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THE LAC QUI PARLE INDIAN MISSION

The Sioux mission station at Lac qui Parle was founded one hundred years ago in July, 1835, by Dr. Thomas Smith Williamson and Alexander Huggins. The establishment was supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions as one of several stations that constituted the Dakota mission. For almost twenty years, until the post was abandoned in the fall of 1854, Williamson and his colleagues made every effort to bring spiritual salvation and the best elements of the white man's civilization to the tribes who lived on the upper reaches of the Minnesota River. The story of the missionaries' struggle against hostile forces is one of courage and of perseverance, if not of victory, and their limited achievement was due to no lack of zeal or of Christian idealism. Although they failed to bring about a peaceful adjustment of the relations between the Sioux and the white settlers, the treaty stipulations that they proposed to the government were statesmanlike, and had such provisions been put into effect the bloodshed of 1862 might perhaps have been averted.

Dr. Williamson was born in South Carolina in the year 1800. Although his father was a Presbyterian pastor, Thomas chose the medical profession, received the degree of doctor of medicine at Yale in 1824, and practiced for some years in Ohio. The call of the mission field was strong, however, and in 1833 he and his wife offered their services to the American Board. Volunteers for work

among the Indians were not numerous, for the foreign field offered greater attractions, and the Reverend David G. Greene, who represented the board in its supervision of mission activities among the western and southern tribes, sent the doctor to the upper Mississippi Valley to investigate conditions and report upon possible locations for a new mission. Williamson journeyed to the West in 1834, and visited tribes of the Des Moines River Valley and the Sioux of the Mississippi and the St. Peter's or Minnesota rivers. He detailed to Greene certain reasons why he preferred to settle among the Sauk, but urged other considerations in favor of the Sioux. "There is no other tribe so easy of access to missionaries who have at the same time so little intercourse with our frontier settlements," he wrote, with reference to the Sioux near Fort Snelling. The choice of a location at Lac qui Parle was forecast in his comments on Joseph Renville and the need of missionary work among the Indians living near him. "My mind was deeply impressed," he wrote, "with the idea that a missionary ought speedily to be found in his neighborhood."¹ After receiving his reports and one from the Reverend Cutting Marsh, who was also exploring the upper Mississippi, the board determined to send Williamson to the Sioux country. There he would be able to work near Jedediah Stevens, who had been transferred from the Stockbridge mission near Green Bay to Fort Snelling. On September 9 Greene notified Williamson of the decision of the board and directed him to get in touch with Alexander Huggins, a native of Ohio who, with his wife, was to accompany Williamson as a farmer; and Sarah Poage, Mrs. Williamson's sister, who was to serve as a teacher. Greene hoped that both families might make the trip to Fort Snelling in the fall of 1834, but the necessary

¹ Williamson to Greene, June 12, 1834. Unless otherwise noted, all letters and reports cited are in the archives of the American Board in the custody of the librarian at the Congregational House, Boston. The Minnesota Historical Society has copies of all documents from these archives used in the preparation of this paper.

preparations were not made in time, and the missionaries spent the winter in Ohio. Early the following spring they were on their way to St. Louis, and on May 16, after some misadventures, they finally reached the mouth of the Minnesota and were given temporary lodging in the fort.

Williamson anticipated that there might be a vacant building which could be used for mission purposes at Fort Snelling. In this he was disappointed, and he and Huggins therefore selected a location on Lake Calhoun, thinking that Stevens, who had not yet arrived, would prefer a place near the garrison. This step led to an altercation among the several members of the mission, for Stevens upon his arrival two weeks later claimed the site at Calhoun on the grounds of prior occupancy in 1829. While it does not appear that Williamson allowed the claim, he yielded the point for other considerations, the chief of which was that his Ohio group could be more nearly self-sufficient, and was therefore better able than Stevens to found a station at a distance from the fort. Gideon Pond, who had begun his missionary work at Lake Calhoun in the previous year, was helping the Indians to cultivate the soil and Huggins' services as a farmer were not needed in that vicinity. The opinions of Major John Bliss, the post commandant, and of Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian agent, and the interest shown by Renville, who chanced to be at the fort, also contributed to the decision that Williamson should go to Lac qui Parle. Taliaferro hoped that the mission station would keep him more closely in touch with Sioux living in that vicinity. On June 23 the doctor and his party left Fort Snelling and on July 9, wearied by an overland journey from Traverse des Sioux, they reached Renville's stockade.

