

TWO MISSIONARIES IN THE SIOUX COUNTRY

THE NARRATIVE OF SAMUEL W. POND

[*The first installment of the Pond narrative appears with an introduction in the March issue of this magazine, ante, p. 15-32. It covers the story of the coming of the brothers, Samuel and Gideon Pond, to Minnesota in 1834; of their experiences as missionaries and farmers for the Sioux at Lake Calhoun, Lake Harriet, and Lac qui Parle; and of their early efforts to learn the Dakota language and reduce it to a written form. The second of three installments of the narrative is presented herewith. T. C. B.*]

I soon perceived that my relations with Mr Stevens were not likely to prove very agreeable. As G. was now gone Mr. Stevens thought I should be compelled to remain with him, and he gave me to understand that, as he was a licenced preacher and I only a layman, he should expect me to spend much of my time in manual labor, and interpret for him in his intercourse with the Indians, but I did not come here to interpret for any one, — certainly not for one with as little ability natural or acquired as Mr. S. so I determined to go to Connecticut and obtain a licence to preach.⁸⁶ I did not think a licence would add any thing to my authority or ability to preach the Gospel to the Dakotas, but it might relieve me from some embarrassment in my intercou[r]se with my clerical associates, though regularly educated clergymen should still regard me some as West Pointers do one who is appointed to military office from civil life.

After a six weeks passage by way of the lakes I reached Connecticut in June — studied Theology with Rev. Gordon Hayes the pastor of the church in Washington, and was ordained March fourth, 1837. By teaching school that winter I earned enough to pay the expens[e] of my passage back, but our acquaintance in Washington had changed

⁸⁶ Stevens explained to the American Board that he was purposely freeing Pond from all secular duties which might confine him to the station and hinder his acquisition of the Sioux language. See his letters to Greene, September 26, 1837, and June 26, 1838, in American Board transcripts.

their minds about our mission, and some of them offered me more money than I accepted. They were opposed to our enterprize at first only because they thought it too dangerous and being satisfied on that point, they would have taken on themselves the responsibility of our support, but on account of our conection with other Missionarie[s] I thought best to decline the offer. I returned without waiting for an appointment from the committee at Boston, as that would have detained me longer in New England, and I was in haste to get back.* My second journey out was more comfortable than the first, for though I took deck passage on the rivers as before, I did not neglect as I did then to provide myself with a blanket.³⁷ I left my baggage at Prairie du Chein with Maj [Gustavus] Loomis and came in a small boat with some lumbermen to Lake Pepin, stopping one day at Monte trempe a l'eau to visit Mr. Gavin, who had then been with the Dakotas about a year.³⁸ The boat I came on was in charge of Hudson, from whom I suppose a town in Wisconsin has its name.³⁹ We reached Mr. Gavins place Saturday, and the men told me that I could not get onto a steam boat there and must go on with them the next morning, for they could not afford to wait for me any longer. As I had no claims on them I supposed they would go on without me, but they were there Monday morning and when we reached the end of our journey would accept of noth[in]g for my passage.

I was much pleased with Mr Gavin, and further acquaintance increased my esteem for him. He had quite a number of in[t]eresting

* Mr Hays obtained an appointment for me that summer [author's note].

³⁷ Samuel Pond was not actually appointed a missionary of the American Board until October 3, 1837. See Greene to Pond, October 4, 1837, in Pond Papers. Gideon was made assistant missionary on December 5, 1837. Greene to Gideon Pond, December 7, 1837, American Board transcripts.

³⁸ On Loomis, an officer stationed at Fort Snelling, see Marcus L. Hansen, *Old Fort Snelling, 1819-1858*, 156, 166 (Iowa City, 1918). Trempealeau, "The Mountain that Dips in the Water," is an island in the Mississippi situated about three miles above the mouth of the Black River. Gavin was stationed there at the time of Pond's visit.

³⁹ Pond seems to have been mistaken in this surmise, for Hudson was named in Alfred Day's petition of November 9, 1852, because of the resemblance of the St. Croix to the Hudson River. The village was previously known as Willow River and Buena Vista. Genevieve C. Day, *Hudson in the Early Days*, 20 (1932); A. B. Easton, ed., *History of the St. Croix Valley*, 2: 791 (Chicago, 1909).

