All the meat we had was bought of a drover, who, I think, was compelled to kill his cattle off to save them—they were so poor, and there was no extra grease for shortening. But I have no doubt my biscuits beat the mush you made with flour and water, if you did boil it for two long hours. Our flour and molasses ought to have been good as they were hauled all the way from Muscatine by an ox-team the fall previous, and flour was selling that spring for from eleven to fourteen dollars per barrel.

I have two requests to make of friend Mason, and then I will close: 1st. Can you give me the names of others of your company of eight, yet living, and their places of abode? 2d. Call and see us if you ever come this way, and you will be made welcome, and if desired you can be shown the spot where we found you in the snow.

With God I believe there are no accidents. An overruling Providence directs each life. I believe it no accident that we stayed at the neighbor's

until eleven o'clock on that memorable night, instead of returning home at nine—as was our usual custom. I believe it no accident that you reached our path just before instead of after we crossed it. But I believe God was guiding your weary feet and did not allow your strength to give way until you reached the right place, and then by causing you to sink down He placed you within the possibility of being saved. That we may all learn wisdom from the things of the past—is the prayer of your friend,  
SARAH W. COLLINS.

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MRS. ABBIE GARDNER SHARP'S LETTER.

OKOBOJI, Aug. 4, 1887.

At the request of C. T. Fenton, Esq., I write the following account of the Spirit Lake massacre of 1857:

It is with sadness that I recall to memory the ill-fated March the 8th, 1857—when Inkpadutah and his murderous band invaded the peaceful and happy little settlement of Spirit and Okoboji Lakes and completely demolished it. It is now thirty years since those horrible atrocities were enacted, and having lost all on that sad day that made life dear to me, and though wrecked in health, I still live a witness to those terrible scenes.

The outbreak was as sudden and unexpected as a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. The Indians approached, and through their professions of friendship got into the houses, taking the people by surprise, and attacking in such a way that one family could not help another. My father was shot down while his back was turned getting the Indians some flour. They then rushed upon my mother and sister, beating them over the head with the butts of their guns, and drove them out in the door yard and killed them. My brother and two sisters, all little children, were clinging to me in speechless terror. They next seized these helpless children, heedless of their piteous cries for the help I was powerless to give them, dragging them out of doors, and beating them to death with sticks of stove wood. All through their course they shot down the men when their backs were turned, and then rushed upon the helpless and terror-stricken women and children and killed them in the most cruel and shocking manner.

At the time of the massacre I was little more than a child of less than fourteen summers, and was with three other women taken captive, suffering for three months all the cruelties and indignities that Indians, only, know how to inflict. The dreadful news created intense feeling throughout the country, and excited the wrath and sympathy of all who heard it. Three companies of volunteers, under the command of Maj. Williams, of Fort Dodge, went from Webster and Hamilton counties, and proceeding through snow-banks and swollen streams flooded with ice, surmounted every conceivable difficulty while pressing forward to relieve the living and bury the dead.

On the 15th day of May following, the then territory of Minnesota passed an act appropriating \$10,000, to be used in securing the rescue of the captives, of which \$3,000 was expended in the release of Mrs. Marble and myself. To the State of Minnesota and Charles E. Flandrau, of St. Paul, I owe a debt of gratitude that I shall ever recollect. I am greatly pleased with the kindly interest manifested by the generous-hearted people of Hamilton county in erecting this Tablet to the memory of the heroic volunteers who so bravely risked their own lives to save their fel-

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