The establishment of the mission station on the upper Minnesota was executed quite in the manner prescribed in the instructions given to the workers. "Our Com. wish you to begin on a small scale," Greene wrote to Huggins, "taking with you at first only what will be requisite for your

comfort, & to enable you to begin your work advantageously.”² Faced with the necessity of lodging the entire family of Christian brethren and sisters in a one-room cabin, which Renville placed at their disposal, and compelled to leave much of their equipment behind at Fort Snelling, Williamson and his colleagues may well have felt that the beginnings of the mission were more humble than was entirely desirable. Nevertheless their communications to their chief contained no word of complaint, and Greene wrote optimistically that none of the Indian missions established by the board had been begun so favorably.

The mission at Lac qui Parle is described by a traveler who visited the station in the summer of 1837 as follows:

Both the Fort and Dr. Williamson's premises are situated under the hills; so that, being overtopped by them, both places are quite invisible from the main road. Both the establishments are situated on the East side of the River of St. Peter's. The Indians, among whom the Doctor carries on his missionary operations, have their village and farms on the opposite side. The scenery presented to the view from these places is rather indifferent. As little more than high hills on one side and lofty timber on the other can be seen, the prospect thus obstructed on every side necessarily offers but a very limited space for the exercise of the optical organs. This residence here being scarcely yet twelve months, their progress in agriculture, &c, is but little. They have, however, opened a small farm which seems to thrive well.³

At this spot the mission families conducted their ministry to the western Sioux. Williamson and Huggins labored there for more than ten years before the doctor removed to Kaposia and Huggins to Traverse des Sioux. Gideon Pond lived at the station from 1836 to 1839, working for his keep, but preferring not to share the responsibilities of administering the Christian household. Stephen R. Riggs and his young bride joined the mission in 1837 and, save for a period of three years spent at Traverse des Sioux, remained

² Greene to Huggins, March 4, 1835.

³ Peter Garrioch Diary, July 8, 1837. A transcript of this diary is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

at Lac qui Parle until the station was abandoned in 1854. John N. Kirker and Jonas Pettijohn helped with agricultural and mechanical tasks for short periods, Robert Hopkins and his wife were missionaries there in 1843-44, and Fanny Huggins and Mary Spooner served as teachers after the marriage of Sarah Poage to Gideon Pond. Moses N. Adams assisted Riggs from 1848 to 1853.

During the entire life of the station at Lac qui Parle the members occupied very modest quarters. In the fall of 1835 Huggins built, with Williamson's help, a simple log cabin, situated some three-fourths of a mile from the stockade, and a short time later he built a stable. For another year Williamson's family continued to be dependent upon Renville's hospitality for its lodging. The doctor felt the need of privacy particularly, and confided his wish to Henry Hill, treasurer of the board: "A closet where one may retire and be alone is particularly desirable in this country where the mosquitoes in summer and the cold winds near all the rest of the year render comfortable meditation in retirement out of doors for the most part out of the question."⁴ In December, 1836, the missionaries built a second log cabin, thirty feet long, twenty feet wide, and a story and a half high. The lower floor was divided into two rooms and a good shingle roof covered the whole; this did not, however, prevent the snow from drifting through the cracks in the upper walls. The room under the roof was the home of Riggs and his wife for some years after their arrival. In 1841 work was begun on the brick church, which was constructed with the help of two young Sioux. Riggs and his family took refuge in this meeting house when in March, 1854, their house was burned to the ground.

The work of building the houses and church was no small task, for there were few hands to help and no laborers in the neighborhood who were sufficiently skilled to be worth

⁴ Williamson to Hill, June 14, 1836.

their hire. French-Canadian canoemen did not prove satisfactory as carpenters, and the Indian braves considered all forms of manual labor fit only for the women. An occasional emigrant from Red River was prevailed upon to lend his services, but Williamson and Riggs themselves gave considerable time and strength to the material welfare of the station, reluctant though they were to do so.