legends which he had written at the dictation of Madame La Chappelle, but he labored under the same disadvantage that we had done for want of an alphabet, for the Dakota differs as much from the French as from the English, and when I showed him our alphabet he approved of it and adopted it at once. He told me that he had in Switzerland a companion to whom he was very much attached, and who was selected to come with him to America, but he was drowned just before they were ready to start, and Mr. Denton took his place. Mr Denton was I believe an honest upright man but slow to learn and very excentric. I think no woman labored harder or more efficiently for the benefit of the Dakotas than Mrs Denton did. When I returned to Lake Harriet in May my brother met me there He had made commendable progress in Dakota during my absence, and furnished me with some of the results of his studies. About the first of June 1837, Mr. [Stephen R.] Riggs arrived at Lake Harriet and I had the honor of giving to the future D.D. L.L.D. — Author of the Dakota grammer and Dictionary &c his first lessons in Dakota. I continued to help him what I could till September when he left for Lac qui parle carrying with him many hundred words that G. and I had collected and doubtless my brother and others at L. q. p. furnished him with other words faster than he could learn to use them. He says in "*Mary and I*" Mr Stevens collected the words that he found at Lake Harriet. I found on my return that Mr Stevens had made no advance in learning Dakota. He had collected no words and those which we had given him he had not learned to use nor tried to learn, but his niece Cornelia Stevens, who came to Lake H. when she was but sixteen years of age, had learned very rapidly and though neither she nor other females except Mr[s] Denton were in the habit of writing what they learned, we were doubtless indebted to them for many words in the dictionary.⁴⁰ In the summer of 1837, I wrote the

⁴⁰ Riggs likewise wrote Greene that in June, 1837, he had copied a small vocabulary of Stevens. He also stated that he had added to this some three or four hundred more words with Samuel Pond's help, that to these he had added Dr. Williamson's collection at Lac qui Parle, further words collected there by himself, the doctor, and Gideon, and two or three hundred more from Samuel's winter hunt in 1838. Riggs's letters would nowhere seem to claim full credit for the dictionary. In 1839, he wrote to Samuel: "when you make any discoveries in Sioux I shall be glad to hear of them — I make none — just plod along, scarcely knowing whether I learn any or not." He says several times that Sam-

story of Joseph and sent it to Lac qui parle where it was revised by Gideon. I believe that was the first book in Dakota written by a Missionary that was published, except[t] lessons for children in school.

In Oct I started with another hunting party, and, profiting by former experience was more Comfortable or rather less uncomfortable than in the winter of 1835. We were three months without bread and salt but had plenty of good food. Fortunately for me the lock of my gun was broken soon after we started by a boy to whom I lent it, so that I was excused from hunting, and could spend my time more profitably for when I accompanied the hunters I seldom heard a word spoken except while a deer was being dressed, while there was always talking enough at the tents, and if I was at any time tired of listening to the gossip of the Indians, I had with me a pocket testament and lexicon in Greek. The family that I lived with consisted of a middle aged man and his wife and two of his nephews, bothe old enough to hunt, and, as the men were all good hunters, we had always venison enough and a surplus for those who had none. The old man made an estimate of the number of deer that I ate, and I paid him so that he and his wife said it was enough, and what was unexpected and remarkable they never afterwards claimed that I was under any obligations to them.

I returned to the Lake in January, but soon after received a letter from Mr. Prescott who was sick at Traverse des Sioux with no one to take care of him, so I went up about the first of February Taking care of Mr Prescott a while, and then of his store while he was brought down to the Fort.⁴¹ There I found myself among the most degraded Indians I had seen, and Mr. Prescott left a Canadien with me who was more disagreeable than the savages so that I was glad to

uel had done most for the "grammatical principles" of collecting the Sioux language. "Yours I consider the *nucleus*. I have tried to gather a few crystals and put round it." See Riggs to Greene, February 24, 1841, American Board transcripts; Riggs to Pond, June 21, 1839, January 2, 1841, Pond Papers. An excellent sketch of Riggs by Grace Lee Nute appears in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 15:605 (New York, 1935).

⁴¹Philander Prescott, the trader at Traverse des Sioux, states in his unpublished "Memoirs," now in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society, that he asked Samuel Pond "to come up and keep house" for him while he went down to the doctor for a month. See p. 199. Pond was at Prescott's post from about February 1 to April 10, 1838. See Pond to Greene, May 21, 1838, American Board transcripts.

call occasionally on M. Le Blanc whose manners were always exceedingly polite, and his conversation always amusing.⁴²

About the middle of April I left The Traverse on foot with Eagle Head a chief and his son a youth about twenty years of age to go to Lac qui parle for G. and I contemplated commencing a new station near where Fort Ridgley now stands. A son of Mr. Le Blanc, who had married a daughter of Eagle Head and who had been the winter before in the employ of Joseph R. Brown and stationed at a frontier trading post, was murdered by an Indian whom he had insulted and Eagle Head was going after his daughter.⁴³

We had no tent, and our journey was very disagreeable owing to cold rains and sleet which drenched our clothing, and when we reached the Chippeway River one cold windy day we found the stream high and rapid, and no means of crossing except a canoe which lay on the opposite shore full of water. Eagle Head said he was too old, and his son was too young to swim the river, and I did not feel like plunging into that cold water and stemming that rapid current, but I had been out of provision for some time, and there was a prospect of a storm so, after waiting a while to see what the Indians would do, I swam over and got the canoe. I had just got the water out of it and was starting back when I heard a shout, and looking round saw the young man running down on the west bank of the river. He had found a better place to cross higher up and one of us had a cold bath for nothing. The next day it snowed all day but we were safe under shelter. I have mentioned that G. and [I] expected to commence a new station by ourselves, for we preferred being together, and it did not seem advisable for us to be at Lake Harriet while Mr. Stevens was there, but after our horses were saddl[e]d and we were ready to start to select a place to build Mr. Renville advised us to postpone building to another year, and as the Dr. could do nothing to displease Mr Renville our project was abandoned, and in less than a year from that time we were both at Lake Hairet. Mr. Stevens had some difficul[t]y with the Lake Calhoun band and while I was at Traverse des Sioux he wrote to me urging me to return so when our plans in

