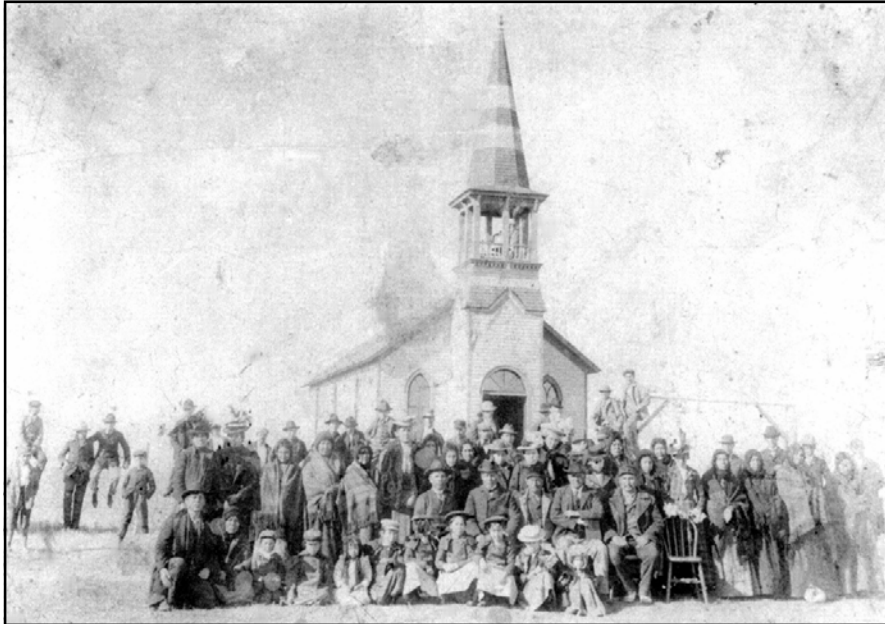


AN EXPERIMENT OF FAITH

The Journey of the Mdewakanton
Dakota Who Settled on the
Bend in the River



Wakpaipaksan Okodakiciye
'Bend in the River Church'

1873—2003

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ITANCAN TAWOCEKIYE KIN

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9 *qa* Luke 11:2

*ATEUNYANPI Mahpiya ekta nake cin,
Nicaje wakandapi kte: Nitkiconze u kte.
Nitawacin maka akan econpi nunwe;
mahpiya ekta iyececa.
Anpetu kin de anpetu woyute unqu po.
Qa waunhtanipi unkicicajuju miye;
tona sicaya ecaunkiconpi
wicunkicicajujupi kin iyececa.
Qa taku wawiyutan en unkayapi sni ye:
tuka sice cin etanan eunyaku po.
Wokiconze kin he Niye nitawa,
qa wowasake kin,
qa wowitan kin owihanke wanica.
Hecetu 'Amen.'*

*AN EXPERIMENT
OF FAITH*

The Journey of the Mdewakanton
Dakota Who Settled on the
Bend in the River

*A Brief History of the
Organization and Construction
Of the First Presbyterian Church
Flandreau, South Dakota*

In Memory of
*Owancatowin and
Wicahincamaza*

2003

Introduction

In 2002, the small congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in Flandreau took on the monumental task of restoring one of the most historic churches in the state of South Dakota. The original structure, now 130 years old, was in need of urgent expensive repairs. The congregation was overjoyed when approached by Governor Bill Jankow to establish a state grant to not only make the necessary repairs, but restore it to its 1873 condition. It was the answer to cumulative years of prayer to save the “oldest continually used church” in the state. Additional funding was provided by the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and generous donations from individuals and organizations.

Demolition to remove an outer layer of exterior stucco started on June 17, 2002. The work force consisted of prison inmates from the penitentiary in Sioux Falls, through an arrangement made with the state, a supervisor employed by a construction company, and volunteer help from church members. Elder Fred Olson dedicated his entire summer and fall, 103 work days, to drive the inmates from the penitentiary to the work site. He worked tirelessly along side the inmates and, like the other members of the church, treated them with respect and friendship for the important work they undertook.

The Dakota men who built the church in 1873, under the supervision of Rev. John P. Williamson, had also been prisoners following the Dakota Conflict of 1862. How did this church get to this place along the Big Sioux River? Why did Dakota people settle here?

The roots of Christianity among the Dakota, the beginning of the First Presbyterian Church, go back almost 200 years to the homeland of the *Mdewakanton Dakota* in Minnesota. The *Dakota* ‘Allied or Friendly’ were part of the *oceti sakowin* ‘seven council fires’ that consisted of the *Mdewakantonwan* ‘Village of the Spirit Lake,’ *Wahpekute* ‘Leaf Shooters,’ *Wahpetonwan* ‘Village in the Leaves,’ *Sisitonwan* ‘Village of the Fish People,’ *Ihantonwan* ‘Village at the End,’ *Ihanktonwanna* ‘Little End Village,’ and *Titonwan* ‘Prairie Villages.’ The *Mdewakanton*, or eastern Dakota people, were a woodland tribe that had customs and traditions similar to the Ojibway, Menomini, Winnebago, and other northern tribes living east of the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Coast.

In the 1830’s, many of the *Mdewakanton Dakota* who eventually formed the nucleus of the Dakota settlement at Flandreau resided in a village under the leadership of *Mahpiya Wicasta* ‘Cloud Man.’ It was near that village called *Heyatatonwan* ‘Village Back from the River,’ on the shores of present day Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis, that the first missionaries from the East started mission work among the Dakota people. Samuel W. and Gideon H. Pond arrived in 1834 and lived in a log cabin near the village. Like the other *Mdewakanton* villages along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, Cloud Man’s village consisted of elm bark lodges occupied in summer, and *tipi ha* ‘hide lodges’ in winter.

The following year, Dr. Thomas S. Williamson and Alexander Huggins brought their families from Ohio. They received a commission from the American Board of Foreign Missions to “proceed on an exploring tour among the Indians of the Upper Mississippi.” Jedediah D. Stevens also arrived with his family. In 1837, Rev. Stephen R. Riggs reached Fort Snelling, the military post established in 1821 on a bluff overlooking the meeting point of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. This sacred place, where the waters meet, the Dakota called *mdote* ‘junction of one river with another.’



Permanent Residence, Dakota

Seth Eastman, 1846-1848

A mission was soon established at Lake Harriet, adjacent to Lake Calhoun, by Mr. Stevens. It consisted of a small boarding school of mainly mixed-blood children of Dakota women and fur traders or soldiers stationed at Fort Snelling. Later, mission schools were established at Laci qui Parle, Hazelwood, *Pezihutazi* ‘Yellow Medicine’ Traverse des Sioux, Red Wing, and at Little Crow’s village of *Kapoza* ‘Those who Travel Light.’ In 1859, John P. Williamson, a son of Dr. Thomas Williamson, was licensed to preach in Ohio. He returned that same year to establish a station at the Lower Sioux Agency. The reservations for the upper and lower Dakota bands were formed along the Minnesota River, when the Dakota signed away most of their land in 1851.

In the beginning, the mission schools were composed mainly of girls and women. Some boys and men eventually took part, but never a large number. Many were ridiculed for adopting the white man’s way. Their education consisted of learning to read and write in Dakota and religious instruction. In order for the missionaries to “reach” the Dakota, it was necessary for them to learn and understand their language. Words were first written down in lists, then a dictionary was developed. Translations of the Bible, hymns, and school books soon followed.

By 1862, life on the Lower and Upper Sioux Reservations was becoming increasingly difficult for the Dakota people. They were now residing on a 10 mile strip of land, 150 miles long, on the south side of the

Minnesota River. Their vast holdings of land in Minnesota had been ceded to the government, and they were forced to hunt and trap within the 10 mile boundary. The treaties provided for annuity payments to the Dakota that they became more and more dependent upon, with the shortage of game for food. And the traders were reluctant to give more credits, or payment of supplies and provisions in advance, when there was a lack of fur bearing animals.

The government encouraged the Dakota to change by taking up farming on a larger scale than their small patches of corn. They attempted to get them to abandon the community plantings and establish individual farms. In the plan, their mixed-blood relatives were hired by the government to teach them how to plow and maintain larger crops. Unfortunately, in 1861, an infestation of cutworms destroyed their plants. That winter was a time of great hunger for the Dakota people.

In August of 1862, rumors spread that the annuity payment would not be made. Dakota leader *Taoyateduta* 'His Red Nation, also known as Little Crow,' received no assurances from agent Thomas J. Galbraith that the payment would be made promptly, or that the Dakota would be given additional credits from the traders. At a meeting with the agent to discuss the situation, *Taoyateduta* said, "We have waited a long time. The money is ours, but we cannot get it. We have no food, but here are these stores, filled with food. We ask that you, the agent, make some arrangement by which we can get food from the stores, or else we may take our own way to keep ourselves from starving. When men are hungry they help themselves." The Dakota were noticeably angered when the spokesman for the traders, Andrew Myrick, answered, "So far as I am concerned, if they're hungry, let them eat grass."

With tensions mounting on the reservation, an incident occurred on August 17, forty miles from the Lower Sioux Agency in Acton township, that would forever change the world of the eastern Dakota. Four young Dakota men, formerly of a band headed by *Sakpe* 'Six,' were returning from hunting. Over a dare to kill a white settler, it is said, five men and women were slain near Litchfield. When the four Dakota men returned to the reservation that evening, a council was called among the Dakota leaders. After discussion of the event at Litchfield, and the dire circumstances of the Dakota people, *Taoyateduta* reluctantly agreed to lead the *akicita* 'soldiers' into battle the following day.

According to plan, the *akicita* attacked the Lower Agency on August 18. After killing all the *wasicun* 'white men' that were unable to escape across the river to Fort Ridgely, the Dakota opened the storehouses and helped themselves, as predicted by *Taoyateduta*. Trader Andrew Myrick was one of the first to be killed. His mouth was stuffed with grass.

A force of 46 men and an interpreter, under the leadership of Capt. John S. Marsh, left Fort Ridgely for the lower agency. They were ambushed when they attempted to cross the Minnesota River at the ferry crossing. Capt. Marsh drowned during the battle, and half the soldiers were slain.

In the first two days of the war, later known as the Dakota Conflict, large numbers of white settlers were killed on both sides of the Minnesota River. When the conflict reached the upper agency at Yellow Medicine, Dakota who were close friends of the settlers and missionaries helped them to escape. Meanwhile the agency buildings were set on fire and the storehouses emptied. The Dakota attacked the community of New Ulm unsuccessfully on August 19. On the 23rd they returned in larger number, but were again held back by the residents and their reinforcements. When the town was evacuated two days later, most of the city had been burned to the ground.

On August 20, the Dakota *akicita* attacked Fort Ridgely, but after two days of battle were unable to overtake the troops. The superior defenses of the fort, with its cannons, forced the Dakota to abandon their plan to destroy the army post. Smaller groups of *akicita* plundered white settlements throughout southwestern Minnesota. Many men were killed, and the women and children were held as hostages.

Henry H. Sibley, a former trader among the Dakota, was appointed by Minnesota Governor Ramsey to lead volunteer forces. Sibley reached Fort Ridgely with his troops by August 28. Under the command of Joseph R. Brown, a portion of Sibley's men were defeated in a battle near a stream called Birch Coulee, across the Minnesota River from the lower agency. With 13 killed and 47 wounded, it was the "heaviest military loss" of the Dakota Conflict.