The remoteness of Lac qui Parle from the civilized world caused the mission workers to give careful attention to their farm. Provisions were brought from St. Louis and the East only at heavy expense and it therefore became Huggins' chief responsibility to raise a good supply of vegetables and grain each year and to care for the livestock on which the settlement was dependent for its meat and dairy products. In 1837 a small grinding mill operated by horse-power was acquired by which corn and wheat were cracked. At first Greene warned Williamson against the evils of "large establishments for agricultural or mechanical purposes," but Williamson explained the situation, reporting five acres planted to corn, potatoes, flax, wheat, peas, and turnips.⁵

Protestant missionaries in Minnesota made a consistent effort to educate and civilize the Indians by teaching them to lead an agrarian rather than a nomadic life. The Sioux near Lac qui Parle were particularly in need of such instruction, for they farmed but little and often returned from their hunting excursions nearly starved. They lived at some distance from the forests, and usually had to travel many miles to hunt buffalo.

Taliaferro reported in 1839:

This band of Indians raised nothing, but depended upon the chase alone for subsistence, and with no means of improving their condition, until the American Board of Missions located the Rev. T. S. Williamson M.D., and S. R. Riggs, A.M., at Renville's trading post.

⁵Greene to Williamson, March 23, 1837; Williamson to Greene, July 13, 1837.

. . . They have remarkably few horses and cattle; and in reference to other things, such as they use, many are equally destitute.

With the arrival of the missionaries, Taliaferro noted, "a visible change for the better has been effected in the habits and general conduct of the tribes around the mission station."⁶

The progress of the natives was slow and Williamson and his companions never considered themselves successful in teaching them to till the soil. Huggins did two weeks' plowing for them in 1839 and some fifty acres were put under cultivation, most of it planted with corn. In 1842 the crop was blighted by a spring frost, and many of the Indians moved down to Fort Snelling, where they hoped to be given sustenance. In later years crops were better, but any surplus that might be accumulated was more than likely to be consumed by visiting Sioux from Lake Traverse or to be wasted in feasting. As for livestock, both cattle and horses were scarce. There was little or no respect for property, and an Indian's stock was killed for the most trifling reason. At one time the entire band at Lac qui Parle was reported to have fewer domestic animals than were cared for by the mission farmer. The mission suffered from the destructiveness of the natives, who slaughtered many of the cows and pigs.⁷

Despite these difficulties Riggs persisted to the end in his belief that the red man must be trained to farm if he was to survive. Proposals made by the mission shortly before the treaty negotiations of 1851 and submitted to Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota included a stipulation for instruction in agriculture. The argument was advanced to the board in Boston that the villages on the upper Minnesota should not be removed, but should rather be used as a base from which to urge the art of farming upon the wilder

⁶ 26 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 2, p. 496 (serial 363).

⁷ Williamson to Greene, September 30, 1839; September, 1846.

tribes to the west. These views were received with some favor and provisions were inserted in the treaty of Traverse des Sioux which looked toward agricultural instruction, but the stipulations were not observed.⁸

The efforts made by the missionaries at Lac qui Parle to improve the physical well-being of the Sioux were always subordinated to their main purpose, which was to share with their less fortunate brethren the blessings of their Christian faith. The first step toward effective teaching or preaching was a familiarity with the language, and Williamson and Riggs joined with Gideon and Samuel Pond in their attempt to master the complexities of the Dakota language. Greene's suggestions were not always helpful. He advised the unversed missionary to plunge himself into situations that demanded the use of the Indian tongue. Interpreters should be avoided lest they lead to a dependence upon their services. Writing to Williamson, he suggested:

Can you not go out often & spend a day or two or sometimes two or three weeks in the lodges, learning their words & forms of expression, & attempting to communicate your thoughts to them? . . . I was about to say that I should rejoice to learn that there was not an interpreter within a hundred miles of you.⁹

Gradually the men found a common medium of expression. In his work of relieving sickness among the natives Williamson learned the meaning of a few practical terms, and a review of his French and a resort to the written word for purposes of translation brought some success at least in his efforts to put portions of the Scriptures into the Dakota language. The work was slow at best. "It will be years before I can preach in Sioux," he wrote regretfully to Greene.¹⁰

⁸ Riggs to S. B. Treat, July 31, 1849; Riggs, "Outline of a Plan for Civilizing the Dakotas." The latter document bears the following endorsement: "adopted by the mission at its meeting in June, 1850, and handed to Gov. Ramsey."