⁴² Le Blanc was the famous fur trader, Louis Provençalle. For a sketch of his career see Babcock, in *Minnesota History*, 20: 259-268.

⁴³ For a more detailed account of this incident, see Pond, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 12: 322, 394. On Brown and his career, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3: 347-357.

regard to a new station were frustrated I returned to the lake. The treaty of 1837 was now ratified and in the summer of 1838 Major Taliaferro received instructions to appoint a farmer for each band of the Mdewakantonwan.⁴⁴ Mr. Stevens, Mr. Prescott and others applied for the appointment of farmer for the Lake Calhoun band, but the Agent refused to give it to them, and offered it to me. I at first told him I could not take it, but he said the Indians would be dissatisfied if he gave it to any one else, so I consented to hold the appointment until I could ascertain whether Gideon would take it off my hands.⁴⁵ This pleased Taliaferro for he was very unwilling to have my brother leave Lake Calhoun.

Maj Taliaferro resigned soon after & read to me his letter of resignation, in which he said that the [American] Fur Company was too strong for him or the Government — that they interfered with his management of the Indians and thwarted his plans for their improvement. He at that time had his faults — and his example did not exert a salutary influence on the morals of the Indians, but he had been so friendly to us that we felt as though we “Better could have spared a better man” and we rejoiced greatly when we afterwards heard of his reformation.

About the first of November Dr. Williamson and family arrived at Mendota on his way to Ohio, and, Gideon came to bring him down and carry back a load from the Traverse. It was too late in the season to undertake such a journey and subjected my brother to needless hardships and dangers.

Just before he started for home we went to Mr. Sibley to transact some business, and were detained over night. At daylight the next morning Mr. Sibley sent Milor an old man in his employ to put us

⁴⁴ Land cession treaties with both the Sioux and the Chippewa in 1837 provided for the establishment of a system of teaching farming to the natives, an idea that followed theories that Taliaferro had long applied. Possibly Taliaferro was himself responsible for the inclusion of the provisions for government farmers. The Mdewakanton were one of the divisions, or council fires, of the Sioux. They had main villages up to 1853 at Winona, Red Wing, Shakopee, St. Paul, and Fort Snelling. A copy of an unpublished paper by Sister Grace McDonald on “The Government Farmer and the Minnesota Indians” is in the manuscript division of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴⁵ The contract making Samuel “farmer and instructor in Agriculture” to the Lake Calhoun Sioux, made on October 1, 1838, is preserved among the Pond Papers.

across the river.⁴⁶ The canoe was a bad one but we did not know it, and, by some mismanagement, it was over set while we were getting into it, plunging us into deep water. When G. and I rose to the surface the old man was missing, but I caught a glimpse of his red jacket und[er] water and drew him out. We then crossed the river and giving the old man some money to warm himse[lf] with, we walked against a cold wind in our wet garments eight miles to Lake Harriet, for we had no time to lose as G. was anxious to reach Traverse des Sioux before the river froze up. He started the next day but was comp[el]led by the ice to abandon his canoe near Little Rapids, and to add to the embarrassment of his situation an Indian who accompanied him was attacked by the small pox. His companions name was Eagle Help a man of superior natural abilities, and one who had the reputation of being a very skillful physician.⁴⁷ He pointed out some roots to my brother, who dug them up and made of them a decoction for him to drink. G. had considerable baggage with him, a part of which he carried on his back to the Traverse, and then came back with a horse for the remainder. He then loaded his waggon—put the sick man into it—and started on a journ[e]y of more than a hundred miles through a deep snow, with the mercury below zero. He had a covered waggone but could not ride in it, for one of his horses would not go without continual urging, so he had to walk on the north side of the waggon to keep the team going. He told me his feet would have been frozen if he had not wrapped them in muskrat skins that he obtained at a lake where he passed the Sabbath. As it was he suffered severely and only a man of great strength and energy could have endured the hardships that he encountered on that ill advised journey. Some years afterwards Dr. W. sent two men in the winter from Yellow Medicine to Traverse des Sioux after a load of provision, and they had to leave their team to perish on the p[r]airie, while the men themselves barely escaped with their lives, one of them

⁴⁶ Milor, the son of a French officer and an Indian woman, served as a guide for George W. Featherstonhaugh on his explorations in Minnesota in 1835, and he greatly impressed the Englishman by his skill and resourcefulness. *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor*, 1:259 (London, 1847).