The final battle of the conflict took place at *Mdecan* 'Wood Lake' on September 23. The Dakota *akicita*, under the direction of *Taoyateduta*, were defeated. The number of Dakota killed in the battle was 16, and 7 of Sibley's forces died. This defeat, along with growing opposition to the war by the "friendly" Dakota, forced *Taoyateduta* and his supporters to flee to the prairies of Dakota Territory and into Canada.

On September 27, the "friendly" Dakota released the 269 hostages to Sibley. About 1,200 Dakota men, women, and children surrendered at that time, with another 800 surrendering in the following weeks. After 37 days the conflict was over. Although the actual death toll may never be known, the lives lost are estimated at 500 Americans and 60 Dakota.

Sibley appointed a five member commission to quickly try the 393 captured Dakota for "murder and other outrages" against the Americans. When the hasty trials concluded on November 5, with as many as 40 tried in one day, 303 were judged guilty of the charges and sentenced to death. Starting on November 7, Lieutenant Colonel Marshall and an adequate number of guards conducted the un-condemned and approximately 1,700 of the captured Dakota to Fort Snelling. When the long procession reached Henderson, community members swarmed over the captives with "guns, knives, clubs, and stones." One Dakota infant died from inflicted wounds.

The 303 condemned Dakota, along with a few women and children, were marched to a log prison near Mankato on November 9. As they passed through the burned out city of New Ulm, residents attacked the prisoners. Many were injured, including the guards, by the angry mob.

At the request of Bishop Whipple and others who sought leniency for the 303 condemned prisoners, President Abraham Lincoln ordered General Pope to send a copy of the trial records for review. A military commission recommended that the number to be executed be reduced to 40, and the sentence for Godfrey (a mulatto married to a Dakota woman) was commuted to ten years in prison.

On December 6, President Lincoln wrote an order to General Sibley "to cause 39 of the Indians and half-breeds designated by name and number to be executed on Friday, the 19th of December." The death sentence for *Tatemani* 'Round Wind' was later suspended. After a delay of one week, General Sibley sent a telegram to the President on December 27 stating, "The 38 Indians and half-breeds ordered by you for execution were hung yesterday at Mankato, at 10 a.m." With the death of the 38 *akicita*, the Dakota Conflict came to an end. The eastern Dakota, the *Mdewakanton*, *Wahpekute*, *Sisseton*, and *Wahpeton*, would no longer be a unified people living on their ancestral lands.

In the spring of 1863, General Sibley's army set out on a campaign to "kill or capture" the remaining Dakota that fled to the west and north. Battles were fought at Big Mound, Dead Buffalo Lake, Stony Lake, and Whitestone Hill in present-day North Dakota. Another campaign took place in 1864. Many Dakota crossed the border into Canada and remained. Remnants of those families still reside there.

Most of the Dakota men held as prisoners at Mankato were converted to Christianity. Under the influence of Rev. Thomas S. Williamson and other missionaries, 274 were baptized. They were also taught to read and write in the Dakota language. By March, Williamson was carrying one to two hundred letters a week to their relatives confined at Fort Snelling. Of the 1,601 Dakota accounted for at the Fort Snelling detention camp in December, 130 were dead by March of measles, other diseases, and exposure to cold. Rev. John P. Williamson, along with Episcopal missionary Samuel D. Hinman and Father Augustin Ravoux of the Catholic Church, baptized many hundreds of Dakota. Williamson and Hinman continued preaching to them during their confinement.

On March 3, the 37th U. S. Congress enacted a law for the removal of the *Sisseton*, *Wahpeton*, *Mdewakanton* and *Wahpekute* from Minnesota. The Dakota prisoners at Mankato, chained in pairs, boarded the steamboat "Favorite" on April 22 to be removed from the state. They were to be confined in army barracks at Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa. Remaining families held at Fort Snelling were removed in two groups. Steamboats also transported them down the Mississippi, but their destination was to be up the Missouri River to an agency established for them at Crow Creek, Dakota Territory. Shortly after the Dakota arrived at Crow Creek in June, nearly 300 died of eating food that was improperly stored and cooked for them, and from the lack of proper clothing.

Taoyateduta, leader of the Dakota *akicita*, was shot to death on July

3, 1863 while picking berries near Hutchinson, Minnesota. He had returned with his son *Wowinape* 'Appearing One,' after fleeing into Canada in 1862. *Wowinape* was later captured and taken to Fort Snelling, where he was tried and convicted. The state of Minnesota set a bounty on Dakota scalps on July 4, 1863 of \$25. It would be increased to \$200 by September.

The Dakota women and children, and a few men, confined at Crow Creek endured miserable conditions. Because the soil was poor, and rain was scarce, they were unable to raise crops of vegetables. The government continued to supply unfit meat and flour, which they dumped into troughs of "fresh cottonwood logs" and attempted to cook. The number of deaths from diseases, exposure, and malnutrition continued to grow into the hundreds. Nourishing food was so scarce that the Dakota men were allowed to leave the reservation to hunt buffalo.

Those imprisoned at Camp McClellan lived under similar conditions as the women and children at Crow Creek. The men spent much of their time learning to read and write in the Dakota language. They wrote hundreds of letters to their families and to Stephen R. Riggs, one of their missionaries. While under constant guard, the men swept the entire Army campgrounds with brooms, and they hauled water and wood for the camp. With almost all the men now baptized, religious services were held several times during the day. Their spiritual faith in *Wakantanka* "Great Spirit, Creator of all Things, God" sustained them during this difficult time.

Nearly 120 died while they were at Davenport. In 1864, a few of the pardoned men, along with some women and children, were released from Davenport to join their relatives at Crow Creek. After a peace commission visited Crow Creek in 1865, a recommendation was made to move the Dakota to another location. An executive order was issued on February 27 to set aside land in Knox County, Nebraska for a permanent reservation for the Dakota at Crow Creek and Davenport.

In April, 1866, 247 Dakota men, women, and children at Davenport boarded the steamboat "Pembina" for St. Louis. From there they were transferred to the Dora and traveled up the Missouri River to the Santee Sioux Reservation in Nebraska. On the way, they continued to hold religious services and spent time reading books published by the missionaries in the Dakota language.

The Dakota at Crow Creek were moved overland to the reservation the end of May. With most walking the entire distance, and with a few horses provided for the old and sick, they reached Niobrara on June 11. The reunion of the two groups, after nearly four years of separation, was both a time of celebration and reflection. The darkest period in the history of the eastern Dakota people would be past. Because the pain was so deep, generations to come would be unaware of the suffering they endured. Those who survived chose not to speak of it to their children and grandchildren.

An agency was first established near present-day Niobrara, Ne-

braska. The Dakota lived in tents that were provided for them, while the agency officials and missionaries occupied a hotel in Niobrara. In the fall, they were moved to the mouth of Bazile Creek, where wood was more plentiful for log houses and firewood.

In 1867, politicians in Dakota Territory proposed a plan to move the Dakota to a reservation in eastern Dakota Territory, between the James and Big Sioux Rivers. A delegation of Dakota traveled to Washington, D.C. to consider the plan. An executive order was issued setting the land aside, but it was later rescinded. In the spring, the Dakota were moved to a site on the reservation called Breckenridge, where hardwood timber was in ample supply. Ground was broken and crops were planted in June, however, grasshoppers destroyed most of the growing plants.

After a visit by the peace commission, a recommendation was made to set up a larger reservation, "a northern Indian Territory," for the remnants of the eastern Dakota bands and other tribes. The Dakota were allowed to send leaders to view part of the area selected for their recommended reservation. They thought it was unsuitable for agriculture.

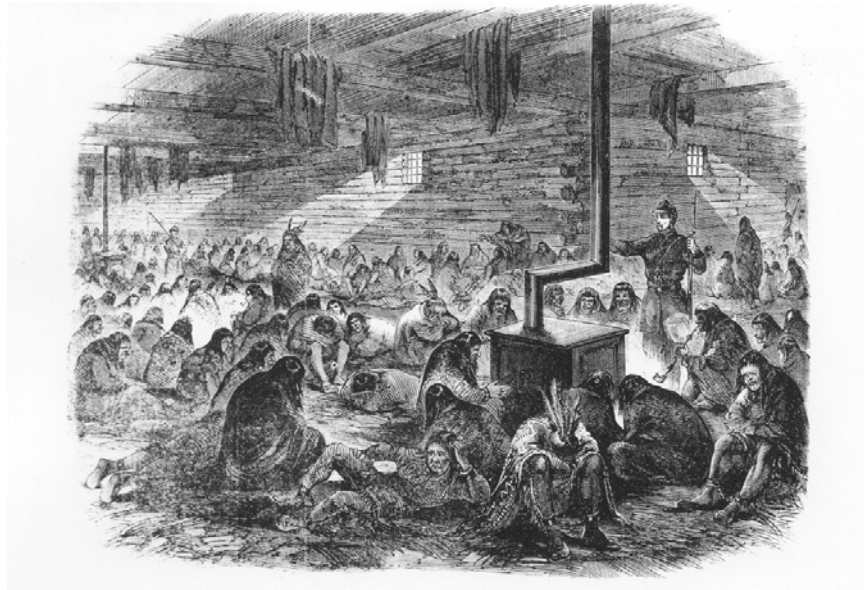
Because it was uncertain whether they would be moved again, many Dakota chose not to plant their crops in the spring of 1868. When the peace commission passed through the Santee Reservation in June, they persuaded the Dakota leaders to accompany them. Along with the western Dakota/Lakota bands, they signed the treaty of Fort Laramie. Provisions of the treaty allowed for Indians, "if they would adopt white customs," to take land in severalty and begin farming. The government would allow them to remain where they were and assist them generously in their efforts, and a provision allowed for the allotment of lands on the reservations for anyone desiring to farm.

In 1869, when the allotment of land to the Dakota failed to take place quickly, and because life on the reservation was still filled with uncertainty, about 21 families (many who were members of the Pilgrim Church) left the reservation in March to take homesteads in Dakota Territory. On their journey they passed by Fort Dakota, near the falls on the Big Sioux River. They settled on unoccupied land along the river, near an abandoned town site named after Judge Charles E. Flandrau. On October 3, they organized a Presbyterian church in one of the log houses built near the river. With a total membership at that time of 47, they called their new church *Wakpaipaksan* 'River Bend' after the looping river.

"An Experiment in Faith" is an account of the exile of the Dakota from Minnesota, and the path they took to settle at *Wakpaipaksan*.

William L. Beane, Elder
Damakota 'I am a Dakota'
Great Grandson of Rev. John Eastman

Exile, Reflection and Change



Condemned Dakota Prisoners

W. H. Childs, January 31, 1863

In 'the moon in which the geese lay eggs' *Magakadawi* or April, 1863, the month also known by the Dakota as *Watopapiwi* 'the moon when the streams are again navigable,' the Dakota prisoners were removed into exile. Now that the ice was no longer on the Mississippi River, steamboat travel quickly resumed. In order to avoid further mob action intent on harming the Dakota prisoners, the exact time of their departure from their homeland was kept a secret. After *wiiyaye* 'sundown' on April 21, the steamboat "Favorite" returned from Fort Ridgely and quietly docked at Mankato.