⁹ Greene to Williamson, August 15, 1835.

¹⁰ Williamson to Greene, May 4, 1836.

The chief difficulty that the mission workers encountered was that the Sioux had no words to express what all good Christians wished to say. Many abstract terms had no counterpart in Dakota, and the most common metaphors had no meaning in that tongue. As Riggs so neatly put it: "'The lamb of God' an expression perfectly at home in our ears, is exceedingly strange to a Sioux."¹¹ It was only after a long struggle that the Christian teachers and preachers came to sense the *Sprachgefühl* of the Dakota language. The Lac qui Parle station became something of a center of study. Gideon Pond was attracted by the opportunity to perfect his knowledge, and Daniel Gavin, a Swiss missionary from a station on the Mississippi below Fort Snelling, spent the winter of 1838-39 working with Riggs and Pond.

Williamson painfully framed prayers and explanations of Scriptural passages and did his best to speak to the Sioux in their own language when Renville was away. Ordinarily the trader served as interpreter, and Sabbath services were conducted in French and Dakota. The final victory was won when sermons could be preached in the Indian tongue. By that time Dakota expressions and symbolisms were so well assimilated that the speaker lapsed into the dialect naturally. The Ponds, writing to members of their family, inserted paragraphs written in Dakota, and during a visit to Ohio Riggs found to his surprise that his English came haltingly from lack of use.

Williamson, Riggs, and the Ponds were convinced that the most effective teaching and preaching could be done by supplementing the spoken word with the printed page. At first Williamson optimistically hoped that the leaders among the Sioux might be taught English, and that in this way the treasures of English literature might be unlocked to them. He was soon disillusioned, however, and the greater effort was made to translate important Scriptural passages into

¹¹ Extract from Riggs Journal, January 29, 1840, enclosed in Riggs to Greene, February 8, 1840.

Dakota. No attempt had previously been made to reduce the Dakota language to an alphabetical system. Greene sent Williamson a book that had been used among the Creeks, with the thought that it would serve as a model in determining rules of spelling, but the languages were very different and arbitrary decisions regarding the representation of sounds were necessary. Williamson, Samuel Pond, and Jedediah Stevens studied the problems involved and fixed upon an alphabet and a general system of orthography in order that their work might be perfectly co-operative. A conference was planned for September, 1837, at which Gavin was expected to be present, but this effort to enlist the assistance of the Swiss missionaries failed. While Gavin was at Lac qui Parle he attempted to work with Renville on the task of translating the Scriptures. Temperamental differences, however, prevented the work from going forward as rapidly as had been hoped. "The perfection of knowledge, of which they both supposed themselves possessed, was a great bar to progress," Riggs observed dryly.¹²

Having agreed upon a common system of representing the Dakota gutturals and "clicks," the members of the mission attacked the work of translation. Stevens made no great progress, and even after several years his fellow workers expressed the opinion that he probably would never learn the language. Williamson, Riggs, and the Ponds all did constructive work and the results of their labors were published in several volumes under the supervision of Williamson and Riggs, who made trips to Cincinnati for that purpose in 1838-39 and 1842-43, respectively. The story of the translation of the Gospel at Lac qui Parle is a familiar one, as recorded by Huggins:

Dr. Williamson reads a verse in french then Mr. R[enville] speaks it in Sioux and the Dr. Mr Riggs & Mr. Pond all write it down then the Dr reads another verse One Chap[ter] is as much as they

¹² Stephen R. Riggs, *Mary and I: Forty Years with the Sioux*, 52 (Chicago, 1880).

get done in one day after they get a Chap they read & compare it to see if they all wrote the same thing.¹³

The method of work was cumbersome and slow but when Dr. Williamson journeyed East in the fall of 1838 he took with him Dakota translations of the entire Gospel of Mark and extracts from Matthew, Luke, and John, the Acts, and the first Epistle of John; and Old Testament passages from Genesis, the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the Book of Daniel. The story of Joseph, translated from Genesis by the Pond brothers, was published with an elementary reading book prepared by Riggs. In 1842 a Dakota primer, adapted by Riggs from English readers by the Reverend T. H. Galaudet, a hymn book prepared by Renville and the Lac qui Parle missionaries, and a *Second Dakota Reading Book*, consisting of Old Testament stories translated by Samuel Pond, were published. In 1852 a *Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota Language* was published by the Smithsonian Institution under the patronage of the Minnesota Historical Society. The editing was done by Riggs, but the work represents the efforts of all the members of the Dakota mission. In 1853 Riggs edited a second hymnal, which included tunes as well as words. The singing at Lac qui Parle was encouraged and directed by Huggins.