⁴⁷ For further information about Eagle Help, see Stephen R. Riggs, *Mary and I*, 53–55 (Chicago, 1880), and his "Dakota Portraits," edited by Willoughby M. Babcock, in *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 2:561–568 (November, 1918).

losing part of his feet. Eagle Help recovered and was among the fugitives who fled to Ma[n]itoba in 1862. Last winter he died there and just before his death he said "My medicines are good, and I have cured many people with them, but if another attempts to use them he may do more harm than good so throw them all away" He was not engaged in the outbreak but his son was and he went North with him. My brother was married in the Fall of 1837 to a sister of Dr. W's wife and I was married in November 1838⁴⁸ to Cordelia Eggleston at Lake Harriet.⁴⁹ Quite a numbe[r] of persons were present when I was marr[ie]d but I believe none of them are now alive except Mr Sibley and myself, but that must have been long ago, for Dred Scott was then at Ft Snelling, and his owners at the wedding. Dr. Em-
 erson⁵⁰

In April 1839 My brother and his family with Mr Gavin, who had spent the winter at Lac qui parle, and Eagle Help came all the way from Lac q. p. to Mendote in a canoe, and the farming was transferred to him, but it was no sinecure. About twenty head of ill assorted, half wild cattle were committed to his charge to be watched in the summer and fed in the winter. He had to make team out of bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke and too old to be easily subdued, but he from boyhood was skillful in the use of oxen, and soon had a team, though some of them were always wild. Ploughing their fields was a small part of the work that he had to do for the Indian, and it

⁴⁸ In the original manuscript, the year has been inserted above the line in pencil.

⁴⁹ Gideon's marriage to Sarah Poage on November 1, 1837, is described by Riggs in *Mary and I*, 32-34. Cordelia Eggleston, a sister of Mrs. Stevens, was a New York schoolteacher who accompanied Stevens on his return from an eastern trip in November, 1837, and who taught at the mission school and helped with the cooking. Her marriage occurred on November 22, 1838, at the Lake Harriet mission. Samuel wrote to a friend a few days later that both he and Gideon had "such wives as missionaries ought to have." Pond to Samuel Leavitt, November 29, 1838, to Mrs. Hine, January 20, 1838, Pond Papers; Stevens to Greene, January 8, November 20, 1838, Pond to Greene, February 4, 1840, American Board transcripts; Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries*, 128-132.

⁵⁰ The name has been added in pencil at the end of the paragraph. Dr. John Emerson went to Fort Snelling as post physician in 1836, taking his slave, Dred Scott, with him. An article on Emerson by Charles E. Snyder, who quotes several letters that the doctor wrote from Fort Snelling in 1839 and 1840, appears in the *Annals of Iowa*, 21:440-461 (October, 1938).

required sixty tons of hay to winter their cattle and his own cattle and horses. He did most of the hard work himself, sometimes plowing alone with two yoke of oxen, but no one man could do it all, and he paid out a good deal of money for hired labor. He had to build his own house and store houses for the Indians. Before the treaty was made the Ind[i]ans would assist in plowing their fields but afterwards not one of them would touch a plow. Most of the farmers took things very easily and had as little to do with the Indians as possible. The first farmer for the Shakopee band got along several years without doing any thing for the Indians except that now and then he gave a present to the chief. He used their waggons and carts for his own business, and let their cattle starve to death, and some of the other farmers did not do much better. In the winter of 1841, almost all the cattle belonging to the Mdewakantonwan perished for want of food. At some of the villages not one was left alive. Yet Gideon did not lose one and his oxen were in good condition for work in the spring. [Peter] Quinn had the cattle for Good Roads band, and as he lived near the Fort his cattle, having nothing to eat at home, annoyed the people at the Garrison and Maj Plympton ordered them shot.⁵¹ Yet these farmers drew their salaries and were excused from plowing the next Spring because they had no teams while G. had no excuse so that when I say the farming was no sinecure I only mean that it was not one in G's hands. Dr Williamson in a sermon which he preached in St. Paul in commemoration of Gideon said that he gave away a certain amount of money so that what he retained would make his salary about equal to that received by the other missionaries. Dr W was incapable of making a wilful misrepresentation, but quite liable to make mistakes.⁵² The missionaries up the river received so many valuable donations aside from their salaries that it would have been impossible for him to ascertain what their income was, if he attempted

⁵¹ Quinn, an adventurous Irishman, was an Indian trader and interpreter. See John H. Stevens, ed., *History of Minneapolis and Hennepin County*, 2: 1209 (New York, 1875). Good Road was chief of the Pini-sha village, nine miles above Fort Snelling. Samuel gives a humorous account of his arrest in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 12: 327.