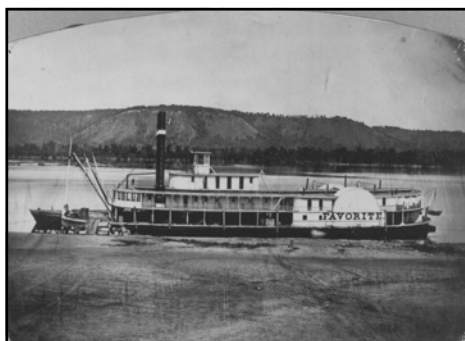
The following *hanhana* 'morning,' 16 women, 48 acquitted Dakota men who would be "dropped off" at the Dakota detention camp at Fort Snelling, and the 278 convicted Dakota men, chained two by two, walked slowly from the log prison through four companies of infantry to board the boat. The convicted men were released into the custody of Joseph R. Brown, Indian Agent, as he called their names. Blankets were used as litters to carry aboard three too ill to walk. Over the last four months, 13 had died while in confinement. As word spread of their eminent forced exodus, a noisy crowd gathered on the steamboat landing but there was no physical violence.

It must have been a painful and anxious time for the Dakota men when the 48 were let off at Fort Snelling. The remaining prisoners on the boat knew their *winyanpi* 'women' and their *cincapi* 'children,' those who had survived a winter filled with sickness, were still in the detention

camp. They had been corresponding by writing hundreds of letters, but they feared that avenue of communication would come to an end. Would they ever see their loved ones again? They had no knowledge that their families would be put on two steamboats in May, sent down to St. Louis, then up the Missouri to a desolate location in Dakota Territory near a stream called *Kangiokute* 'where they shoot crows or Crow Creek.' On leaving Fort Snelling, and passing St. Paul, the Dakota prisoners could be heard singing a hymn in the Dakota language:

Jehovah, have mercy upon me,
For thine own mercies sake;
Thy loving-kindness is very great,
Therefore place me in thy heart.

The life of the woodland Dakota who had resided in Minnesota for hundreds of years was about to come to an abrupt end. They would no longer be able to hunt the rivers and lakes that had been their home, nor mourn their relatives buried on the high sacred bluffs overlooking the *Hahawakpa* 'river of the waterfalls or Mississippi' and the *Wakpa-minisota* 'whitish water river or Minnesota.' The world as they had known it forever would be no more. Truly, it was the end—but it was also the beginning.



Mississippi River Steamboat "Favorite" ca. 1861

The four-day journey down the Mississippi, with periodic stops to take on wood, would take them to the location known by the Dakota as *Witawakan* 'sacred island or Rock Island.' It was a solemn time to reflect on the events of the past nine months—the desperate conditions on the reservation, the war, their baptisms in the log prison, and acceptance of the white man's way of praying. Although they had always been a spiritual people, they would let go of the *wakan wacipi* 'sacred or medicine dance,' the dog dance, and other ceremonies. The new religion they were adopting would be the center of their lives, would give them comfort, and would be the cement that held them together through the hard times ahead. They also reflected on the scene they witnessed

in Mankato on December 26. Through narrow cracks in their log prison they had a view of their 38 friends and relatives that were hung, It affected them deeply, and set them on a new course for change.

For most, this trip by steamboat was a first time event. They had always navigated the rivers and lakes by birch bark canoe when they lived further north, and later by *canwata* 'log canoe.' However this time, floating to the south on a *petawata* 'boat of fire,' the voyage was almost dreamlike. As they huddled together on the deck of the boat, they reached out to *Wakantanka* 'God' to save them, praying late into the night each day. And as the days passed, the anxiety and fear began to lift.

Besides the sixteen women, two babies, and Joseph R. Brown, the Dakota prisoners were accompanied by 85 men from Company C of the 7th Minnesota Volunteers, and mixed-blood Dakota interpreters, David Faribault, Jr. and Antoine Provencalle. After their arrival at Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa, within sight of the *Witawakan*, the women were detailed "ten to cook rations, four to do the washing, and two assigned to hospital duties."

On April 27, all the Dakota passengers embarked "without trouble." Within thirty minutes they were transported the 2-1/2 miles from the boat landing to their prison quarters within Camp McClellan. Located on a bluff 100 ft. above the Mississippi, about one-quarter mile from the river, Camp McClellan was established as a military camp on August 8, 1861. It was maintained as a military post throughout the Civil War, with many regiments of Iowa troops mustered out of service there. The Dakota were held within a *conkaske* 'fenced enclosure' 200 feet square with four long barracks. The men occupied two of the poorly constructed buildings. Without the bunks, the men ate, slept, and worshipped on a floor covered with straw. One of the barracks housed the women and served as hospital, and one was set aside as the guard house. A walkway for the soldiers had been built 4 ft. from the top of the wooden stockade that surrounded 1-1/2 acres of ground.

Rev. John P. Williamson visited the Dakota prisoners the first week of May 1863. He wrote to Stephen R. Riggs that he spent much of his time with them and that he was "needed more than he supposed before he came." He also reported that the number of sick had increased since they departed from *Mayasapa* 'black river bank or Mankato,' and three had died since their arrival. Within their new environment, the prisoners continued to gather together two or three times each day for religious meetings. John informed Stephen Riggs, "Although many appeared very glad to see me, I felt very sad to see the great abatement in religious feeling."

With poor attendance at the first meetings he attended, John set up a more efficient system for them to follow when conducting their services. He soon had the Dakota men and women attending worship at each building in the mornings, and joint services together in one building at 11 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. With an increased attendance to 200 worshippers, Rev. Williamson distributed Dakota *odowan* 'hymn books' to

those who had paid for them in advance.

The Dakota men were not always occupied with reading, writing letters, and attending worship services. As prisoners within Camp McClellan, they were required "to perform all the drudgery that could be invented." With crude brooms made of hazel brush or twigs, they were told to form a straight line and sweep the entire military grounds. All the debris was deposited outside the camp. They gathered the *canaonpi* 'wood to lay on the fire' to be used in cooking the meals for the several thousand soldiers, hauling the bundles up the steep river bank behind the camp like "a pack train." When they hauled water for the camp from the river, they gathered *tukihasan* 'mussel shells' that they fashioned into rings and other ornaments. The mussel shell "trinkets," along with small wooden bows with arrows and beaded moccasins were sold to the soldiers and visitors. The *mazaska* 'white metal or money' was used to purchase writing materials, hymnals, *Wowapi Wakan* 'sacred books or Bibles,' *canduhupa* 'pipes' and *candi* 'tobacco.'

Thomas S. Williamson, a doctor and *wasicun wakan* 'minister' respected by the Dakota people, arrived in the heat of July to provide religious instruction to the prisoners. On the 25th he wrote to W. P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that the Dakota men "need religious instruction every day." He informed him that, when the men were at Mankato in the beginning of the year, less than a dozen could read in their own language. Now, about 150 "can read sufficiently" to use the Dakota hymnal in singing. The purpose of Dr. Williamson's letter to Mr. Dole was to get support from the Secretary of War to allow "all loyal ministers of the gospel and missionaries access to the Indians." General Roberts of Camp McClellan was not going to allow them further access to the prisoners. The General spoke harshly of them and said, "It was wrong to show them any kind of sympathy, even so far as to preach the gospel to them."

On September 11, 1863, Dr. Williamson wrote to Stephen R. Riggs about his prohibition from giving instruction to the prisoners. On the day of his departure, the 25th, he hoped to say farewell to the men, but could only view them from the elevated sentry walkway. He felt the Dakota men looked "very badly" due to their confinement and the hot weather. Williamson informed Rev. Riggs that General Roberts would be pleased at their condition; he would "wish them to die of sickness" since "he cannot hang them."

In March of 1864, Dr. Williamson had regained access to the prisoners and continued his religious teaching. While he was there, about 15 men had become infected with smallpox but were "getting better." One had died of the disease. In a letter to S. R. Riggs dated March 12 from Davenport, Williamson asked Riggs to send thirty plain hymnals and 8 or 11 with extra binding. He reported that Stephen's son Alfred was there instructing them to sing. During the summer, about 90 Dakota men, women, and children were brought down from Canada. They had reluctantly surrendered to the U. S. troops at Pembina. On their arrival, they were soon swept up in the new religion adopted by their relatives,

and were eager to learn to read and write. A school for the children was started by the women who came with the group from Mankato.

During the three years that the Dakota remained at Davenport, the iron chains that dug deep scars into their ankles were finally removed. Because of their good behavior, the number of soldiers guarding them was greatly reduced. The women and children had always been allowed to go out of the prison at daytime, but later small groups of men were allowed to go out to hunt deer with one soldier to watch over them. Prisoners were also sent out to help white farmers by hoeing their crops in the spring, and harvesting in the fall.

When the missionaries were not with them, *Caskedan* 'first born male' or Robert Hopkins led the men in worship. Since they were first incarcerated at Mankato, *Caskedan* was their own religious teacher. He was comforted with the thought that "the work that he did for his people was the Lord's work." And, he played a large part as each man accepted Christianity and "set aside" the old ways. It was not an easy decision, but they decided they must change to live and to be with their families again. Although they would choose to be like the white man, in manner and custom, they knew they could not be a white man. They would be born anew, but they would always remain Dakota.

After three years, the men prisoners, women, and children held at Davenport were told they would be released. Sadly, 120 had died waiting for that news. Thomas S. Williamson, his son John, Stephen R. Riggs, and others had persevered to gain their freedom.

On April 10, 1866, the 247 that survived at Davenport were put on the steamboat "Pembina" for a destination unknown to them. This time, with a new understanding of the "holy writings" they had been studying, there was a calmness to their demeanor. The crowded steamboat took them to St. Louis, where they were transferred to another boat destined for their new home on the Missouri River. They continued to hold worship services, and passed the time reading the books that had been translated into Dakota.

After a month's travel, they arrived at a temporary agency established for them at Niobrara, Nebraska. On June 11, those who lived through the sickness and starvation at Crow Creek reached the agency also. They left behind hundreds of graves that covered the hills above Crow Creek. After four years, the two groups were finally reunited. It was a time of extreme joy, and a time of extreme sadness. To finally see their families brought wails of happiness, but to learn their husbands or wives or children had died brought wails of almost unbearable grief.

The Santee Reservation was set aside to be their new home forever. However, with the events of the past clearly in mind, many felt they could only know happiness again if they owned their own *makoce* 'country.'

Pilgrim Church Organized

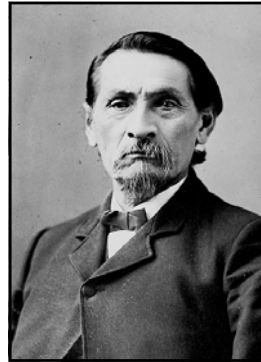
It was the month of *Canpasawi* 'the moon when the choke cherries are ripe, July,' just six weeks after the surviving women, children, and men arrived from Crow Creek, when Dr. T. S. Williamson, S. R. Riggs, and Rev. J. B. Renville traveled to Niobrara to assist John P. Williamson in organization services. The ministers came to the new settlement in Nebraska to "strengthen the things that remain," to make plans for missionary schools, and to continue religious instruction.

