

**Mary Fellegy
Narrator**

**Deborah Locke
Interviewer**

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**DL = Deborah Locke
Minnesota Historical Society**

**AL = Aimee LaBree
Minnesota Historical Society**

MF= Mary Fellegy

AL: This is Aimee LaBree on May 31, 2011, at the home of Mary Fellegy in New Ulm, Minnesota. Interviewee: Mary Fellegy; Interviewer: Deborah Locke.

DL: Mary, could you spell your first and last name for us?

MF: My first name, M-A-R-Y. My maiden name was K-I-T-Z-B-E-R-G-E-R. Kitzberger. And then my married name is F-E-L-L-E-G-Y. And in some parts of Minnesota or, up on the range, Iron Range, they call it Fa-lay-gey, or fell-a-gee, but we call it FELL-a-gee, here in New Ulm.

DL: When and where were you born?

MF: At 819 North Washington Street [New Ulm]. My mother and father had been to one of my uncles' for Easter dinner, and on the way home she felt that she was having pains. My mother's aunt was a midwife so I had her as a midwife.

DL: Who were your parents?

MF: My father was Peter Kitzberger Sr., and my mother was Josephine Diepolder.

DL: Who were your grandparents?

MF: I only knew one grandparent. The others were deceased. My grandfather that lived with us was Joseph Diepolder. His wife Mary Louise Huelskamp died in 1918.

DL: How long have you lived in New Ulm?

MF: Well I'm 91 years old and I would say out of 91 years, I have lived here sixty-some. We lived two years in Winona, and that would be from 1943 to 44.

DL: What is your heritage?

MF: German. Bohemian.

DL: Both sides?

MF: We're both German, yes. The Diepolders were German.

DL: Where did you go to school?

MF: I went to school over at the Catholic school. I graduated in 1938. It used to be Holy Trinity high school, and now it is Cathedral High School and they have a grade school here too.

DL: What relatives had the most influence on you?

MF: I would say both. The Diepolders – because I grew up with my grandfather at 819 North Washington until he passed away. But in the summertime, from May until after harvest, he would go to his sons, William and Walter Diepolder. They had an implement shop in Willow City, North Dakota. But the rest of the time he spent in New Ulm with us.

DL: What did you learn about family history while growing up?

MF: That was always part of our growing up, always.

DL: Who told you about it?

MF: Both parents. My mother was into history, my father was into history and my grandfather was very much into history. I will tell you that right now.

DL: What stories do you remember from them?

MF: Oh goodness gracious. My grandfather was born here, in Brown County, Milford Township. He would tell us stories about his growing up. He was very well-read, I can tell you. He read and read everything that could be had about that time of the year, of his being on earth. My mother grew up with history and my father did too. He'd tell about stories from when his parents came over here from Germany. My father was born over here, and my grandfather was born over here. Grandpa Diepolder was born in Milford Township in 1856. There were no doctors around so he was nursed by an Indian squaw. They lived in a bark house. But you will read all of this in the article that I

had. So we had all the history, we had all the books. I remember little encyclopedias and things like that. We had a lot of reading material at our house. And to this day, I still do. I've given some to my children already. [Laughter] Yes, we had a very good education, we kids did.

DL: It sounds like your grandfather's family had a good relationship with the Dakota people.

MF: Yes they did.

DL: If he was able to locate a woman to come and take care of you.

MF: Yes

DL: How did that happen?

MF: He always talked about that, when he was born, the Indians were very good. The Dakota were good. And there was no doctor at that time, so they had to depend upon them. But if you read the article that he had, it talks about how he was six at the time of the Dakota conflict.

DL: Wow.

MF: Yes. They moved from where they were until they came back again. It tells the whole story that he told us children, and we heard that many times from him.

DL: Can you tell us the story? Because not everyone will read the little piece that you gave to me.

MF: I can read it to you, part of it.

DL: Okay.

MF: "I was six years old at the time of the Indian uprising," says Joseph Diepolder, prominent farmer, Lafayette township, in relating to the Indian massacre experiences through the Daily Journal. (At that time that was in 1937 when he told the children.) "Father and mother were stacking barley in the afternoon of August 18th, I was to be taking care of my little sister and little brother. And in the evening, probably about five o'clock, our neighbor Matthias Lump, came and broke the news that there was an outbreak... That the Indians had broken out and were murdering people from house to house in Milford Township." (And then he mentions also that other people decided to congregate there.)

"Lump's house was in the open, and we stayed there over night. No one slept that night, except the children, of course, they were tired." (And then of course it says that the Minnesota Ferry could take only one team of horses when they left. So Peter Simit was

so excited that he drove his oxen into the river where the ferry landed. And other people, the Sauers started to go back home, but they didn't.)