⁵² Samuel's estimated budget for the Lake Harriet mission in 1839-40 was only \$250.00. See his letter to H. Hill, June 24, 1839, in the Pond Papers. After Gideon began to receive a salary as farmer, the two families managed to live on that alone plus the gifts they received from Connecticut. Samuel Pond to Greene, May 10, 1842, Williamson to Greene, May 16, 1843, American Board transcripts.

it which he never did, and he did not believe, neither do I believe, that any of those missionaries could have done what he did for the Indians and supported their family on what was left of the six hundred dollars.*

My brother and I were now together again with the Lake Calhoun band after a separation of three years, but Mr Stevens did not like the arrangement and soon left Lake Harriet, having obtained the appointment of farmer to the Waapaxa band.⁵³ Mr Gavin married Cornelia Stevens about the same time and took her to Red Wing, but the next Spring he and Mr Denton with their families came to Camp Cold Water, where we all occupied the same house for a year.⁵⁴ Mr. Gavin and I making preaching excursions to villages on the river.

After the slaughter of the Chippeways in 1839, the Indians were afraid to remain at the Lake.⁵⁵ They would doubtless have soon returned but Major Plympton determined to remove them from the Reserve so he and Col. [Amos J.] Bruce who had succeeded Maj. Taliaferro went up and selected a location for us at Credit River, where Hamilton now is, and my brother had orders to go to that place and plow that Spring for the Indians, though we were permitted to leave our families in a large stone house built by [Benjamin F.] Baker at Camp Cold Water.⁵⁶ Our Indians were very unwilling to go to Credit River, and other Indians were opposed to their going there,

* He saved the money by hard work and economy & thought he could spare it but I thought he gave too much [*author's note.*]

⁵³The band of Wabasha III near Lake Pepin. See Thomas Hughes, *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota*, 10 (Mankato, 1927); and Samuel Pond to Greene, June 14, 1839, in the American Board transcripts. A controversy in reference to the division of the Pond and Stevens property followed Stevens' departure. Stevens, at his own request, was released from his connection with the board. Greene to Stevens, October 11, 1839, American Board transcripts.

⁵⁴Camp Cold Water was the site of the camping ground at high-water time during the building of Fort Snelling.

⁵⁵Some ninety Chippewa were killed at Rum River and twenty-one near the site of present-day Stillwater in bloody encounters that followed a Chippewa-Sioux council at Fort Snelling. Among numerous and varied accounts of these events may be noted those by Edward D. Neill and Samuel Pond, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 2:138, and 3:131-133. The Sioux, fearing Chippewa revenge, abandoned the Calhoun village.

⁵⁶Bruce was the United States Indian agent at St. Peter's from 1839 to 1848. Hamilton has since been renamed Savage, and the Credit River is Elk Creek. Samuel wrote Greene on July 14, 1840, that he and his

but we had a Colonel and a Major to deal with, and their orders were imperative, so having pulled down our house and taken away the lumber from Lake Harriet, we started for Credit River with three or four yoke of oxen and a load of lumber, swimming our oxen across the river at Mendote, and drawing our cart across by a strong cord of raw hide long enough to reach across the river. Our cart disappeared as it went into the river, and spectators said we should never see it again, but it reappeared as it ascended the opposite bank. When we reached Credit river we were not at all pleased with the location, and were unwilling to build there, but we hardly knew what to do, for Major Plympton and Col Bruce had, after personal inspection, pronounced the place a good one. We could get along well enough with Col. Bruce and, Major Plympton had treated us well, but he was a man of very decided opinions and arbitrary temper. However, I left my brother at Credit River and went down to see him. I did not venture to complain of the location, but I told him that our band had selected a place at Bloomington, and, as the Indians above were opposed to their going to Credit River, I did not believe they would go there that season. After a long talk with him he reluctantly gave us permission to plow for them that Spring at Bloomington but declared he would compell them to go to Credit River the next year. Col Bruce was indifferent about the matter. My Brother had so little hope of my succeeding with the Maj. that he had been busy during my absence building a shanty, though he had been ordered away by Indians from above. We willingly abandoned our shanty and went down to where the Indians were encamped nearly opposite the place where we afterwards built. We did not think we should ever be sent to Credit River again, but did not tell the Major so. When we first went to Lake Calhoun the village was small and all acknowledged Marpiwecaxta as chief,⁵⁷ but, in consequence of our going there, they brother had hired a house a mile from Fort Snelling for a year. See American Board transcripts. For information on Baker, a well-known trader, see George Henry Gunn, "Peter Garrioch at St. Peter's," in *Minnesota History*, 20: 122 (June, 1939).