On Saturday, July 21, 1866, 157 members of the Prison Church at Davenport and 225 from the Fort Thompson Church at Crow Creek, a total of 382, united to form the Pilgrim Presbyterian Church, *Ohnihde Okodakiciye*. The name *ohnihde* 'going from place to place, pilgrimage' was chosen to reflect the journey the Dakota members made to reach this place. It was not only a physical journey with severe hardship, pain, and death, but a journey of the *nagi* 'soul.'

As each member stated their name for the church roll and selected a class from a list of ten, they were glad for the reunion of their families. And, they felt comfort in being together to "commemorate Christ's love." But surely they also remembered the hundreds that were not there – men, women, and mostly children that perished at Mankato, Fort Snelling, Davenport, Crow Creek, and on the journeys between.

Ten of the Dakota men were selected and installed as elders; all of them held the positions previously in prison at Davenport or at Crow Creek: Robert Hopkins *Caskedan*, Reuben *Tahohpiwakan*, Louis *Mazawakinyanna*, William O. Rogers, Jonas *Wakandiena*, Joseph *Wicahcamaza*, Thomas *Kicosmani*, Benjamin *Makaohomnikudan*, *Tatoheya*, and Elijah *Mazakiyemani*.

Two additional men were selected as probationers for the Gospel ministry: licentiates Artemas *Ehnamani* and Titus *Icaduze*. They would act as supply for the new church, under the superintendence of Rev. John P. Williamson. Both of the Dakota men had shown they were capable as teachers, and were honored to be able to preach "to their own people."



Artemas *Ehnamai* 'Gallops Amongst Them'

On Sunday, July 29, 1866 a communion service was held under a large *canwapatipi* 'arbor covered with willow branches,' like the arbors constructed in Minnesota for meetings and ceremonies for hundreds of

years. Since their reunion, the Dakota gathered each day under the arbor, morning and evening, to pray together, read the Bible, and “tell what God had done for them.” Now, after four years of separation, it was a time of *woyuonihan* ‘celebration’ – a time of renewal, but a dark part filled with pain would remain lodged in Dakota hearts for generations to come.

In *Wasutonwi* ‘the harvest moon, August,’ John P. Williamson reported to J. M. Stone, Agent, that for the past four years, the government did not support a school for the Dakota. He suggested that the government establish a good school, releasing the missionaries “to carry on their religious and moral instruction.” Williamson informed Agent Stone that the Dakota were willing to listen, that more than half of the men and women residing in the settlement of cloth tents attended the Sunday services.

Dakota Delegates to
Washington, D.C., 1867

Back Row: Rev. Hinman
and Owancaduta
Front Row Left: Husasa,
Wapasa, Wakute, and
Cotankainape



For the next two years, the Dakota lived with uncertainty day by day. The location of the Santee Agency was moved several times, and they feared that they would be exiled to another more desolate location. In June of 1868, a peace commission sent out from Washington stopped at the Agency and “encouraged” Dakota leaders to accompany them to Fort Laramie, *Wapasa* ‘Red Ensign,’ *Wakute* ‘Shooter,’ *Husasa* ‘Red Legs,’ *Owancaduta* ‘Scarlet All Over,’ *Cotankainapi* ‘Flute Player,’ and *Tasunkamza* ‘His Iron Dog.’

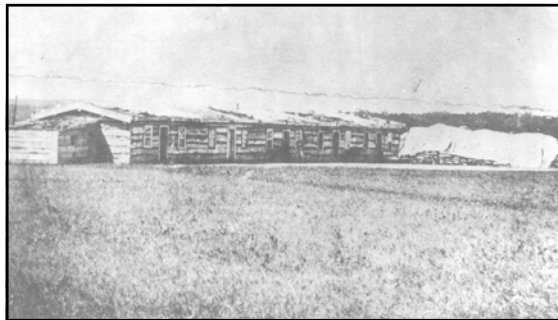
On their return from Fort Laramie, the leaders told their people about the issues discussed in the treaty and that they put their mark on the document in their behalf. They said that, if they did not get a tract of land on a reservation established for them, any man over 18 years of age could take a homestead on public land of 160 acres. The treaty also stated, “Any Indian receiving a patent for land under the provisions outlined, shall thereby and henceforth become and be a citizen of the United States, and be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of such citizens, and shall, at the same time, retain all his rights to benefits accruing to Indians under this treaty.”

It had been the wish of the Dakota, for five years now, to have their own *makoce* ‘country’ again. If the government would not give them their own farm lands, or allotments, they now had an alternative.

Exploration and Decisions

During the month of *Wazupiwi* 'the moon in which rice is laid up, October,' 1868, several Dakota families crossed the *Mnisose* 'turbid or muddy water, Missouri River' north into Dakota Territory to hunt and trap before *waniyetu* 'winter' began. Unknown to the Indian Agent, the journey was also a mission of *waodeomanipi* 'exploration,' to look for suitable agricultural land to take homesteads. Remembering the fertile farm land unoccupied in the valley of the *Wakpaipaksan* 'bend in the river,' they chose to go beyond the falls of the *Cankasdeca* 'wood to split, Big Sioux River.'

When they reached the *akicitatipi* 'fort' on the Big Sioux they had peaceful contact with the small garrison of soldiers stationed there. They also met C. K. Howard, the fort sutler or *akicitawopeton* 'soldier trader.' He was a generous man who would play a large part in their future economy. Fort Dakota was a temporary post, established in 1865 by the government, to keep harmony on the frontier and encourage settlement in Dakota Territory. Originally called Fort Brookings, the cluster of ramshackle buildings was abandoned in June of 1869.



Fort Dakota Barracks Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory

In November, 1868, post commander William Olmsted wrote to Lieut. Goodhue, "For the last six months and the present time, parties of Indians of the Yancton[sic] and Santee [Dakota] Bands of the Sioux Tribe, as also half breed Santees, numbering from 1 tepie [sic] to 80 & 90 tepies have passed through the district and near it at different times." The commander stated that the surrounding settlers were concerned about the Indians trespassing on ceded land without a pass. He said that he "turned back all Indians coming from Yancton [sic] or their reservations and also any who arrive here from other parts ordering them to move right in and not delay or enter any settlers claim." Lieut. Goodhue wished to know if any of the Indians of the Sioux Tribe "have the right to be off their reservations and if so how each one or any to have pass or permit and who to sign it?" In his letter the commander also stated that he provided the Indians with rations if they were requested.

Following the winding river trail, the Dakota set up camp in northern Minnehaha County, near land settled by the Guttorm Thompson family. The Norwegian family arrived in Dakota Territory from Minnesota in 1868, and lived in a dugout along the river in Dell Rapids Township. One of the sons, Ole, visited with David Faribault, Jr., the mixed-blood Dakota fluent in Dakota, English, and French, and another man called "Canty John." Ole later referred to David Faribault as "Ferbo"

Mr. Thompson was told by the men that they had "been in the Indian rebellion of 1862." He was also told that the "main cause of it was that the government agents who were ordered to give the Indians what they were promised, took a part of it themselves and deceived them in many ways, especially when they came back from their hunting grounds to receive what they were promised and entitled to, they were also tricked. They received little or nothing and their wives and children were in need. This happened many times. Therefore they blamed the white people who came and took their land, killed their wild life and brought about their hunger and death. They then decided to root out the white, who were the cause of their misery. They said that if they had been treated right, there wouldn't have been any outbreak."

Ole Thompson sympathized with the action the Dakota were forced to take in 1862, "that the outbreak would not have started if they had been treated right." He felt "there was a lot of truth in that, especially when you considered their position and ignorance. We came here as Christians to proclaim to them civilization's better rule of life, but in many ways it was the opposite. I mean it was the government's fault and responsibility."

If the Thompson family had been in Minnesota during the conflict of 1862, certainly they would have reacted differently to the near proximity of Dakota people. Ole Thompson formed a bond with the men, and had several more talks with them.

The Dakota continued their travel up the Big Sioux River past the *os-maka* 'dells' of quartzite stone, and on to *Wakpaipaksan*. Upon their arrival, they saw that the fertile bottom land was superior to the reservation land, calling it *makoce nina waste* 'very nice country.' They observed that deer, elk, antelope, and buffalo were plentiful for hunting. There was an ample supply of beaver, otter, mink, and muskrat for trapping, and there were *hogan nina ota* 'great many fish' in the river. Both sides of the river banks were lined with groves of ash, elm, and cottonwood. An ample supply for log homes and firewood. After the years of incarceration, and, now the uncertainty of life on the reservation, the *ipaksan* 'bend' looked like the "land of milk and honey" they learned about in the white man's Bible. In their daily prayers they gave thanks to *Wakantanka* 'God' that this location was still unsettled, and that it had all the things they would need to survive as free men, as citizens. Several weeks were spent hunting for their winter's supply of meat to supplement the meager provisions provided by the government. Trapping along the river and streams yielded many *wawaha* 'fur pelts' for trade.

When the Dakota families returned to the Santee Reservation from the area of *Wakpaipaksan*, the ice and snow had arrived - it was *nina osni* 'very cold weather.' Those who made the trip gathered other Dakota families together, held *omniciye* 'an assembly, council,' and told them about *Wakpaipaksan*. They described it as *mokoce wowinihan* 'wonderful country' for farming, hunting, and trapping. *Kangisapa* 'Black Crow,' one of the Dakota who explored the *wakpaipaksan* area, told them, "All those who wished can go there."



Wakpaipaksan 'Bend in the River'

2002

"It is now winter and very cold when we return to Santee and father held a council with the Indians at home. And made his report of his findings at wakpaipaksan. Told them of the wonderful country for agriculture, hunting, and trapping. And told them all those who wished can go there."

Joseph Rogers, Son of Kangisapa

During the winter of 1868-1869 there was much snow, providing bitter isolation on the prairie reservation. For approximately three months, many Dakota families sat around their fires and discussed the possibility of leaving the reservation to take their own *makoce oicu* 'land taken, homesteads.' The "feeling of uncertainty" about the future of the reservation, the delay in allotment of individual farms, and the events of the past seven years weighed heavily in their ultimate decision.

The Migration Begins

In the last week of *Wicatawi* 'the raccoon moon, February' of 1869, *Kangisapa* 'black crow,' his family and 10 to 25 other Dakota families said farewell to relatives and friends. With much anticipation and apprehension, they left the Santee Reservation for a new, independent life at the *wakpaipaksan* 'bend in the river.' Without *canpahmihma* 'wood-that-rolls, wagons,' they used *sungwakinihupa* 'ponies to drag lodge poles' piled with their canvas tents, possessions, and small children. Since some of the families had but one horse and others had none, the men, women, and older children walked for the duration of their 130 mile journey.

After crossing the *Minisose* 'Missouri River' on the ice, they started their trek into Dakota Territory at the mouth of the *Waseyusapiwakpa* 'red earth or Vermilion River,' west of present-day Vermillion, S.D. Following the *Waseyusapiwakpa*, traveling close to the frozen river, they camped within protection of the numerous trees along the banks. In the mornings and evenings, all gathered together to softly pray and sing hymns.