"We were in New Ulm for a while and then we heard the firing of guns. Then we knew that the Indians had broken out and were attacking the white settlers. We went to one of the stores in New Ulm and a lean back; it used to be a warehouse. Two sons carried out a dead woman. She had been killed by an Indian bullet near the Dakota House. She was the daughter of Mr. Pauly. Emily Pauly was her name and she had been carrying a child- later Mrs. Joseph Bobletter.

"From Chronies warehouse, we went to a double-frame house which belonged to Freton. Next day, there was a second skirmish in the afternoon. We were warned to go to the Erd building (that is downtown here) so we would be safer. We were packed in and the air was very close. I slept under a bench. I recall very well the morning we left for Mankato. We had one meal at Mankato and then left for St. Peter. We spent the night at South Bend, being quartered in a little Methodist church. We stayed there over two weeks. Mother coaxed father to return to our farm. We recovered our oxen about a month after we returned. We found things at home unmolested. Most of our neighbors, except Enderall, came back the same fall.

"Mr. Diepolder's father, the late Fidel Diepolder, came to America in 1853. He remained in Rochester, New York for a time working as a carpenter. There he married Teresa Dorn the same year. From Rochester Mr. and Mrs. Diepolder moved to Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Diepolder worked in a shipyard there for a few months. The cholera epidemics scared them out and they moved to Detroit, Michigan. Returning to the Windy City, they joined the Chicago Land Association. In 1855, Mr. and Mrs. Diepolder settled on the Henry Bastion farm in Milford Township. Mr. Diepolder helped build the water-power sawmill there. They lived in a deserted Indian bark house during the winter. Some of the settlers lived in block houses. Joseph Diepolder was born January 9th, 1856 in the Indian teepee on the Bastion farm. No doctor was present, so an Indian squaw attended his mother. The family had remained there. The winter of 1856 was very mild. Mr. Diepolder's father and Lawrence Enderville built a boat and came down the Minnesota River. They filed a homestead in Lafayette township, Nicollet County. Mr. Enderville remained there until the Indian uprising then he returned to Stearns County and established a brewer.

"And on February 9th, 18... (I can't remember the number) Joseph Diepolder married Ms. Mary Hillscamp. They went to housing on the old Dakota homestead which Mr. Diepolder purchased from his father when the latter retired in New Ulm.

"When he became 21 years old of age, Mr. Diepolder was appointed constable and deputy sheriff of Nicollet County by the late Sherriff Thomas Downes. From 1884 until 1900 he served as the Town Clerk of Lafayette. He was Deputy Clerk of the Nicollet County district court during the tenure of Charles A. Johnson, also for two years under Gus Blomberg. For twenty-seven years he served as clerk of School District #14, Lafayette Township, until 1913. In 1890 Mr. Diepolder was elected to represent Nicollet

County in the lower branch of the state legislature. He was reelected in 1892, serving during his terms of Governor William E. Merriman. Mr. Diepolder retired from active agricultural pursuits in 1913 and turned the farm over to his eldest son Henry. Then he and Mrs. Diepolder removed to New Ulm. The latter passed away April 6, 1919 and they have four children, namely, Henry Diepolder, Lafayette; William and Walter Diepolder, Willow City, North Dakota; (and of course my mother), Mrs. Peter Kitzberger." (Josephine).

DL: Can you tell us about this picture [referencing Mrs. Fellegy's picture on the table]? Who is in this picture and what is everyone doing?

MF: [photo of children gathered around an elderly man] Well, we're listening to my grandfather, I can tell you that. Because we were all interested in what he had to say. He was telling the story to the journal, and that is the story that I have just read to you. And Mr. H. Carl Schmidt was the photographer.

DL: Can you tell us who is in the picture?

MF: Yes. He was talking to children. This was at 819 North Washington Street where I grew up. And in the picture is Mrs. H. Carl Schmidt, Mary Kitzberger...

DL: You're pointing to somebody in the far left corner, the Schmidt person.

MF: Yes, this is Mrs. H. Carl Schmidt. And this is me [pointing]...

DL: And your face is almost hidden, so we see about half of your face.

MF: [Laughter] One of the girl's name is Norma, I can't tell you the other one. And the little children here were the Gag children, the Albert and Vera Gag children, they lived right next to us as a child. Some of them are gone already.

DL: And the girl in the middle here, on the top, who's that?

MF: That would be Norma Muesing. M-U-E-S-I-N-G. Her father was a druggist here in New Ulm.

DL: So these children weren't all related to you.

MF: No, none of them were.