⁵⁷ Marpiwecaxta was "Cloudman," one of the most enlightened of Sioux chiefs. See Hughes, *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota*, 19-30. Chief Cloudman was an ancestor of Dr. Charles A. Eastman, the famous author of books on Indian life. Gideon Pond, in a letter of March 16, 1836, to Ruth Pond, in the Pond Papers, presents Cloudman's account of Indian warfare, a record of unusual interest.

gathered in from other villages, so that in a short time the number was greatly increased, and among others an old man named *Karboka* who claimed to be a chief came bringing a good many with him. Between him and Marpiwecaxta there was a rivalry, and, when they left Lake Calhoun, the band separated, Karbokas party encamping nearer the Fort than the other party. They were displeased because Gideon did not plow for them first, and, while he was plowing for the others a large number of them went up and drove away his oxen, but when he perceived what their intentions were, he slipped off the yokes, and they got nothing but the oxen. It was supposed that they did this at the instigation of Scott Campbell, and that some one had promised to plow for them, but when Plympton heard of it he told Campbell to tell Karboka that if the men who brought away the oxen did not take them back immediately the soldiers would be after them, and if any man attempted to plow for them with G's team he would find himself in the guard house. They hurried back with the oxen and G. went up and finish[e]d plowing. He had intended to plow for Karbokas party, but when Indians attempted to drive us we always found it best to be a little obstinate, so when he had finished plowing for the upper band he, with the aid of the Indian, crossed his team and cart over the river and a swamp at Oak Grove, and went home and the other party had to dig up the ground with their hoes, but it did them good and they caused less trouble afterwards. Karbokas was mortally wounded that summer by Chippeways at Camp Cold water and his son killed.⁵⁸ Our experience about that time was more disagreeable than at any other time during our missionary life, for while we were meeting with so much difficulty in finding a suitable place for a new location our brethren at Lac qui parle, without consulting us, recommended that we should be sent to Lac Travers, and Mr Green the Secretary wrote to us as though he expected us to go there as a matter of course, but we refused to take our families among the desperados of that lawless region, and if our removal there had been insisted upon we should have withdrawn from the mission but not from the Indians. Mr. Green said he thought we need have no apprehension of serious difficulty with the Indians there provided we managed discreetly, and I suppose the Committee thought us contumacious, but we knew the

⁵⁸ Kahboka and his son were killed within fifty rods of the Pond house. The event occurred in 1841. Samuel Pond to Greene, May 8, 1841, American Board transcripts; Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries*, 150.

character of the Indian[s] at Lac T. better than they did and we knew the state of things at Lac qui parle better than they. The missionaries at L. q. p. were under the protection of Mr Renville, the most influential man in that region, and they gave many valuable presents to the Indians, but Mr. R. could not restrain the Indians, and the donations did not conciliate them so that there was any security for property belonging to the Mission. In 1850 Mr. Huggins reported that fifty cattle and horses belonging to that stati[o]n had been killed or stolen by the Indians. At Lac Travers we should doubtless have found matters much worse for we should have had no protection and we never paid black mail. The fear of exposing ourselves to danger would not have deterred us from going there but we had families to care for.⁵⁹ Not long after recommending that we should be sent away from the Mdewakantowan, Mr. Riggs left L. q. p. but not for Lac Travers. He attempted to locate himself at Shakopee but was refused permission by the Indians both here and at Little Rapids, so he went to Traverse des Sioux, where I visited him the first winter he was there, and found them so harrassed and alarmed by the Indians that Mrs. Riggs said they could not remain there unless they could obtain relief. On my return I applied at the Fort for military protection for them and Captain [Electus] Backus, at my request, arrested and put in irons a man who had shot at Mr Riggs.⁶⁰ When Mr. R heard of his arrest he was very much alarmed, and wrote to me to try to get him out of prison as soon as possible lest his relatives should do them some mischief at the Traverse, and, as I made no haste about the matter, he came down himself to get him set free, and Capt Backus released him but very reluctantly for he

⁵⁹ "It is true," wrote Samuel of the Lake Traverse Indians, "that they cannot injure us or our property without the permission of our heavenly Father but still . . . it does not seem to us prudent to expose property to the depredations of unrestrained savages." See his letter to Greene, May 8, 1841, in the American Board transcripts. There are various other letters among the transcripts and in the Pond Papers relating to this subject. Though Greene, on the recommendation of Riggs, suggested Lake Traverse, he wrote Samuel that he would leave the matter to the judgment of the Ponds. Letter of June 15, 1841, Pond Papers.

⁶⁰ On February 3, 1845, Backus wrote Samuel, requesting him to come to Fort Snelling to identify an Indian thought to be the one who shot an arrow at Riggs and who also "showed a willingness to use his knife on your person." See Pond Papers. In the margin near this point the following notation appears in the manuscript: "Dr. W. afterwards left Lac qui p for Kaposia."

wished to send him to Prairie du Chien for trial.* For my interference in the matter I recieved the hearty thanks of Mr. Rigg's associate the Rev Mr. [Robert] Hopkins,⁶¹ and Mr Rigg's fear of retaliation proved groundless, for they had less trouble with the Indians afterwards but it was well for Mr R. that he was not at Travers where the Indians were more than a match for Joseph R. Brown. One Spring while I was at Lac qui parle they killed his teams & wounded him so he had to send to Mr. Renville for help, and they did many worse things, so that troops were sent there more than once to arrest murderers.