The publication of the translations made at Lac qui Parle was financed for the most part by special subscription. Williamson records donations amounting to three hundred and sixty dollars, including a hundred dollars from Renville and twenty from Joseph N. Nicollet, a French explorer who visited the station during the summer of 1838.¹⁴ The total amount more than covered the publishing projects undertaken in 1839. The American Board gave Riggs and Williamson their wholehearted support in the project of making

¹³ Huggins to an unknown person, January 18, 1838, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁴ Renville to Henry H. Sibley, October 24, 1838, Sibley Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society; Williamson to Greene, February 4, 1838; May 16, 1839.

Lac qui parle 24th Octobr 1838

Henry W. Sibley Esq

Cher Monsieur

Je vous envoie cette lettre pour
vous rassurer de mes respects et pour vous apprendre que je me
suis rendu en bonne santé à mon poste avec le contentement
de trouver toute ma famille en bonne santé et bien contents de me
voir voyant qu'il y avait tant de sauvages autour deus il y a
une partie des Esquimaux qui sont allés aux Missions qui m'en
fait dire qu'il viendrait en printemps prochain et une partie que
j'ai trouvés arrivés ici j'ai beaucoup de sauvages ici mais je
vous assure qu'il y en a plus que moins qui mourront, froid
et je vous remercie pour la lettre que vous m'avez donné à
mon départ que je vous promets de suivre les ordres de la Compagnie
je suis de vos amis et de vos parents donnez leur pour de dropt et de
je m'attends bien d'avoir de troubles avec eux que Dieu soit béni.

Notre Ami Dr^{re} Williamson nous a fait accompagner
de sa Dame pour cette hiver dont je vous prie de lui donner
\$100 Pistres et de les mettre à mon compte avec mes obligations beaucoup

Je suis votre Ami et de vos parents
Je suis votre Ami

Notre Ami & Obéissant Serviteur
Joseph Renville Père

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM RENVILLE TO SIBLEY,
OCTOBER 24, 1838

[The writer authorizes Sibley to charge to his account the sum of one hundred dollars to be donated to Dr. Williamson for the publication work of his mission.]

the Scriptures available in the Dakota language, although, as the years went on, the prospect that the Sioux bands would profit by the translations became increasingly discouraging. Greene was too old a hand in the mission field not to be a realist about such things. "I hope & pray," he wrote to Riggs, "that the Lord will give the Indians a heart to learn to read & obey his Word, of which they now have so large a portion in their own language."¹⁵

The reading and writing of the Dakota language was made the chief objective of the schoolteaching done at Lac qui Parle. Sarah Poage and, later, Fanny Huggins worked with the children and the women and an attempt, albeit an unsuccessful one, was made to interest the men as well. Usually a feast was necessary if the men were to be assembled. In teaching as in other branches of effort, the missionaries had to make the best of unfavorable conditions. During the first year school was held in the one-room cabin in which the Williamson family made its home. At times meetings would be held in one of the Indian lodges. No books or working materials were at hand, and the necessity of working in a strange tongue added to the teacher's problems. The simplest arithmetical processes were complicated by the lack of common symbols. Disciplinary problems presented their distractions, and even the lack of proper clothing proved to be a disturbing factor. "But leaving the *question of comfort*," Riggs complained in an appeal for donations, "it is our firm conviction that we ought not to have boys from six to twelve years of age, in an almost perfect state of nudity, attend our schools."¹⁶ A possible solution to the problem of clothing was seen in domestic weaving. Renville's sheep were sheared in the name of civilization, Huggins built a loom, and lessons in the operation of it were given to the women. Homespun fabrics

¹⁵ Greene to Riggs, [1843].

¹⁶ Riggs to Greene, endorsed August 27, 1842.

held no attractions for them, however, and the textile arts were never important in the life of the village.

