

# Taken by Surprise

In the summer of 1862, after years of broken treaty promises and late payments that fueled growing tensions and conflict, some Dakota began an attempt to forcibly reclaim their homeland. After attacking the Redwood (Lower Sioux) Agency on August 18 — the beginning of what became known as the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 — the Dakota moved toward New Ulm. In their path stood a small settlement known as Milford. There, unprepared for battle, 53 of Milford’s residents were killed in a single day. As farms burned, the survivors of those families fled, raising the alarm for the citizens of New Ulm about what lay ahead. Following are some of their stories.

## Henle Family



Theresia and Anton Henle

The Henle family lost more than two dozen of their extended family in the U.S.–Dakota War — more than any other immigrant family in Brown County. Farmers and innkeepers Anton and Theresia Henle were lucky to escape with their lives. Anton, gone from Milford for the day with U.S. Army soldiers seeking Civil War recruits, escaped a Dakota ambush nearby. Theresia, left at home, witnessed much bloodshed. Among those killed that day were her mother and three of her own children. When Anton made his way back to Milford at day’s end, he was grateful to find his wife alive.

## Haeberle Family

Brothers Jacob, Leonhard and David Haeberle settled on neighboring farms in Milford Township in 1855. Jacob, one of the many local German immigrants, was given the honor of naming the nearby town of New Ulm after the area in Germany from which many had come. When war broke out on August 18, 1862, the close-knit Haeberle family fought to defend their homes. The next day, Jacob fought again at New Ulm, suffering a wound that took his life several months later. Leonhard, disabled from his injuries, died a few years after. Their brother David survived the attack but lost a son in the fighting.



David Haeberle



Leonhard Haeberle

## Schilling Family

Carl “Adolph” Schilling, an immigrant from northern Germany, brought his family to Milford in 1857 after buying land to homestead in the small farming community. An account of the Schilling family’s fate survives in the record of post-war trials. Joseph Godfrey, a mixed-blood of French Canadian and black heritage married to a Dakota woman, testified that he was forced by some Dakota to attack the Schilling family while they ate dinner. After he broke in and hit Adolph, the Dakota followed, firing their rifles. Adolph died in the attack. A son, Fritz, died later from his wounds. Adolph’s wife, Christina, also was wounded but survived.



Christina Schilling

## Massopust Family



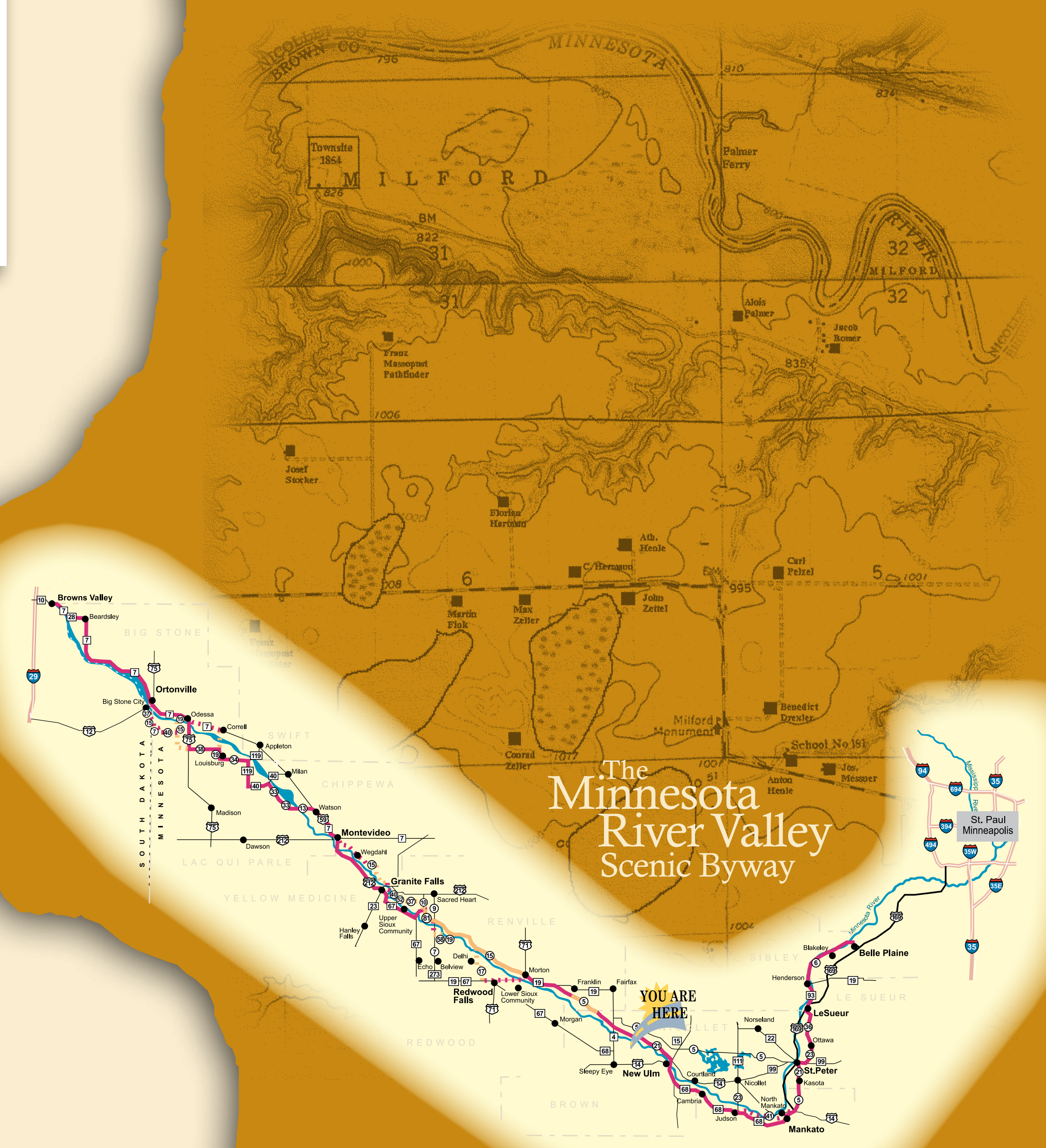
Ernestine Massopust

Among the scouting party that founded New Ulm in 1854 was Franz Massopust Jr., from Bohemia by way of New York and Chicago. Two years after his 1855 marriage to Ernestine Klingbeil, Franz’s extended German-Bohemian family left Europe to join him in Milford. In 1862 they found themselves caught in the middle of the attack on their community. In all, four family members lost their lives on August 18. Franz survived the fighting, only to die of typhoid fever three years later.

# Struggles for a Home



The Minnesota River Valley has stories to tell...about the indigenous people struggling to keep their land and their way of life, and about immigrant families who began new lives here. Their stories came together, with tragic consequences for all, in what has become known as the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 — a war that had repercussions for the whole country.



The Dakota, too, would pay a heavy price. An unknown number were killed during the six-week war, and hundreds more died later in prison camps or during their exile from the state. There are few written accounts of those hardships. Their stories remain to be told.

All photographs from the collection of the Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm.



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