In the Spring of 1841 Mr Riggs went east and was absent a year, while I took his place at Lac qui parle.⁶² Dr. Williamson expected to remain there with me, but on the twentie[t]h of June a frost killed the crops down to the ground, and as the Indians were killing off the cattle belonging to the mission the Dr. anticipating a scarcity of food removed with his family to Camp Cold Water, where he resided more than a year in the house with G while Mr. Huggins and myself remained at Lac qui p.⁶³ On my return in the Spring of 1842 I met, at Traverse des Sioux, Mr. Riggs and family, with Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins, who had lately joined the Dakota mission.⁶⁴ I have already mentioned the attempt of Mr. Riggs to form a new station at Shakopee, and Little Rapids. As he had been repulsed by the Indians at both of those places he wished to locate himself at the Traverse, but was apprehensive that the Indians would not permit him to build there. As he seemed determined not to go back to Lac qui parle, I

* He refused to rel[e]ase him until I told him I could not very well go to Prairie du Chein as a witness [*author's note.*]

⁶¹Hopkins went to Minnesota in 1843 as a Presbyterian minister to the Sioux. He was at Lac qui Parle for a year and then served at Traverse des Sioux until his death by drowning in the summer of 1851. Riggs, *Mary and I*, 75-77, 90, 115.

⁶²Riggs went east in the spring of 1842, not 1841. Samuel and his wife then went to stay with the Williamsons. See Williamson to Greene, February 8, 1842, in the American Board transcripts; Huggins to Samuel Pond, May 2, 1842, and Gideon to Samuel Pond, June 26, 1842, in the Pond Papers. On the trip to Lac qui Parle, see Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries*, 159.

⁶³This was the winter of 1842-43. Williamson to Samuel Pond, August 3, 1842, Pond Papers; to Greene, July 29, 1842, American Board transcripts.

⁶⁴This meeting actually occurred in the spring of 1843. Riggs to Greene, July 24, 1843, American Board transcripts.

advised him to go on and build without asking permission for I knew it would be refused, as it had been at the villages below, and he did so. I came down the river with the same boat and crew that Mr Riggs had on his passage up and as we drew near the village of Shakopee some men standing on the shore began to fire at us, the balls striking the water very near us. I was steering the boat and as soon as I perceived they were firing at us I directed my wife to get behind a chest with her babe, and pointing the boat towards the men on the shore ordered the oarsmen to row fast. When the Indians saw we were approaching them they hastened away. I was at first surprized at such unusual conduct, but they recognized the boat and supposing Mr. Riggs was returning they wished [to] frighten him. That was the only time that an Indian ever even pretended to shoot at me except, that I found an arrow once sticking in my house at Shakopee just over the window that might have been shot at me, and a man who attempted to stab me in Mr Riggs house at Traverse des Sioux was the only Indian that ever assaulted me. But I have been threatened and may have been in more danger when I was not threatened for when Indians meditate mischief they are not apt to give their victims warning of their intentions. I have suffered almost nothing from fear of personal injury but that was not because I [did not] know that there were always some among the Indians who would have killed me without hesitation if they had known they could do it with impunity.

The winter of 1841-2,⁶⁵ was a long and hard one, and the snow was very deep. It was the year that so many cattle died in this region, but G. had hay in abundance, and, while the other farmers did nothing but look on and see their cattle die of starvation, he collected materials for a house at Oak Grove, for Major Plympton was gone now and no more was said about Credit River.⁶⁶

The walls of the building were constructed of large tamarack logs, and the house was of sufficient size to accommodate both our families. The place where he obtained the timber was eight or ten miles from his residence at Camp Cold Water and four or five miles from the

⁶⁵ The correct date, "1842-3," is written in pencil above this date in the manuscript.

⁶⁶ Gideon wrote Samuel on November 11, 1842, that Quinn was to build near him and that the Indians of Good Road and Marpiwecaxta seemed glad to have the Ponds in their neighborhood. Pond Papers.

place where he built, so he built a hut at Oak Grove where he and his hired man staid over night, while he was hauling the timber. The snow was so deep that he could cross the prairie only with a strong team composed of three or four yoke of oxen, and he could not drive them without snow shoes. He had never been accustomed to wearing snow shoes and would gladly have dispensed with them, for they embarrassed his movements, and if he happened to fall down he could not rise again till he detached them from his feet, but the snow was a greater impediment to his walking than the snow shoes and he could not manage his long team with heavy loads without them. He prosecuted the work with his usual energy, and, when I came down from Lac qui parle in June 1843⁶⁷ the house was about ready for occupation and there I found a home for five years and he one for life, though not in that house.

In the fall or beginning of winter of 1846 Col. Bruce sent for me to his office where I found Shakopee⁶⁸ with most of his men, and the Col. informed me that they had given me an invitation through him to go to their village, and promised to give me all the privileges I needed of cutting wood grass &c, and send their children to school. I knew Shakopee and his men too well to have much confidence in their promises but Col. Bruce said they had always been opposed to missionaries and schools, exerting a bad influence over the other Indians, and as they had now come for me of their own accord, he thought I ought to embrace the offered opportunity. I gave them no definite answer but told them to go home and talk the matter over, and I would go up after a while and see if they had not changed their minds. After waiting a few weeks, I came up and found them gathered together at the house of their trader, Oilivier Farribault.⁶⁹ They

⁶⁷ The year has been added above the line in pencil.