Activities in the school varied sharply with the seasons. Sessions were suspended when hunting parties left the villages and good fishing might at any time decimate the ranks of the scholars. Attendance averaged from five to forty, and in 1840 a total of seventy natives were said to be able to read Dakota. These were divided into three groups on the basis of reading ability. The experience of the American Board had been such as to discourage the organization of boarding schools among the Indians, and, save for taking a few children into their families, the missionaries made no attempt to establish anything more ambitious than a day school at Lac qui Parle. They did hope, however, that the day would come when native teachers, trained at the mission school, could be sent out to teach Indians in other villages to read and write. This plan received the approval of the board in Boston, and two hundred dollars was allowed for the purpose.¹⁷

In 1840 Waumidokiga, a native teacher, was employed to work at Lake Traverse. He taught twenty-three pupils, of whom three made a beginning in reading and writing and four more learned to spell. The missionaries agreed to pay the native teacher five dollars for each person whom he taught to read and write.¹⁸ The growing hostility of the Sioux men at Lac qui Parle toward the mission and unfortunate incidents connected with the enmity of Sioux and Chippewa in 1839 prevented native teachers from conducting classes in other villages. By 1850 the attitude of the missionaries toward boarding schools had changed. They came to feel that lasting impressions could only be made upon a Sioux child when he lived in a school and did not

¹⁷ Greene to Williamson, March 16, 1839; December 23, 1840.

¹⁸ "Annual Report of the Lac qui Parle Mission for the Year Ending July, 1840," in 26 Congress, 2 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 2, p. 378 (serial 382); Riggs Journal, December 31, 1839, in Riggs to Greene, February 8, 1840.

return each day to a hostile home environment. Recommendations submitted by missionaries to Ramsey in 1850 included a proposal that manual labor schools be established, and this plan of education was embodied in the treaties of 1851. The board reluctantly gave its consent to the founding of such a school at Lac qui Parle, but the station was abandoned before the final steps were taken.

The medical work of Dr. Williamson played its part in the efforts of the mission workers to save the Indians from the errors of ignorance and superstition. His skill and unselfishness won not a few sufferers from the native medicine men, and his services in vaccinating the Sioux against smallpox were helpful, even though delays in sending vaccine to him meant that his ministrations were not always timely. Greene expressed his concern lest the ravages of the dread disease should destroy the Sioux warriors before they could be converted. On occasions the doctor's errands of healing carried him westward to Lake Traverse and at one time he took Dr. George F. Turner's place as surgeon at Fort Snelling. Renville repaid his kindness by giving the mission a cow, and other contributions for medical services increased the revenues of the station. Williamson's accounts show that among his paying patients were Alexander Faribault and Henry H. Sibley.

The Sabbath day services were planned with particular care. Riggs's description of the first that he attended at Lac qui Parle is a graphic one:

Doct. Williamson led in the devotions of the sanctuary. And after asking for the blessing of God upon the exercises he proceeded to read a Dakota hymn. After it was read they all rose and joined in singing, and led by one of their own number, they made as solemn and impressive music as I ever heard in the house of God. Prayer was made and another hymn sung. Doct. Williamson then read a portion of scripture in Dakota and some remarks in connection with the story of the "Prodigal Son," which he had prepared with the assistance of Mr. Renville. For the benefit of the few French present, he read also a chapter in the French bible and made some remarks.

After prayer and singing again in the language of this people the assembly was dismissed with the usual benediction.¹⁹

Although attendance varied, an average of perhaps thirty or forty, most of whom were women, were present at services. The admission of the first male member of the church was celebrated with great satisfaction in 1841.

