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POPULAR HISTORY OF NORTH DAKOTA

BY CLEMENT A. LOUNSBERRY.

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CHAPTER XV.

The Religion of the Dakota Indians—The Ghost Dance—The Prophet of the Delawares—The Shawnee Prophet—Tribu—Wovoka's Golden Rule—Short Bull—Kicking Bear—Death of Sitting Bull—The Battle of Wounded Knee—End of the Ghost Dance Craze.

HOPE springs eternal in the human breast. The Indians of America, no less than the white men of Europe, and the brown men of Asia, have had many prophets and messiahs, who have taught them in spiritual things.

Among the Indian teachers, one of the most noted was the prophet of the Delawares, who claimed to have visions in which he received instructions from the Master of Life, who taught a return to the simple life of the redman as the only avenue to Indian happiness. His followers were required to give up all they had acquired from the white men and return to the fire sticks and bows and arrows of their fathers, when it would be possible for them to organize and drive away the white men who were encroaching upon them.

In 1805 there was a prophet among the Shawnees, a brother to the great and good Tecumseh, much older than the latter, who also communed with the Master of Life, giving revelations to his followers. He warned against the use of intoxicating liquors,

picturing the horrors of drunkenness in such lurid light that intoxication became almost unknown among the Indians during the period of his influence. He required a return to the primitive life and that they throw away their medicine bags, give up their dogs and firearms, and keep a fire ever burning in their camps. His followers carried their virtues to such an extent that they even emulated the whites of New England and burned their witches, roasting one subject four days before death came to her relief.

His fame extended to the extreme southwest, where the Indians had looked for a messiah under whose influence "the earth should teem with fruits and flowers without the pains of culture, when an ear of corn should be as much as one man could carry, and the cotton as it grew should of its own accord take the rich dyes of human art, and the air should be laden with intoxicating perfumes and the melody of birds." Under the vigorous preaching of the prophet many in the southwest gave up their flocks and herds, their apiaries and orchards—for they were becoming civilized—and returned to the forests to take up the simple life of their fathers. The influence of the prophet extended to all western and southwestern tribes. Even the far away Ojibeways killed their dogs, ceased to fear the Sioux and tried to lead the life taught by the one they had come to love and look upon as a redeemer. They had mysterious rites of confirmation and were taught to clasp the hand of the prophet as the Christian takes the body and blood of Jesus through the holy eucharist.

When this excitement was at its height Tecumseh took advantage of it to unite the Indians of the west and southwest to resist the further advance of the whites, drawing the line at the Ohio, as Sitting Bull later drew it at the Missouri. But when Tecumseh was away in the southwest his brother, the prophet, inspired the attack on Vincennes, which ended his role as a prophet and proved disastrous to Tecumseh's plans.

Born during this period of excitement another Indian prophet appeared in Nevada, Tvibo, said to have been the father of the Indian messiah of 1890. He taught the resurrection of the dead and restoration of the game and the disappearance of the whites, leaving their effects and improvements to be enjoyed by the Indians.

To bring about these results it was taught that there must be obedience to the ten commandments, and in addition they must

cease using intoxicating liquors and refrain from gambling and horse racing. The propaganda was carried on secretly, and it was accompanied by a dance, which was the forerunner of the ghost dance. Since 1871 there have been other messiahs, all teaching substantially the same things, their highest hopes being centered on the return of the game, and the disappearance of the whites, when the Indian should again enter on the life enjoyed by their fathers.

When Tvibo died, in 1870, he left a son, Wovoka, then fourteen years of age, who had been reared in the land of his father, Mason Valley, Nevada, and who dreamed his dreams, and as he says when the sun died, meaning an eclipse, he went up into heaven and saw God and all of the people who died long ago, and returning from his sleep he told his people what he had seen and heard, and his fame went out to all Indian lands, and the tribes sent their wise men to see and know of him. Dakota sent its representatives and the delegates declare that each one, though of different tribes and language, heard Wovoka in his own tongue. And Wovoka told them that they must not hurt anyone or do any harm to anyone; that they must not fight and must always do right for it would give them much satisfaction; that they must not tell any lies or refuse to work for the whites or make any trouble for them; that when their friends die they must not cry. He charged them that they must not tell the white people but that the son of God had returned to the earth; that the dead were alive and there would be no more sickness, and everyone would be young again; this might be in the fall or in the spring, he could not tell, but they must dance every six weeks, every night for four nights and the fifth night till morning. Then they must bathe in the river and go home, and when they danced they must make a feast and have food that every one might eat. And he gave them some new food and some sacred paint, and promised that he would come to them sometime.

And thus equipped the wise men of the tribes returned to their people to teach the return of the ghosts and inaugurate the ghost dance. For the ghosts were coming and they were driving before them vast herds of antelope and buffalo and other game.