Dakota Prairie View

2002

On the fifth of *Istawicazayanwi* 'sore-eye moon, March,' after extinguishing their *peta* 'camp fires,' the families set out across the treeless, ice encrusted prairie for Fort Dakota on the Big Sioux. Midway between the two rivers the lightly falling snow changed to heavy pelting snow. The *tate wazyata* 'north wind' increased in intensity and the temperature dropped to twenty-five below zero. The dangerous *icamnatanka* 'big storm or blizzard,' the greatest fear of the Dakota at this time of year, had quickly come down upon them. Some of the

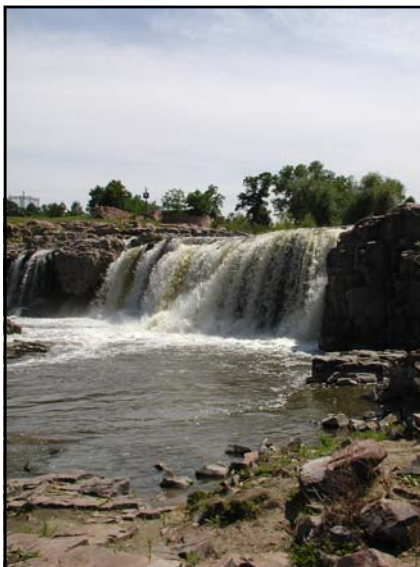
group hurried on to reach shelter along the river, and others “buried themselves in snow drifts” until the *icamnatanka* had passed.

One of the eldest of the Dakota women, *Owancatowin* ‘Blue All Over,’ weakened by age and the elements was overcome with exhaustion. Unable to walk through the rapidly mounting drifts, and unable to see through the blinding horizontal-blowing snow, *Owancatowin* laid down four miles from the fort. With *cante sica* ‘sad heart or sorrow’ her husband covered the woman with blankets and continued on with the pony to set up their *tipi* near the fort. On his return, the Dakota man located the blankets that covered his wife, but *Owancatowin* “had disappeared.” When the storm subsided the following morning, the families searched all day for the missing woman. Finally, she was found “sitting on bare ground, with her hands to her mouth, frozen stark and stiff.”

The migrating Dakota were greatly saddened by the loss of the *kunsi* ‘grandmother.’ She would be sincerely missed and remembered as a cherished part of the Dakota *oyate* ‘people or nation.’ The rest of the journey would bring a flood of memories of *Owancatowin*, and former life in their homeland of Minnesota before the conflict of 1862.

When the tired and somber families reached the Big Sioux River, they camped on *wita* ‘an island’ above the *minihinhe* ‘waterfalls,’ a short distance from Fort Dakota. Certainly, with all that had occurred in the past few days, discussion around their campfires would have been about the continuation of their experiment in freedom. Would *Owancatowin* want them to go forward? Did they make the right decision to leave?

Falls of the Big Sioux River
Sioux Falls, SD 2002

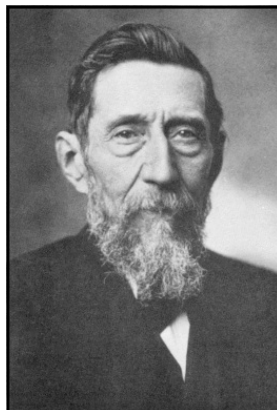


The commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel John M. Duffy, provided the migrating Dakota “a lot of food and other good things to eat.” Col. Duffy later wrote in his journal of Fort Dakota’s “Record of Events” that “nothing of interest has occurred during the month. Many destitute Indians have passed through on the way to their reservations. And, in some cases, have been supplied with rations, in accordance with instructions from the Secretary of War.” They also received “a lot of groceries” from C. K. Howard, the storekeeper. While recovering near the fort, they heard the news that a *wasicu* ‘white man’ had also lost his life in the storm.

When it was safe to travel again, the Dakota families continued on their journey to *Wakpaipaksan*. On their arrival, they lived in a cluster of *tipi* and dugouts until logs could be cut and small homes constructed. Their faith had gotten them to their new home, and they were determined to stay.

On March 11, 1869, Julia LaFramboise wrote to Stephen R. Riggs from Santee Agency, “John [Williamson] got started the next Monday after writing you . . . Very soon after they started, the Indians commenced going down below looking for employment and many of them going over to the Big Sioux. He heard of one woman freezing to death, somewhere between Yankton and the Big Sioux. I suppose that a good many more than half of the Indians are gone. Many of them say they want to go to the Big Sioux so as to pick out a good piece of land.”

Rev. John P. Williamson
Missionary to the Dakota



John P. Williamson, “feeling a call to preach the gospel to the Yankton Indians,” arrived with his family at the Yankton Agency in March 19, 1869. He would be under the jurisdiction of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The ice on the Missouri opened the next day, making travel across the river more difficult for the rest of the year. Even though John was now at a different reservation, he would continue to give support, both as a minister and as a friend, to the break-away community of Dakota on the Big Sioux River.

Wakpaipaksan Church Organized

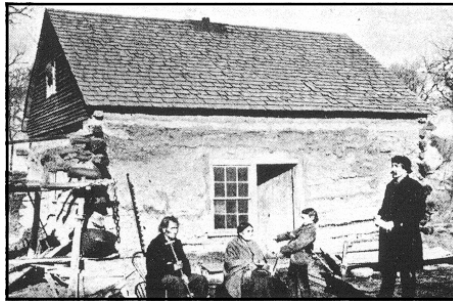
On the last Tuesday of *Psinhnaketuwi* 'the moon in which the Dakota lay up rice to dry' or September, Rev. John P. Williamson started on *oicimani* 'a journey of purpose' from the Yankton Agency to the settlement on the Big Sioux. Rev. Williamson would later write Governor J. A. Burbank that the purpose of his trip was to "further their spiritual interests." He was accompanied by Rev. Artemas *Ehnamani*. The other religious leader at Santee, Titus *Icaduze*, was unable to make the trip because he did not have a *sunkawakan* 'spirit-dog or horse' and thought he best remain with the dwindling congregation at the Pilgrim Church. Crossing the *Minisose* 'Missouri River,' probably on one of the ferry boats that transported travelers, they followed the opposite side of the river almost as far as the capital of Dakota Territory at Yankton.

After spending time at Yankton in the morning, they trekked on for about 25 miles along the Fort Dakota Military Road, a wagon cart path that ran from the capital to the fort at Sioux Falls. They came upon a camp of *tipi topa* 'four lodges' of Dakota also going to the Big Sioux. Williamson and *Ehnamani* visited with the group and spent the night at their camp.

The following day, they proceeded for 35 miles, passing *wicowazi nonpa* 'two families' also headed for the Big Sioux. After spending a restless night in the cold and rain, they reached Fort Dakota in the morning and observed a considerable settlement of "whites."

Continuing on along the river trail for 6 miles, they stopped to camp when they met two former members of the Mission Church at Santee, James Dickey and his father-in-law. The Dakota men offered to share their meager meal and requested that they have a *wodaka* 'talk or counsel' with them. As the smoke from the camp fire rose around them, the ministers spoke of God's eternal love for all people. When they had finished their talk, the Dakota men showed their gratitude with a *taku ituhanpi* 'give away or gift' of \$4.00 for their ministry.

Akipa 'to meet'
Dakota Log Home
Bend in the River



In the crisp autumn air on Saturday morning, Williamson and *Ehnamani* quickly continued on along the river. With the dry leaves of the cottonwood trees crunching beneath the hooves of their ponies, they

finally reached the *ipaksan* 'bend', about 35 miles above the *minihinhe* 'waterfalls'. On their arrival, they saw "about two dozen families congregated at the *ipaksan*." Some of the families had erected log homes, while others still lived in the canvas lodges that were issued to them at the Santee Reservation.

As word spread among the Dakota of their appearance, many gathered outdoors under the barren trees near the river for a sermon and a "class meeting' before nightfall. Two women, Emma *Waskuyeca* and Elizabeth *Tateoanjanwin*, were received on profession of faith; and three, *Wahinkpe*, *Mazaiyotankewin*, and *Siyowahde*, were received after transferring their membership from the Episcopal Church.

The worshipers dug deep into their well-worn garments and produced a monetary offering of \$23.79, a large amount from a people whose income was doubtful at best. This sum would form the foundation for the new church that would continue to grow and flourish for generations to come.



Wakpaipaksan River View

2002

On Sunday, with nearly all the Dakota settlers present, Rev. Williamson administered The Lord's Supper. Through eating the bread and drinking the wine, the Dakota would "receive the sustaining presence of Christ, remember God's covenant promise, and pledge their obedience anew." Rev. Williamson later stated that "there was a good degree of interest" in partaking of the sacraments he administered.

At a meeting on Monday, October 3, a total of *opa wikcemnatopa sanpa topa* '47 members' humbly united to form a holy covenant. Rev. Williamson suggested the name *Wakpaipaksan Okodakiciye* 'The Church at the River Bend,' and it was unanimously approved. Many were overcome with emotion as *nape tawa Wakantanka* 'God's hands' reached down and touched each one. Even though doubt as to their future was ever present, *cante owasin* 'all hearts' were strong. They were "holding on to their new faith," meeting regularly on the Sabbath before they were formally organized. Many remembered *Owancatowin*

and her struggle to reach this place. Like the reunion of Dakota prisoners and families when they all arrived at Niobrara, this day was a day of *woiyuskin* 'gladness,' but also a day of *woiyokisica* 'sadness' at the loss of those, like *Owancatowin*, who did not survive.

From the Pilgrim Church, 39 united in the formation of the new church by stating their names for the roll. They were a people in transition, with names part English and part Dakota: Williamson *Owancamaza* Rogers and his wife *Mazahowastewin*, Philip *Mahpiyawicasta* and his wife *Hinnajinwin*, *Tawakanhdiota* and his wife *Mazatokahewin*, *Matogi* and his wife *Hehotawin*, *Tunkanahnamani* and his wife *Pahomniwin*, *Wakanhdisapa* and his wife *Icagowin*, John *Mahpiya* and his wife *Wakanhdiyahewin*, *Mazaiheyedan* and his wife *Hupadutawin*, Stephen *Huntkamaza* and his wife *Mazatiwin*, *Tatecanhpi* and his wife *Canhdeska*, *Iyotangmani* and his wife *Tatiyopahdawin*, *Wasuhdiheya* and his wife *Makahdgewin*, *Tiyohomnipi* and his wife *Apaksin*, James Dickey *Akicitamaza* and his wife *Mahpiyahdinapewin*, Joseph *Wicahcamaza* and his wife *Hdayamani*, *Hokagopi*, *Ohiyewin* or Mrs. *Wahinkpe*, *Tiojanjanwin*, *Hupataninwin*, *Apaha*, *Tipiwakanwin* or Mrs. David Faribault, *Mazaskaskanskanwin*, *Mazayusdohewin*, and *Makayumniwin*. The five that were received on Saturday completed the list.

Rev. Williamson discussed the issue of electing a pastor, but it was set aside for another time when no selection was made. He advised that they "be ready to make a choice at the first opportunity." The new congregation elected three elders that had formerly served at the Pilgrim Church, *Mahpiyawicasta*, *Owancamaza*, and *Wicahcamaza*. They would lead in Divine worship during the coming *waniyetu* 'winter,' until one of the men was chosen as *wicasta wakan* 'holy man or minister.'