DL: But they came to listen to him anyway?

MF: Yes, we had to have some little children listening to it. In fact, one of the gals who I met a couple of years ago said "I can always remember your Grandpa talking to us." And she was little...

DL: What general impression did your grandfather give you of that war?

MF: Of course he was six years old at the time. I don't know if he felt it was necessary or not, you know because he was only six. But he had quite an experience. I suppose he was probably very scared about it. He told us stories, little ones, being that he lived with us and ate with us, and everything. And my mother too, she remembers. My mother was born in 1893 and my father was born in 1878, he was thirteen years older than my mother.

We had a lot of history. They told us stories. And out of the four children that they had, there is only one boy bearing the Diepolder name yet. He's 85. That's Donald Diepolder. The others all had only girls.

Nobody [laughter] had sons. I just talked to Donald. He lives in Rugby, North Dakota, and I have a little picture that he sent me last Christmas of my grandfather and his father and him when he was about ten years old. I have it on the bulletin board over there. Donald said, "Oh I can remember Grandpa Diepolder."

DL: Your grandfather was with his family - he was just a little boy – and they had to basically flee for their lives.

MF: Yes they did. This will tell you too.

DL: This is an obituary.

MF: Yes.

DL: It doesn't give the dates that he died, but it does give a rather long account of who he was.

MF: Yeah.

DL: And it says that he was born in 1856, and it says that he was born in a teepee.

MF: Yes.

DL: Because this Indian woman helped with his birth.

MF: Yes.

DL: Your family certainly had a good working relationship with the Dakota people at one time.

MF: Yes, they did.

DL: But then they found themselves running from them at one point.

MF: I don't know, what would you do?

DL: Well, if I heard there were people murdering...

MF: I think I'd get out of the way.

DL: Yes, that's wise. So your grandfather as a little boy went with his family, left the homestead,

MF: Yes.

DL: Went and, they didn't exactly hide...

MF: Well, no, they never said that they hid, but they did say that they went with a bunch of the people, the farmers I suppose, around the area where they lived.

DL: Horse and wagon?

MF: Yes. Oxen, I think.

DL: Oxen and wagon.

MF: Yes

DL: Those doesn't move very fast. It had to be very frightening.

MF: It would be. For me it would be. But he did talk about the oxen. He said they were BIG animals. And I remember as a child, I thought, "What is this oxen?" I have seen them now. But when you're young you don't understand.

DL: How many people would have been on that wagon or cart then?

MF: I suppose the father and mother and the children, and maybe a couple of neighbors.

DL: Maybe as many as ten people.

MF: Yes, at least. I'm pretty sure. My son said to me, "Mother, you had interesting people." I never knew my grandparents on the Kitzberger side. They were all gone by the time I came around.

DL: So your grandfather's parents and siblings and some neighbors were running for their lives...

MF: Oh yes

DL: Hoping they were going the right direction

MF: Yes, that's right

DL: Where again did they ultimately end up? Were they going toward New Ulm?

MF: Yes, I think, the way he talked it... Well, they were at different places during the Indian attacks. Later the Diepolder family decided to leave New Ulm and seek safety in South Bend. Now I have no idea where South Bend is, it must have been a very little town, maybe just a village. There they stayed quartered in a Methodist church. By the way, my grandfather was the first white baby baptized at the Holy Trinity Church in New Ulm.

DL: Your family was Catholic..

MF: Yes, both sides were Catholic. Though sometimes I have read things on Diepolders and it sounded like they are Lutheran so I don't know.

DL: From the obituary it sounds like they hid in a Methodist church for a while

MF: Yes, they did.

DL: How long were they away from their home?

MF: They were there in the church for two weeks.

DL: I wonder what happened to the farm animals.

MF: Well the Diepolders returned to Lafayette Township after the Uprising and evidently, most of the neighbors that were with them also returned. Everything was fine. They were not molested by things at all.

DL: How about the animals, did they survive? They wouldn't have been fed. Did they have farm animals [that grazed the fields?]

MF: Yes, that could be too. They lived in a bark house. They came to America from Germany.

DL: Was their house entered and perhaps ransacked?

MF: From what they said, it was not molested by anything, the house.

DL: Perhaps the Dakota wouldn't have even gone there.

MF: Yes, that's right, it may be.

DL: They certainly couldn't wait around to find out [where the Dakota were going].

MF: No, I tell you. I don't think they did. Erd Building is downtown here, and that is where they were. "We had been in the city about a half an hour when we heard the firing of guns."

DL: I heard a story that if the Dakota had prevailed on New Ulm; if their attack had been successful, there was a plan for all the women and children to kill themselves. That they would have a cannon or a fire or something. I don't know if that's a rumor or if that's true.