⁶⁸ The name "Xakpedan," a variant of Shakopee, appears in the manuscript above this name. Williamson some years later wrote Greene that Shakopee, chief of the upper and largest band of the Mdewakanton Sioux, had requested Samuel Pond to reside in his village and to teach the children to read. He added that the chief was "a very disagreeable man," but had more influence than any other Sioux. Letter of January 28, 1847, American Board transcripts.

⁶⁹ Oliver Faribault probably was not eager to have Pond in Shakopee, for he had once said that each Indian who learned to read and write meant a five-hundred-dollar loss to him as a trader. Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries*, iv. Upon the death of Faribault in 1851, Riggs wrote with a certain dry humor, to Martin McLeod, on October 25, 1851, that

still insisted on my coming here, and said there was no one who objected to it. When I asked Mr. Farribault what he thought about it, he said he was the first one who suggested it to them. I had suspicions that all was not just as it appeared, to be, but determined to come here, and went down to Point Douglas and purchased lumber for a house.⁷⁰ G. went down first with a strong team and brought up the timber for the frame on the ice, and then I went with four yoke of oxen and brought four thousand feet of boards in one load, but near Grey Cloud Island my forward cattle slipped and fell, and that accident turned the team off from the track onto a weak place where all broke through. The water wa[s] so deep that I feared at first I should lose them all, but they were strong and active, and when they were relieved of their yokes they succeeded one after another in getting out. I had of course to get into the water myself up to my waist and found it a difficult matter to extricate them from their yokes and chains. Some of the bow pins I chopped off, but lost my axe in the river before they were all unyoked. The yokes and bows did not sink, but the chains of course did. As fast as the oxen came out I tied them to the sled, for I had ropes on them all, but with their addi[t]ional weight the sled broke through the ice and I cut the ropes in haste and let them go. Some of them were young and wild, and all of them were frightened, and ran off in different directions some on one side of the river and some on the other side, but I caught them one by one and tied them to trees, and after recovering my axe and chains, went to Grey Cloud Island and got two men to help me unload and reload my sled. The accident detained me twenty four hours and I felt the effects of the wetting and extra exertion many days.

I had the materials for my house all prepared at Ft Snelling ready for putting up, and transported them to Shakopee on a barge, and then set a man at work digging a cellar and came⁷¹ home, but he came down the next day and told me that as soon as I got away the Indians took away his tools and sent him off. Col. Bruce was then absent and I forget who was in command at the Fort, but think he was at that time a stranger to me. When I went to him with my the event showed a "marked providence." McLeod Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁷⁰ Point Douglas is on the west side of the mouth of Lake St. Croix.

⁷¹ In the manuscript the word "went" is written above the word "came."

complaint he said, Col. Bruce had requested him to see that the Indians did not annoy me during his absence, and he proposed to send up soldiers and arrest some of the Indians, but I told him I thought a letter from him would answer my purpose just as well, so he gave me one and I went up and collected the Indians together at Mr. Farribalts, and asked him to read it to them. He read it reluctantly but he had to read it correctly for I was there to listen to it. He prided himself greatly on his cunning, and he hoped, if I was driven away, to get my lumber pretty cheaply. The materials for my building being all ready to put together formed a tempting prize for him, for it was the first framed house on the Minnesota above Mendote, but, if he had known me better, I think he would hardly have hoped to prevent my building then after I had done so much towards it.

That was the only time that I ever asked for military interference in my favor, and then I only asked for a few words in writing. I never had any serious trouble with the Indians here afterward though I had some very sharp talks with Shakopee, who was very insolent and overbearing at first. Mr. Moer who was Indian farmer here then said Shakopee told him that no other man ever ventured to talk to him as I did, but though he was very much disturbed for a while it did him good and he soon learned to treat me with respect. I still occupy the house that I built when I first came here.⁷²

During the thirteen or fourteen years when G. and I had no certain dwelling place, we experienced, at times, hardships that I have no wish to dwell upon, and in writing I have passed over many of them in silence. What fell to my share I can recall to mind without regret, but G. had more than his share of them, and, at times, I cannot think of the trials that he went through with without feelings of sadness, for they wore out his strong constitution and I believe shortened his life.

But I trust it is well with him now, and it affords me great satisfaction to know that he never regretted coming to the land of the Dakotas.

[*To be continued*]

⁷² Samuel moved in December, 1847, into a frame house he had built at "Prairieville." See his letter to Greene, January 18, 1848, in the American Board transcripts. A description of the mission there and an account of Pond's manner of talking to Shakopee are in Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries*, 184-187.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).