During their stay at *Wakpaipaksan*, Williamson and *Ehnamani* visited with the families and observed the conditions at the settlement. Williamson described the *ipaksan* as a horseshoe bend of about 2 miles, with settlers "all around the bend and above and below for several miles." Because the Dakota that arrived in the spring and summer had taken most of the claims along the *ipaksan* and timber was in short supply, those going to the Big Sioux now plan on settling about *Titankahe* 'the place of the great summer lodge' and on the Big Sioux near it." The settlement near *Titankahe* would be 20 or 30 miles above the *ipaksan*. Some were disappointed that there was adequate timber above the *ipaksan* but the fertile bottom lands were prone to flooding, and they would have to "build a mile or two" from the river. Rev. Williamson speculated that "they may want a separate church there." He also noted that there were white settlers near *Wakpaipaksan*, and two stores. The Dakota were industrious in their preparation for the coming winter, but Williamson feared they would still "suffer for food."

In a letter written from Greenwood at the end of the month, Rev. Williamson wrote to his father that some who had settled in this new community, former members, were not present and "others had not arrived yet." He predicted that within a year there would be twice as many members.

Early Church Growth Continues

The Dakota men, almost all members of the church at *Wakpaipaksan*, traveled to the Dakota territorial capitol at Yankton to meet with the governor and explain their desire to file for homesteads.

On the sixth day of June, 1870, 25 Dakota men signed a *wayaatanin wowapi* 'manifest paper,' a document declaring that they "have been members of the tribe of Santee Sioux Indians, but have voluntarily abandoned their relations with such tribe with the determination of becoming Citizens of the United States; and they hereby assert and declare that they have no further share or interest of any kind in any of the annuities, exemptions, provisions or any other benefits secured to its members by any acts of Congress or treaty stipulations." The documents were witnessed and certified by John A. Burbank, 2nd Governor of Dakota Territory. The Governor accompanied the Dakota men to the land office at Vermillion to assist them in perfecting their titles.

On June 10, Governor Burbank wrote to E. S. Parker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that 38 Dakota have settled on claims "on the Sioux River, above Sioux Falls, in the Territory," and "several others from the same tribe have only awaited the recognition of the right of Indians to take Homesteads to make preparations for leaving the tribe on following their example."

Shortly after the Dakota men returned from Vermillion, Dr. Thomas S. Williamson and Rev. Artemas *Ehnamni* arrived at the new settlement of Dakota homesteads in the beginning of the month of *Canpasapawi* 'the moon when the choke cherries are ripe, July.' It was the season of high humidity, with *caponka optaye* 'swarms of mosquitoes' along the river. Between the individual log homes with small patches of vegetables were expanses of wild flowers, blue bent grass and weeds almost as tall as a grown man.

On the first Sabbath of the month, July 3, 1870, under the shade of the willow arbor, Dr. Williamson administered the Lord's Supper to *wikcemna sakowin sanpa sakowin '77'* devout communicants of the Bend in the River Church. He reported to Jonathan A. Burbank, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, later in the month that "among the men whom I remember to have seen on that occasion, are three whose names are appended as Santee chiefs to the treaty of 1868." He referred to the Dakota settlers on the Big Sioux as a "semi-civilized Christian people." Dr. Williamson had worked among the Dakota for the past thirty-five years. Of those now residing at *Wakpaipaksan*, he informed Mr. Burbank that they "very generally read God's word in their own language, and a man may travel or reside among them with as little risk of losing anything by theft as among any people." Dr. Williamson requested agricultural implements and subsistence for the Dakota settlers on the Big Sioux until they were self-sustaining.

At the July 3rd service, Dr. Williamson and Rev. *Ehnamni* received the following as members from the Pilgrim Church: *Oyeicasnamani* and

his wife *Mahpiyaiyotakewin*, *Cotankainape* and his wife *Wamduska*, *Wakaniskadmani* and his wife *Hinziwin*, *Wanwakankida* and his wife *Mahpiyahdinapewin*, *Tawahinkpeota* and his wife *Napewakanhdiwin*, *Anpetuiyotake* and his wife *Oyesotawin*, *Unktomiska* and his wife *Mahpiyadutawin*, *Napewamnican* and his wife *Tacanhpisapa*, *Tunkansaiciye*, Charles *Topahotonna*, Fannie *Mahpiyanasdohewin*, Emma *Ma-zaicicasnawin*, *Manpiyaicaduzewin*, *Sinawakanhdiwin*, *Anpetuwakanwin*, *Tunkanokiyewin*, *Hapistina*, *Sinatokiyewin*, *Wicanhpiwastewin*, *Makaakaniwakewin*, *Piyaiyotankewin*; received from the Episcopal Church: *Tasunkamaza* and his wife *Wakaninajinwin*, *Wakinyanwaste* and his wife *Mahpiyahdegawin*, *Tatehenakewin*; and received on profession of faith: *Tunkanoicagewastedan*, *Tacandisotewin*, and Mary *Wanska*, who was also baptized. The following infants were baptized: Daniel, child of *Tawakanhdiota*; Nancy, child of *Kinyaahiyaye*; George, child of *Wakanhdisapa*; and Emma, child of *Makaakaniwakewin*. The following marriages were solemnized: *Tasunkamaza* and *Wakaninajinwin*; *Tacanhpisapa* and *Tacanhdisotawin*; *Tatecanhpi* and *Cankdeska*; *Icahape* and Agnes *Nagiahdiyahdewin*. At the same church meeting, an election was held to select a Pastor, but a selection was not made.

Before leaving, Dr. Williamson paid a visit to the nearest white family living near the Dakota. He asked the man if the Dakota annoyed him. The white farmer replied, "No, for two years that we have lived here, we have not lost a dime's worth by them. I never had or expected to have better neighbors."

During the month of *Psinhnaketuwi* 'the moon when rice is laid up to dry, September,' Rev. John P. Williamson and Titus *Icaduze*, from the Pilgrim Church, visited the growing congregation. They held meetings for two days at the *cankagatipi* 'log home' of *Owancamaza* 'Iron All Over, Williamson O. Rogers.' On September 17, 14 were received from Pilgrim Church: *Heinkpa* and his wife *Tasinatowin*, *Wanna* and his wife *Tatenawakanwin*, *Paksiksan* and his wife *Mazayuhomniwin*, Alice *Ah-nahiyayewin*, *Oecitiduta*, *Mahpiyayewin*, *Wakankoyakewin*, *Tunkanh-yaywin*, *Imaniwin*, *Tunkanimaniwin*, *Wasuicagewin*; three were received from the Episcopal Church: *Kinyahiyaye*, *Winyan*, *Koyakewin* or Mrs. *Hdayamani*; and nine were received on profession of faith: Peter *Tatehota*, Edgar *Tacankumaza*, Joseph *Nonpaicage*, *Wakahididan*, *Tatewanwin*, *Mahpiyaojanjanwin*, *Anpetuwinohinca*, *Tatewastewin*, and *Oyedutawin*.

A special meeting was held for the election of a *wicasta wakan* 'holy man, pastor.' On the second ballot, *Wicahincamaza* received 57 votes and *Mahpiyawicasta* received 21. Their selection of *Wicahincamaza* would be put before the Dakota Presbytery for approval. This was indeed *anpetu wastehinca* 'a very good day.' The fledgling congregation would now have a *wicasta wakan*, one of their own people. *Wicahincamaza* (Joseph Graham) was officially installed on September 23, 1870.

Death of Wicahincamaza

The following article about the death of *Wicahincamza* 'Iron old man' is from the *lapi Oaye* 'Word Carrier,' published at the Santee Normal Training School in June of 1871. Originally written only in Dakota, it was translated into English by Rev. Sidney Byrd in 2002.

Wicahincamaza

"Some of you are now aware of the manner of this man's death. He served as a *hunkayapi* 'elder' for many years and preached to countless numbers of men. He was finally recommended to be an ordained *wicasta wakan* 'minister,' and then at the completion of three additional months [of service] his name should have been reported in the *wotanin wowapi* 'newspaper.'

Wicahincamaza grew up on the *Wakpa Minisota* 'whitish water river, or Minnesota River' among a band called *Heyatatonwan* 'dwellers of a village back from a river, [Cloud Man's village].' He was one of those incarcerated at *Mayasapa* 'black banks or Mankato.' Then, while in prison, he found Jesus [was converted] and was baptized there. When elders were selected, he remained in office as long as they stayed at *Wita Wakan* 'sacred island or Rock Island, Davenport, Iowa. When they were released, he was one of those who were relocated to the *Minitanka* 'high water, or Niobrara River.' There the congregation was reorganized and he was again elected as an elder.

Three years later, some Dakota expressed a desire to live as *wasicu* 'white men,' and migrated to *Wakpaipaksan* 'bend in the river.' They acquired *makoce icu* 'to take land, homesteads' like the white men. Iron Old Man was a member of that group.

The following summer, a congregation was organized and he was one of three elected Elders. A year later, a *wicasta wakan* 'minister' was to be chosen and he was the one whose name was presented. At a gathering of all the ministers, the recommendation was considered. It was decided at their next meeting, the following summer, his ordination would be confirmed. But *Wakantanka* 'God,' never-the-less conceiving a different plan, returned him to heaven and claimed him as His own.

His English name was Joseph W. Graham. I do not know his exact age, but he was a member of the young men who were *kuwapi wasakapi* 'strong followers.' He may have been a little beyond forty years old. When he died, men who remained on earth and depended on him and loved him dearly were all deeply saddened. The congregation where this man was expected to preach had been very patient, but because they would not see him again on earth, there was *nina*

cantesicapi 'great sadness in their hearts.' Also there were many different men who knew his name. He was known as a man who was ambitious, kind hearted, and could follow. He was thus remembered and now there is much sadness of hearts. While with all who remain on earth there is sorrow. I am convinced there is much rejoicing with all the *mahpiya ekta oyate* 'hosts of heaven.' When a soul departs from this world and returns to the dwelling of God, all the angels will sing songs of joy and the *Wowapi Wakan* 'Bible' also confirms this. In death, those who die in the Lord will receive His blessing.

Then a man sent me a letter and told me how he [Iron Old Man] died. His name is John Goodteacher. This is the way he tells it.

Mihunkawanji 'One of my relatives,' with this letter I will tell you something, because I am the one who knows about it all completely. Thus, I will tell it as I know it. On the date of Friday, April 7th, *Wicahincamza* 'Iron Old Man' and *Wanwakankida* 'Believes His Arrows Sacred [Joseph Weston]' both died from the cold [froze to death]. Very early in the morning they departed out of their homes and did not return from their trip. Then, on the day of May 1st, we found them. They were in terrible shape. Iron Old Man especially had nothing covering his body. His *onzeoge* 'pantaloons or trousers' were thrown away and he wore only his *mahenunpi ska* 'white underwear.' He wore a piece of cloth and his footwear was totally beyond repair. Both died horrible deaths. This is the way they perished. They were pursuing six elk. Thus, they traveled a far distance, and there was an *icamnatanka* 'big blizzard.' It is likely they died on Saturday, April 8, 1871, according to the calendar. They died here on this *makoce* 'place or land.'

There is a military post at Red Willow Creek, perhaps also known as Little Redstone. It is called Fort James, Dakota Territory, from there directly east of Sioux Falls, Territory of Dakota, is where they died. From Fort James, Territory of Dakota, about twenty miles or less is their place of death. Thus, on this day I will now take my sons home by myself. I have oxen and a wagon. I will return them with reverence to the *Wakpaipaksan* 'bend of the river.' In this way, they will rest in peace in their own land.

