

## **The Famed Tuttle-Carver Fight of 1862**

Two Martin County pioneers found the county far too small for their coexistence back in 1862. One of them, Calvin Tuttle, came to Martin County from Fort Dodge, Iowa, in March of 1856. He, along with Mr. Rickey, is remembered as being Martin County's first permanent white settlers. Tuttle originally located on Silver Lake. He later moved to Tenhassen, for which he gave his name, "Tuttle's Grove," to that settlement. Tuttle boasted that he would not live where he could not whip any man in the neighborhood. "Tuttle's Grove" would later become known as Tenhassen and was located just west of where Ceylon is today.

Sam Carver, a huge, stern character with the "voice of a bull," decided to settle in the vicinity of "Tuttle's Grove" in 1860. He was met by Calvin Tuttle, a giant of a man, with a menacing scowl on his face. Tuttle asked what he was doing here, and Carver replied that he planned to settle in the area. Tuttle flatly stated that it was his land and that Carver should get off, and get, fast. Carver reportedly had no idea that he would encounter trouble when he tried to settle in the area, so he moved on into another wooded area nearby and set up camp once again.

Early the next morning, Tuttle along with his two sons, George and Columbus, both nearly as big and surly as their father, strode into Carver's camp. Tuttle snarled that he had told him to move on. Carver replied that he had, and that here he would stay. It was said that Tuttle and his two sons walked away muttering threats as they left. Speculation was that they took no action against Carver at that time because of the dislike held for the Tuttles by the settlers in the area, which concerned them to some extent.

Tuttle had come to the area a few years earlier and had acquired several thousand acres of land. With his sons and son in law, he held this area virtually by force and was considered a dictatorial land baron stating that no man he could whip in personal combat should ever live in his empire. As a result, those that lived not far away in the community to become known as Ceylon had no love for Tuttle and welcomed the arrival of Sam Carver.

The threats continued from the Tuttle camp, and by 1862 it appeared that blood would undoubtedly be shed. At that point, Tuttle made a somewhat rash vow that if Carver could beat him in a fair fight, Tuttle and his family would depart the area leaving his entire "empire" to Carver.

The local settlers arranged where the men would meet in April of 1862; a natural amphitheater cleared in the Tenhassen woods. Onlookers came from miles around to watch the big fight.

The battle began when Carver and Tuttle, both being huge men of physical prowess by standards of the time, entered the clearing. As soon as Carver raised his arms to remove his jacket, Tuttle, ignoring the prior agreement of fair play, smashed him in the face while Carver's arms were still caught in his jacket sleeves. Initially suffering fierce punishment from Tuttle's fists and boots, Carver finally freed one arm. As he fell to the ground, he managed to punch Tuttle in the groin. From that point on, nothing was barred, and the fight continued on with fingernails and teeth at times supplementing the fists of the two fierce adversaries.

Although experiencing intense pain from the kicks of Tuttle's sharp boots, Carver managed to free his other arm from his jacket and grabbed Tuttle around the legs forcing him to the ground. The battle was said to rage on for over an hour when Tuttle, determined to put an end to the fight, rushed at Carver with his head down. Carver quickly stepped aside, and the hard charging Tuttle crashed to the ground with a thud. Carver instantly jumped on top of him, his fists battering Tuttle's head until Tuttle was heard screaming for mercy. Carver, finally the undisputed winner of the hard fought battle, was hailed by the settlers of the area as a local hero.

The Tuttles kept their word. They loaded their wagons, and the company that numbered about twenty persons moved westward a short time after the fight. They weren't heard from for some time, until word later came from Nebraska of Calvin Tuttle's death in 1882.

Sam Carver remained in the Martin County area. His son, William, was later elected sheriff of Martin County and served in that capacity for many years. His nephew, Walter Carver, served as a deputy.

Thus, the terrible feud between old Calvin Tuttle and his deadly rival, Sam Carver, finally came to an end. The story of this famous fight has since been told and retold, perhaps even embellished to some extent over the years, and has since been awarded its place in the archives of local history.