MF: I've never heard that. And I've done a lot of history at the museum. But there were about two hundred and some buildings in New Ulm at that time and about a hundred people were killed at that time.

DL: Are the burial grounds nearby? Can you still find the graves?

MF: Oh yes. I was just out at the cemetery over Memorial Day weekend. I took flowers out. Fidel Diepolder's statue is still there, and so is my grandfather's. His wife is buried there, and one of my uncles is buried there.

DL: Was your family familiar with or friends with any people who were murdered?

MF: No. That I never heard.

DL: Do you think that if that had that occurred, they would have talked about it?

MF: Oh yes, my grandfather would have talked. He did talk to us kids, every once in a while, he'd tell my brother and I about little stories. He was scared, very scared.

DL: What do you think was the cause of that war?

MF: According to what I know, the Dakota were starving. And I suppose that's one of the things. But you hear so many sides of things. I think sometimes we probably started it too, you know, making trouble. Who knows? It's so long ago.

DL: What kind of trouble are you talking about?

MF: See, the Dakota were here before the Germans came to New Ulm, in that area. And maybe they resented that the Dakota were here.

DL: Because it is a beautiful spot.

MF: Yes.

DL: Do you have proof that it was the site of an Indian village first?

MF: No, I haven't got any. Only what I have read and heard my grandfather talking about. I don't think he ever showed any pictures of it. And I know that none of us have any because when I talked to my cousin the other day - he's eighty-five now - he said he doesn't have any either. He lives in Rugby, North Dakota. He had these little pictures of the three generations. He he has one son, Jim, who is the only Diepolder [remaining].

DL: Do you know if your family was able to reestablish ties with the Dakota following the war?

MF: I've never heard that.

DL: So it's possible that was the end of the relationship.

MF: That could have been, yes. And to this day, I've never heard that. I've been down at that museum for 22 years and given all the tours up there on the third floor. But it must have been terrible. Andrew Myrick said "let them eat grass." I think that's terrible. Of course at that time nobody had respect for the Dakota.

DL: Is the property you mentioned, the farmland that your grandfather was on, is that still in your family?

MF: No.

DL: Tell us about where that's located again?

MF: In Milford Township. I don't know it. But when they moved to the farm in Lafayette Township, I know where that is. Are you familiar with the Harkin Store?

DL: No.

MF: It's on the bottom road, when you're coming down on [Highway] 15 and you come to that stoplight- the first big hill going up is where the farm was.

DL: I see.

MF: And now it's owned by Norman Bernhalls. But up until the 1950s or so, it was a Henry Diepolder farm. He was the son of Joseph Diepolder.

DL: That was the property that your grandfather was running from?

MF: Yes. He got it from his father Fidel Diepolder.

DL: They were warned because somebody rode in on horseback.

MF: Yes.

DL: Told them to leave and so they left.

MF: Yes.

DL: Can you tell us anything about the aftermath of the war? Did the war have a direct impact on you and your family?

MF: I don't think so. I was born in 1920, so I was little when my grandfather was getting older. He died in 1938 or 39. So when we were little, and we were high schoolers, naughty, once in a while, we would sit at the dinner table. He would take a knife and he would always hit our little hands, because my brother and I were fighting.

Now my brother was never interested in history. But I was, and my mother and dad both were.

DL: Your grandfather turned out to be quite prominent, didn't you mention that he was in the state legislature as well?

MF: Yes. In 1893 he was the representative in the 28th legislature, and there were 54 senators and 114 representatives. He was the majority leader there. And the standing committees he served on were: ways and means, hospitals for the insane, chairman, forestry, public buildings. In District 17, Nicollet County, at the age of 36 he was a member. [reading from newspaper clipping] And he was born in Minnesota, post office Lafayette, occupation was farmer. And he was married and received his education in the schools of New Ulm. He resided in Lafayette and was a farmer, held the office of Town Clerk and other offices of trust since the majority, was a member of the Board of Education. Was elected a member of the house of 1891 and was reelected in 1892."

He was one of those instrumental in the founding the state hospital system in St. Peter.

DL: I see. Have you ever been to Mankato to the execution site?

MF: Yes.

DL: What were your thoughts about that?

MF: Well it's kind of sad to see it. It really is. When I'm doing a tour, I always tell kids "it was the day after Christmas when thirty-eight were hung. President Lincoln pardoned all but thirty-eight Indians."

I think that's terrible. And that was the largest execution in the United States. What are your thoughts on that execution?

DL: I haven't seen the site.