I am here with W. R. All Iron (W. R. Rogers) and we will transport them to their home. Recently, two men have died and no one will be able to view their bodies. But, we will always be able to observe the place of their deceased bodies. We prayed to *Wakantanka* 'God' and He had compassion, so we were able to locate the bodies in a reasonable manner. For this reason, we sing songs of praise to *Wakan-tanka*."

River Bend Meeting House

At a Dakota Presbytery church meeting held at *Wakapaipaksan* on June 24, 1871, missionaries encouraged the Dakota congregation to go forward with a *tipiwakan* or meeting house "if they could build nothing better than a log church." Two days later, another meeting was held to select a *wicasta wakan* 'minister.' The church members nominated *Ow-ancamaza* and *Wakaniskadmani*, with *Owancamaza* (Williamson Rogers) receiving the majority of votes. The call was presented to *Ow-ancamaza*. He "expressed his willingness" to accept and, after examination, was licensed to preach as a candidate for the Ministry.

On August 1, after logs were partly cut for the church, news was received that "Mr. J. W. Edwards of Marquette had contributed \$500 and the Second Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Ohio \$200, which would enable them to build a frame *tipiwakan* and so they ceased cutting logs." Under the guidance of their missionary and friend, Rev. John P. Williamson, the Dakota men constructed the meeting house with milled lumber they hauled by wagon from Windom, Minnesota.



River Bend Meeting House

ca. 1916

Because more families continued to make the move from the Santee Reservation, the River Bend Meeting House or *Tipiwakan Wakpaipaksan* served the congregation only until 1873, when a larger church was built on a hill about 1 mile northeast.

The government purchased the meeting house from the River Bend Church in 1873, at a cost of \$1,000, to be used as a day school for the Indian children. Money was appropriated from the government to purchase desks, books, a school bell, and supplies. The first teacher for the day school was P. A. Vannice, followed by Marshall Vogan, Rev. John Eastman, and Rev. Hosea Locke.

During the time the Indians settled near the Flandrau town site,

white settlers also took homesteads in the same area. With the influx of both Indian and white settlers, the meeting house served the community of Flandreau in many ways during the early years. Besides its use as a government day school, classes were held for the children of the white settlers in the same building, until their own school was built in 1878. The meeting house served as a voting precinct for early elections.

Non-Indian churches, Second Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist, held services in the building before they constructed their own places of worship. A portion of the meeting house also served as temporary quarters in 1878 for Major W. H. Wasson, agent to the Flandreau Indians, and in 1879 for Rev. John Eastman.

In the Commission of Indian Affairs annual report of 1885 it stated, "The government property consisted of a school house, doctor's office, and warehouse. During the year the school-house has been repaired, painted, and made comfortable for both teacher and pupils. The grounds have also been enclosed by a substantial fence, neatly painted, and ornamented with shade trees." In 1888, the building received a new roof.

The meeting house served as a day school until 1893, when the Riggs Institute, later called Flandreau Indian School, was built approximately 1/2 mile north. In March, Rev. H. Locke, who was promoted to principal teacher in the new Indian industrial school, transferred his old class of students to the new quarters.



For many years the building served as a ration house for the Indians, and as a place to leave their horses and wagons when they came to town.

Church Constructed

During the middle of *Wasutonwi* 'the harvest moon, August,' John P. Williamson traveled from the Yankton Reservation to *Wakpaipaksan* with a plan. He made the journey to "stir up the Indians to do more towards building a new church."

Arriving on Sunday, August 17th, John was successful in encouraging the faithful Dakota church members to allow him to purchase materials for them to build a new, larger *tipiwakan* 'house of worship.' They were "ambitious" to have a building large enough for all the Dakota families that had migrated to the *ipaksan*. They wanted a fine building, "common logs would not do." The \$1,000 from the sale of the meeting house to the government for use as a day school would be used. John was successful in getting 18 men to pledge their labor for hauling the lumber and building supplies. The amount for their *htani* 'labor' was estimated at \$400.

David Faribault wrote to Moses N. Adams at Sisseton Agency on August 26th that he had "just met" Mr. Williamson coming to the post office at his trading post, and John told him he was on his way to Marshall, Minnesota. From Marshall, John may have taken the train to Winona.

On September 1, John P. Williamson wrote to E. P. Smith, Commission of Indian Affairs that he was in Winona, Minnesota to purchase lumber for the new church. A former center of Dakota life on the Mississippi River, Winona was now a prospering lumber town. Numerous lumber companies operated large sawmills, planing mills, and millwork shops. Because of the lack of soft wood in the immediate area, white pine logs were transported from Wisconsin on the Chippewa River and the St. Croix in Minnesota, then on the Mississippi to Winona.

John selected a lumber company and placed the order for a building to be 24 feet by 50 feet. The purchase order was for large floor timbers, wood for constructing the walls, roof, and floor, wood shingles and siding, eight milled windows with arched tops, wainscoting and pine paneling for walls and ceiling, kegs of square nails in several sizes, and lumber for a bell tower that would rise high above the prairie.

When Rev. Williamson discussed the new building with the congregation, a vote was taken where it would be built. The sacred site selected was on the highest hill overlooking the *Wakpaipaksan*. It was the *cokaya* 'center' of the new Dakota community. Their homesteads stretched up and down the river for many miles. A fifteen acre parcel of land was purchased for thirty dollars from members Francis and Anna Hawley.

On his return John hired a local carpenter. P. A. Vannice, the government school teacher, and the male church members helped with the construction.

The lumber and supplies were put on the Winona & St. Peter Railway and transported to the end of the line at Marshall, Minnesota. In 1862, the railroad was constructed west as far as Marshall to “improve access to the river for grain shipments.”

When the freight arrived, the Dakota men loaded the building materials onto their ox carts at the railway station. How proud they must have felt as the heavily laden wagon train of carts trudged in single file along the dirt road from Marshall. They made this 80 mile trip many times before to take grain to be milled, but this time their hearts were full. Their anticipation for the new church probably mounted as they discussed the building around the campfires at night. The round trip to the village of Marshall took several days. Often they stopped to camp on John Moore’s land east of Lake Benton. John was a mixed-blood Dakota who was a member of the church at *Wakpaipaksan*.



First Presbyterian Church

ca. 1906

Unlike the first meeting house that was hastily built, this building would be a real church with high, arched windows and a rising steeple pointing the way to *Wakantanka* ‘The Creator, God.’ It would be a building they could truly be proud of – a *tipiwakan* they could call their own.

A trench was dug around the perimeter and a foundation of concrete was put down. Upon this base several rows of quartzite and field stones were piled, with the cracks filled with mortar. The quartzite was hauled with their ox carts from Pipestone or Dell Rapids. The Dakota men worked along side the white carpenter, missionary, and school teacher “with enthusiasm.”

Dakota Presbytery Meeting
First Presbyterian Church
Date Uncertain



The church members donated \$175 for a fine bell. John Williamson ordered the 400 pound bell from one of the foundries in Troy, New York. Additional items added to the new church were a wood stove, kerosene lanterns, and make shift seating of benches and chairs. The amount of \$200 would be raised later to seat the congregation in appropriate pews.

On completion of the “neat and commodious” building, a service of dedication was held. Their voices soared as Dakota hymns were sung in the new building. The songs they had learned in prison and at the dreadful place called Crow Creek now had new meaning. As the waves of music poured over them, many wept openly. Certainly many would have thought, “Look at what we have accomplished! *Wakantanka* ‘God’ has heard his children. He has brought us to this *makoce* ‘place,’ and taken care of us. We are filled with *wapidapi* ‘gratitude.’”

*Wakantanka Taku nitawa
Tankaya qa ota;
Mahpiya kin eyahnake ca,
Maka kin he duowanca,
Mniowanca sbeya wanke cin,
Hena oyakihi.*

‘Many and great, O God, are thy works,
maker of earth and sky;
thy hands have set the heavens with stars;
thy fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at thy word the waters were formed;
deep seas obey they voice.’ - Dakota Hymn

Afterword

In the third week of July, 2003, a caravan of students and adults arrived from the North Presbyterian Church of St. Paul. It was the fourth year they journeyed to Flandreau with their pastor, Ellen Davis, to put on a Vacation Bible School for community members. When the classes concluded at noon, the students and adults worked on various projects to assist local churches. One of the projects was to put a first coat of exterior paint on the recently restored First Presbyterian Church.



As local church members worked along with the group from St. Paul, some imagined when the church was painted for the first time in 1873. The Dakota men did the painting, and the women set up a camp to prepare their meals and provide water.

The First Presbyterian Church of Flandreau has gracefully survived and enriched the entire community. Worship services have been held since it was constructed, making it the “oldest continuously used church in the state of South Dakota.”

The world around the historic church has changed vastly. However, the digital age even exists inside the restored church with a new sound system, Clavinova digital piano, and high efficiency furnace with air conditioning. The parking lot that once held oxcarts and ponies is now filled with SUV’s, vans, pickups and sports cars.

Some things have not changed since the day of that first service 130 years ago. The present congregation, descendants of the founders of this church, along with their spouses and children, and other Native Americans who have made Flandreau their home, still profess a strong belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Dakota hymns that were sung 130 years ago are still sung by the congregation. The love and compassion expressed by the founding members continues as today’s members go out into the community and quietly do God’s work.

On the completion of the restoration of the First Presbyterian Church, the congregation celebrated the fulfillment of a dream to preserve an important historic structure, and they also celebrated the fulfillment of an “experiment in faith” – a plan the first Dakota families dared to undertake in 1869, against great odds, and succeeded.

**130th Anniversary
1873—2003**

MILESTONES & MISCELLANEOUS

1876 John Eastman Installed

In 1875, Rev. John Eastman was licensed by Dakota Indian Presbytery. He served the First Presbyterian Church as a stated supply until September 1876, when he was ordained and installed as pastor. The sermon and ordaining prayer was given by John P. Williamson. Artemus *Ehnamni*, Thomas S. Williamson, and W. O. Rogers also took part in the service. There were about 150 Dakota adults at Rev. Eastman's ordination, all "dressed as white people." In July of 1906, he answered a call to serve the Goodwill Church on the Sisseton Reservation.

1877 Church Membership

The November issue of the *Iapi Oaye* listed the following statistics for the church at Flandreau: admission by profession, 1; membership, 132; baptism of infants, 12; Sunday school, 48; contributions, \$161.00.

1879 Dakota YMCA Organized

A chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association was organized at Flandreau on Sunday, April 27, 1879 on a one year trial basis. The young men planned to work together "to spread the gospel" and donate funds collected toward the mission fund.

A meeting was held on January 1, 1880 to evaluate the progress of the local organization called *Koska Okodakiciye* 'young men's association.' It was decided to continue and the following were elected as officers: Thomas Wakeman, Chairman; Gustavus Robertson, Vice-Chairman; and Charles Henry, Treasurer.

By 1885, there were eleven organizations with 141 members on the various Dakota reservations.

In 1886, Rev. John Eastman spoke at the national convention of the YMCA in St. Paul. He stated that, at the time the young men organized at Flandreau, "even though they did not have the YMCA constitution and rules to go by, they would work according to the words of Jesus and seek out the ways in which young men might benefit each other."

1892 Church Membership

The "History of the Dakota Presbytery," by the Committee Rev. Moses

N. Adams, Rev. John P. Williamson, and Rev. John B. Renville, listed the number of communicants at Flandreau First (*Wakpaipaksan*) Church at 112.

