

# The Battle of Peterson Field

August 21, 1862



**Marker Location:** .7 miles North on West side of Kandi Meeker Road off Hwy. 12 going towards Atwater. (Kandiyohi and Meeker County border)

## The story of “The Battle of Peterson Field:”

News of the Acton massacre reached the settlers at Columbia on the Crow River in Monongalia County (now known as Kandiyohi) on Tuesday evening, August 19, 1862. On Thursday morning, a group from the Norway Lake settlement loaded their wagons with as much as they could carry and set out for Forest City. More families joined them as they traveled. When they reached Diamond Lake, they found horses and cattle that had been stolen by the Sioux Indians. As they traveled in pouring rain, the wagon train grew to forty families. Two Swedish (Eagle Lake settlers) Sven Backlund (age 75) and Andreas Lorentson (age 56). not aware of the danger, requested to be in charge of the livestock that were gathered behind the wagon train.

The wagon train had in their possession twelve guns, but only five were in working order. The group had two skilled marksman, Silas Foote and William Kouts. The rest of the men were farmers and not trained for fighting. When the wagon train sighted Indians, they whipped the teams to make it to high ground and formed a barricade by placing their wagons in a circle. Here, they frantically dug a hole in the center of the wagons with any kind of tool they could find to make a safe place out of the line of fire for the women and children. It is written that there was indescribable panic of the crying, praying, defenseless people. William Kouts and Silas Foote killed one Indian pony and wounded one Indian. To the wagon train’s horror, the mutilation of Sven Backlund and Andreas Lorentson took place in full sight of the settlers.

The wagon train tried to keep the Sioux distracted on one side while they sent a messenger to Forest City for help. A few miles from the scene of the massacre, the messenger lost his horse in a slough. He laid in the tall grass all night and traveled on foot to Forest City the next morning. The settlers fought the entire next day and kept a watch that evening. The next morning was very foggy, but the settlers set out for Forest City anyway.

*The following is an account taken from Action in Acton: "We left on the ground, where we fought the Indians, one buggy, one two-horse wagon, also bedding, beds, clothing and household articles to the value of several hundred dollars saving our lives with the cost of nearly all we possessed. We stayed one night in Forest city. The next day we went via Kingston to Clearwater on the Mississippi River. There we were put aboard a steamer to Fort Snelling."*

The Home Guard and Captain Whitcomb came to the scene of the battle some time later to bury the men who had been killed and gather any remaining livestock. Sadly, the Sioux had slaughtered all of the settler's cattle. The log cabins and claim shanties of the settlers were either empty or had been burned to the ground.

At the time of the battle, the land where it took place was owned by a farmer named P.M. Peterson. This is why the battle came to be known as "The Battle of Peterson Field." The original site of the massacre was about a half-mile north and half-mile east of where the monument resides today. It had to be moved when a new road was built. For many years the graves of the two men were maintained and flowers were placed upon them in remembrance of their sacrifice.

Reference:

Ketcham, Roule and Marsh, Tracy H. (Year Unknown) Action in Acton, Litchfield, Minnesota: James J. Reed Co.