MF: They have a big picture. It's sad. And everything was done at once. They were not just individual people. But they did this whole execution at once, at one time. That's how I always explained it to children when I gave tours.

DL: I'll mention a few other sites and tell me if you've been to any of these places. Have you been to Fort Ridgely?

MF: Very much so. In fact, there's a Diepolder listed on one of those monuments.

DL: Oh there is?

MF: Yes. I was going to show you something else. [Finds document] Here is the family history of Joseph Diepolder. Fidel is in here too. There is a Diepolder up at Fort Ridgely. But Fidel Diepolder also was a road supervisor, or a constable in Nicollet County, during the war.

DL: Constable. What position is that?

MF: I don't know. To me a constable is like a jailer. That would be my interpretation. Fort Ridgely is very nice. Have you been there?

DL: Yes.

MF: Very nice. But then, one of my grandfather's uncles had a hotel right next to the Harkin Store. And here is a picture of the hotel. Heinrich Diepolder.

DL: I see. What is your opinion of the war?

MF: I don't think it was necessary, but then who am I to say?

DL: How could it have been averted?

MF: I think our white people, if they would have been nicer to the Indians, maybe it would not have happened. As I say, I grew up as a child knowing about it. When you're young, I think sometimes you're not interested in things. I know my brother became a doctor and he was never interested in history. The only thing he thought about was medicine.

DL: Have you ever been to Fort Snelling?

MF: Yes.

DL: What did you think of that?

MF: It's very nice.

DL: How about the Lower Sioux Agency?

MF: Yes I have been there too.

DL: What about when New Ulm was involved in a battle, two battles actually... Did you have any family members in New Ulm who fought?

MF: No.

DL: What do you think about the treaties?

MF: About the treaty. That's the one at Traverse de Sioux?

DL: Any of them.

MF: I've been there already, but at the time that I was growing up I didn't really care that much about what the treaties meant. I think it's very nice [at the St. Peter Treaty Center]. In fact I have been over there and gotten a lot of literature about the Diepolders and Kitzbergers, because they lived in Nicollet County. And in fact I have some property in Nicollet County.

DL: Is it a good idea to commemorate the events of the 1860s?

MF: Yes and no. I think it's wise because it gives some of the younger people education. I can see my children are interested in it. They should know what was going on. The commemoration will be in 2012.

DL: What is the best way to commemorate these events?

MF: Boy that's a hard one to say. I would imagine going to some of the markers, like at Milford - I've been there already. But I think children of today are lacking history. Some people never talk of their families. I know people who don't even know what's going on about things. I realize I'm 91 years old but [laughter]...

DL: Do you think that if you were a Dakota person it would be easy to live in New Ulm today?

MF: No.

DL: Why?

MF: I can tell you, no, I don't know if I would or not. But quite a while ago we had a Junior Pioneers celebration. I am a member of the Junior Pioneers of New Ulm and the vicinity, because of my grandparents, the Diepolders and the Kitzbergers. Anyway, we had a Dakota speaking, and the first thing he said was, "I was afraid to come to New

Ulm." And I will never forget that statement. To be afraid in 2000, or in the 1900s, it's terrible. That's what he opened his talk with, and I will never forget that. What do you people think?

DL: About the Dakota in New Ulm?

MF: Yes.

DL: I don't know how to answer that.

MF: I was embarrassed, to tell you the truth, when I heard this man say that. It was at Turner Hall over here. And I thought, oh my gosh, to be scared to come to New Ulm, NOW?

DL: It sounds like there's still hard feelings.

MF: With some I think there is. But this man was in his fifties or so. But I will remember that as long as I live. I thought that was terrible. Of course a lot of times I don't tell anyone how I feel. I guess that's the way life is these days. I think kids need a little more knowledge about what was going on years ago.

DL: Is placing so much attention on the past just encouraging these old wounds to surface?

MF: I don't like that. Well, I mean yes, I can see how for a lot of people that would happen. But as they say, I'm this old and I don't begrudge anybody anything. I can accept things and I know I have to.

DL: Your grandfather's father would have been of an age to fight in the Civil War.

MF: Yes. He didn't though. But Fidel Diepolder [did fight in the Civil War.] He was a defender during the Conflict from Lafayette Township.

DL: Defender of New Ulm?

MF: Yes. That was my grandfather's father.

DL: Did you ever hear stories though the family grapevine about him?

MF: Not really. I can honestly say that. Though when my grandfather moved up to the farm that Fidel had in Milford Township, they moved to this farm in Nicollet County. Actually, my grandfather didn't talk too much about his father, if I recall. He did tell stories about moving from one place to another with his father and mother.

DL: You have been a lot of help. Thank you.

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society