1916 Meeting House Moved to Indian School

The March 2, 1916 issue of the Moody County Enterprise reported that “an old land mark was removed from the city this week when the Indian school building [meeting house] in the north part of town was removed to the southeast corner of the Indian School grounds.” It was to be used again as a school for about 35 local Indian children, to “relieve the crowded school room and provide facilities for children below the fourth grade.”

1917 Death of Rev. John P. Williamson

A life-long friend of the Dakota people, Rev. John P. Williamson died at his residence in Greenwood, S. D. on the Yankton Reservation. The Moody County Enterprise of October 17 reported, “Rev. Williamson was a great worker among the Sioux Indians, being a missionary of the Presbyterian Church. He compiled an English-Dakota dictionary which has been recognized as a work of great merit and considered a standard publication.”

Rev. John Eastman spoke affectionately of his mentor at the funeral service. He said, “Whatever I am at this time, I owe to him, and I think of him as my father. Whatever I have wanted to know, I have asked of him, and he has told me. Whom shall I inquire of now? He, more than any one else had compassion on the Dakota people. He went with them in the early days, carrying his pack as they did theirs, oftentimes hungry and thirsty and tired, but he remained with them because he wanted to tell them the Good News.”

The funeral was held at the Presbyterian Church in Greenwood, under a large tent set up to accommodate the many Dakota people who came from several states.

1966 Church Designated “Oldest Continuously Used”

On September 22, 1965 Rev. Solomon G. Gruneich wrote to Will Robinson, Secretary of the South Dakota Historical Society, that he read an article in the Argus Leader indicating Mr. Robinson’s interest “in attempting to establish the oldest church edifice, now in use, in South Dakota.” Rev. Gruneich listed several sources that stated the First Presbyterian Church of Flandreau was the oldest continuously used church in South Dakota. He also stated that some believe the Ascen-

sion Church southwest of Sisseton was older by a few months, but has not been in continuous use.

Will Robinson wrote to Rev. Gruneich on September 23 that "he thought of the Flandreau Indian Church as possibly the oldest used standing church in the State," but he had no record of the date the church was actually erected. He requested that Rev. Gruneich locate the date from church records.

Rev. Gruneich responded to Will Robinson on February 1, 1966 that "Mr. Keith Wakeman, Clerk of Session of First Church, called me today and informed me that he found a statement in the Word Carrier, published at Niobrara, Nebraska by Rev. John P. Williamson and Dr. Stephen R. Riggs, that the Indian church building at Flandreau has now been completed and will be dedicated the first week in October, 1873." Rev. Gruneich informed Mr. Robinson that "the Flandreau Indian Church has been in continuous use ever since its construction. The congregation was organized on October 3, 1869."

On February 3, 1966 Will Robinson wrote to Rev. Gruneich, "I had not consulted the Word Carrier, but when I did I found that it also had disposed of the date of the dedication of the Ascension Church up north of Summit. It was on December 13, 1874, and your church is unquestionably the oldest church in the State still in such use."

1969 Centennial Observance

On Friday, October 3, 1969 a special evening service was held to observe the date of the 100th Anniversary of the organization of the First Presbyterian Church. The service included Holy Communion and presentations on the history of the church by Elder Grace Moore and Elder R. Keith Wakeman. Rev. Solomon G. Gruneich, Pastor, conducted the service with assistance from ministers of the Dakota Presbytery. Centennial greetings were given by the Second Presbyterian Church, Dr. Kenneth Neigh, General Secretary of the Board of National Missions, and Rev. Burton Blair, Moderator of the Presbytery of Sioux Falls. All attending were invited to a reception at the Second Presbyterian Church Chapel.

1978 Fellowship Hall Dedicated

On October 8, 1978, at 10:30 a.m. a service was held in celebration of the 109th Anniversary of the organization of the congregation and the dedication of the new Fellowship Hall. The service was conducted by Rev. Peter Vanderveen, Pastor, with the participation of Keith Wakeman, Rev. Floyd Hemminger, Rev. Sidney Byrd, and Rev. Simon Look-

ing Elk. Walter Jones, who acted as overseer during construction, presented the keys to the new Hall, and Pastor Vanderveen accepted the keys on behalf of the congregation.

The Fellowship Hall, a multi-purpose pole and steel type building, contains a large room which can handle 150 to 200 people and a modern kitchen to serve weddings, funerals, receptions, ladies aid, youth activities, Dakota Presbytery, and other church functions. The building also has two meeting rooms, two bathrooms, two furnaces and air conditions, and storage space. After 109 years the new Hall was eagerly awaited. One of the ladies whose father was among the first native pastors, stated, "I am glad to see this dream become a reality."

The Fellowship Hall was dedicated "in memory of all the former pastors and members who gave of their time to further the ministry of this church and to the glory of Almighty God, who has through his generous gifts made our dream become a reality."

In homage to the original members of the church, the multi-purpose building was named "*Wakpaipaksan* Hall." Following the service, a dinner was held in the new Hall and it was open for viewing by guests from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.

1989—1992 Restoration of River Bend Meeting House

By 1931, the first church built by the Dakota families and purchased by the Government for a day school had been remodeled for use as a residence at the Flandreau Indian School. Now known as "Building 59," it housed employees for the next fifty or sixty years until it deteriorated, and finally was used as a spook house for the Indian School children on Halloween.

When it was learned that Building 59 was to be demolished to make way for a new trades building at the Indian School, a group of concerned citizens representing the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, the First and Second Presbyterian Churches, and the Flandreau community organized under the name "Historical Building Preservation Society" to save the historic structure.

On approval of the Moody County Museum Board, the meeting house was moved to the museum grounds in the fall of 1989, about six blocks east of the original site. With the aid of early photographs of the building, labor from carpenters and volunteers, including a church group from Bonhomme Presbyterian Church of Chesterfield, Missouri, and with financial donations from the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and individuals, the River Bend Meeting House was carefully reconstructed.

After nearly 125 years, the original school bell was again placed at the top of the building. Through its exhibits, the River Bend Meeting House once more serves the community as a place of learning.

2002—2003 Restoration of First Presbyterian Church

In early 2002, the members of the First Presbyterian received the news that the church would be receiving a state grant to restore the building. After meeting with the Governor, a wish list was formulated to decide what should be restored or reconstructed to the 1873 appearance, and what new innovations would be added. After discussion, it was decided to include recessed lighting in the ceiling and kerosene lanterns on the walls. A new furnace would include air conditioning, eliminating the need for ceiling fans. It was hoped that the original wood floor painted maroon could be used again, but plywood had been nailed over it. Removing the plywood would be a tremendous heat loss, so maroon carpeting would be installed.

Before demolition actually began, one of the walls was opened to see the original materials. After a layer of paneling was removed, another layer of pressed wood paneling was evident. Beneath the paneling there were 5 layers of wallpaper that had several coats of paint on them. When the wallpaper was removed there was a layer of canvas that covered the last layer of pine planking and wainscoting. When it became clear that the interior walls would be pine planking and wainscoting, a contractor was selected to begin work in the summer. Early photographs showed the building exterior had white wood siding with brown trim.

State offices made arrangements with the Department of Corrections to allow inmates in Sioux Falls to do the demolition work on the church. As it turned out, the inmates worked so efficiently they were also used for the construction work. Under the supervision of a foreman from the construction company, they were eager to get to work each day. Additional inmates in Sioux Falls stripped, repaired, and re-glazed the arched windows, and stripped and repainted the pine pews.

After a layer of two inch stucco, and chicken wire, were removed from the exterior, new cedar siding was applied. The old roof was entirely removed and replaced. Three-dimensional shingles were selected to look like the original wood shakes.

When it was learned that the bell tower was unsafe and needed to be completely replaced, not repaired, it was necessary to seek additional funding. The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe generously responded to fund the unplanned expense. Victor Allen, a member of the tribe, sand-

blasted and painted the bell before it was reinstalled in the new belfry. A loud cheer was given by church members when the belfry was lifted by a crane to complete the major construction work on the building.



First Presbyterian Church Restored 2002 -2003

At the end of December, 2002, a dinner was held in the unfinished church. Members of the church session presented each inmate that worked on the church with a colorful star quilt. The entire congregation, and community members, thanked the men for a job well done.

Final touches added to the building included exterior decking, steps, handicapped ramp, exterior lighting, and landscaping. A new sign cast in bronze to commemorate the 1873 construction, and the 2003 restoration completion, was installed.

The session selected Sunday, August 24, 2003 as the day of re-dedication of the restored historical structure. It would also be a celebration of 130 years of worship in the building.

Restored Interior with Original Pine Pews

2003



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Mission School
River Bend Meeting House
ca. 1890

Rev. Hosea Locke
with Students



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Missionaries Sent Out from the First Presbyterian Church

Joseph Blacksmith	Solomon Flute
William Flute	Robert Hopkins
George Hillers	Joseph Day
Daniel Weston	Owen Lovejoy
Jessie Wakeman	Steven Merien
Grace & Oliver Moore	

Ministers Sent Out from the Church

William B. Rogers	Joseph Graham
John Eastman	Joseph Rogers
John Flute	Samuel K. Weston
Samuel Rouillard	John Wakeman
Peter Thompson	Harry C. Jones
Cecil Corbett	

Register of Pastors

<u>Name</u>	<u>When Installed</u>	<u>Dismissed</u>
Joseph Graham	Sept. 23, 1870	Apr. 8, 1871
Williamson Rogers	June 23, 1871	Sept. 18, 1875
John Eastman	Sept. 16, 1876	July 1, 1906
Lewis DeCoteau	Dec. 13, 1908	Mar. 28, 1909
Samuel K. Weston	May 9, 1909	Sept. 6, 1909
Samuel K. Weston	Apr. 24, 1910	Sept. 27, 1914
John R. Wakeman	June 1917	Sept. 1, 1918
Joseph Rogers	Sept. 1918	Nov. 1, 1918
John Flute	May 1, 1924	Mar. 31, 1925
Albert Heminger	July 1928	Sept. 1933
Amos Oneroad	May 1934	Oct. 1934
Simon Kirk	Oct. 1934	June 1935
Harry C. Jones	Oct. 1935	Apr. 1947
John Frenier	July 1947	Apr. 17, 1948
Abraham Crawford	Oct. 1948	Apr. 1952
H. B. Phillips	May 25, 1953	Nov. 30, 1956
Steve Spider	Nov. 30, 1956	Sept. 1959
Howard Orcutt	Oct. 1, 1959	1960
Cecil Corbett	Aug. 21, 1961	Sept. 1963
Solomon G. Gruneich	Jan. 5, 1964	Sept. 1, 1972
Peter Vanderveen	Nov. 20, 1973	Sept. 15, 1981
Irving Tang	Oct. 9, 1981	July 26, 1982
Sidney Byrd	Sept. 16, 1982	May 15, 1984
Herbert Crawford	May 15, 1984	Jan. 1, 1988
Everett Harrison & Irving Tang	Nov. 20, 1988	Jan. 15, 1989
Danelle Crawford & Irving Tang	May 27, 1989	
Ron McKinney	Aug. 18, 2002	

During the 1990's, without an installed Pastor,
the pulpit was filled by the following Ministers
and Elder:

Al Kitto	Clifford Canku	Mike Simon
Danelle McKinney	Pearl Wakeman	Sidney Byrd
Paula Armstrong, Elder	Everett Harrison	Ron McKinney