Renville wavered occasionally in his allegiance to the mission church, talked of the need of a Catholic priest at his post, and kept his family at home at times when he was vexed. Nevertheless the first years of the mission were years of encouragement, and Williamson considered his ministry a profitable one. During the following decade opposition to the church increased. The roll of active members was never long, and a discouraging number had to be removed or suspended. In 1849 Riggs recorded only eighteen members in good standing, although fifty-four had been received into the fold since 1835.²⁰ Efforts were made from time to time to revive a flagging interest with special services, and visiting preachers from other stations in the mission brought their message of inspiration to the Indians at Lac qui Parle. On one occasion in September, 1845, Riggs, who was then at Traverse des Sioux, and Samuel Pond spent ten days visiting Williamson, and preached at seven meetings.²¹

The actual instruction of the Indians was only one feature of the mission work. It was fully as necessary that the missionaries convince others that their efforts were deserving of support. From the beginning the members of the Lac qui Parle group were careful to cultivate good relations with government officials representing both the Indian office and the military. Greene's instructions to Riggs are worthy of a pupil of Polonius: he should call upon the commandant at Fort Snelling, he should share his plans with

¹⁹ Riggs to Greene, September 25, 1837.

²⁰ Riggs to Treat, July 31, 1849.

²¹ Williamson to Greene, September 27, 1845.

Taliaferro, he should be sparing in reproof even though he encounter profanity and irreligion. These men had it in their power to help or hinder, and the mission workers should take care not to antagonize them.²² Similarly, efforts were made to maintain a friendly acquaintance with the fur traders. Williamson's messages to Sibley are a strange blending of business and morality, of gratitude for services rendered and of entreaty that the merchant should not travel on the Sabbath or sell whisky to the Indians. Martin McLeod borrowed books from the mission library and was active in getting subscriptions to the Dakota lexicon, yet he rebelled against the missionaries' religious exhortations, speaking of them irreverently as the "hypocritical cant of the day."²³ Relations were not so peaceful with the generation of traders who succeeded Sibley and McLeod, and by 1850 the two groups were aligned in opposition to one another, the missionary seeking to civilize the native while the trader sought to exploit him to his own advantage. The efforts made by the traders to claim for themselves a large part of the annuities paid to the Indians and the missionaries' struggle to prevent the traders from diverting treaty payments in this way plainly shows the opposition of their interests.

The missionaries came into contact with the government through officials in the West and through the American Board in Boston. Williamson and Riggs kept watch of James Doty's negotiations with the Indians and observed the spread of drunkenness and crime from the frontier to far distant villages. At times the mission workers themselves served the government in some minor capacity. During the treaty negotiations at Traverse des Sioux, Williamson was engaged as a physician and Riggs as an interpreter. At an earlier time Gideon Pond was a government Indian farmer. More important than these humble serv-

²² Greene to Riggs, March 11, 1837.

²³ Grace Lee Nute, ed., "The Diary of Martin McLeod," *ante*, 4: 419.

ices were the protestations and resolutions submitted to government officials in St. Paul or, through the mission board, to those in Washington. The missionaries saw the Indian problem for what it was and their suggestions, while not perhaps original, were based upon a careful consideration of the difficulties involved. Their scheme of an Indian administration included the assignment of the Indians to a reservation with some promise of permanent security against encroachment; the breaking up of the community mode of life, and the protection of property held on the basis of individual ownership; education in manual labor and village schools, supported by a fund to which the Indians should have no access; prohibition of the liquor traffic; and, finally, direct payment of annuities on a semiannual schedule.²⁴

The Sioux treaties of 1851 embodied enough of the civilizing features outlined to make them acceptable to the missionaries, and letters went east from Lac qui Parle asking for plans for boarding school buildings and suggesting that workers should be on hand to man them as soon as they could be constructed. Dr. Williamson settled at Yellow Medicine, establishing a station near the lower agency.

The plan to remodel the station at Lac qui Parle in conformity with the provisions of the treaties of 1851 was never realized. Almost three years passed, and the government continued to neglect the educational programs for which the treaties provided. The American Board finally decided to wait no longer and was going ahead with school plans at Lac qui Parle when on March 3, 1854, Riggs's house caught fire and was totally destroyed. After some consideration, the decision was made to abandon the station and remove the workers to a point near Yellow Medicine. There in the fall of the same year the Hazelwood or New Hope mission was established. The story of that station and of Williamson's station at Yellow Medicine from their

²⁴ Riggs, "Outline of a Plan for Civilizing the Dakotas."

founding until the outbreak of 1862 belongs to another chapter of Minnesota mission history. After 1854 the plan of work and the conditions under which it was carried on were very different from those of the earlier years. In a very real sense the abandonment of the location at Lac qui Parle marks a turning point in the ministry of the Dakota mission.

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL



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