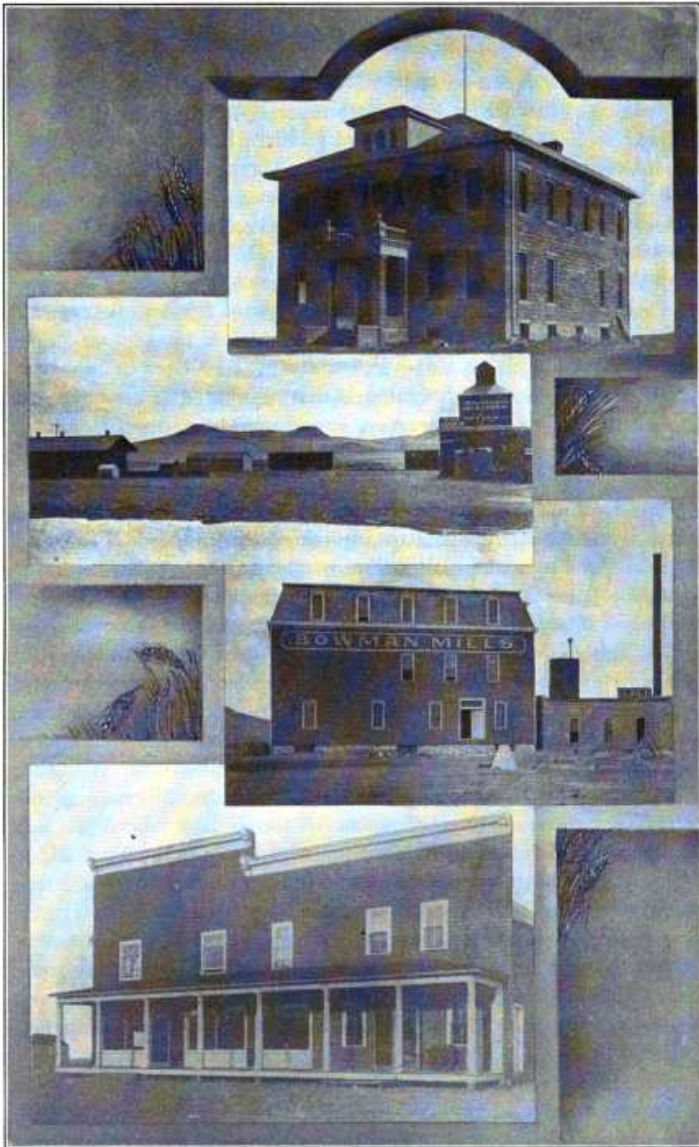
One of the Indians who was present at the Mason Valley conference with Wovoka said of the meeting:

"Heap talk all the time. Indians hear all about it everywhere, Indians come from long way off to hear him. They come from east;

they make signs. All Indians must dance, everywhere keep on dancing. Pretty soon Big Man come. He bring back all game, of every kind, the game being thick everywhere. All dead Indians come back and live again. They all be strong, just like young Indian and have fine time. When Old Man come this way then all Indians go to the mountains, high up away from the whites. Whites can't hurt Indians then. Then while Indians go way up high big flood come and all white people get drowned. After that water go away, then nobody but Indians everywhere, all kinds of game thick. Indians who don't dance, who do not believe this word, will grow little, just about a foot high and stay that way. Some will be turned into wood and will be burned in fire."

The returning delegates brought this new religion to the Dakota Indians in the winter of 1889 and 1890. Sitting Bull was its chief exponent at Standing Rock. Kicking Bull and Big Foot were at the Shenyenne agency and Short Bull was the demonstrator at the Rosebud. Short Bull had visited Wovoka; he had touched the hand of the Messiah; had received from him the holy bread and the sacred paint and had listened to his words; he had received messages through him from his friends in spirit-land and had been told of their homes and their employments, and of the vast herds of buffalo and other game and had been assured that the day was soon coming when there would no longer be any whites to make them afraid. He told the Indians that they were living the sacred life; that the soldiers guns were the only thing of which they were afraid, but these belonged to their father in heaven, and they should no longer fear the soldiers. He said: "If the soldiers surround you four deep, three of you on whom I have placed the holy shirt, shall sing a song which I have taught you, passing around them, when some one will fall dead. The others will start to run, but their horses will sink. The riders will jump from their horses and they will sink also. Then you can do to them as you desire. Now you must know this that all of the race will be dead, there will be only five thousand living on earth." He urged that they should dance and be prepared for the time when these things should come.

And thus they were prepared for the events of 1890. The agent at Pine Ridge was frantic with fear. He telegraphed every day for troops. In August, 1890, two thousand Indians met for the dance near Pine Ridge Agency and refused to give it up when



1. Court House, Bowman, N. D. 2. Haynes Depot and Elevator. 3. Mill, Bowman. 4. Business Houses, Bowman.

ordered by the agent to stop. They leveled their guns, threatening armed resistance to any interference. At the mere rumor of coming soldiers they fled to the Bad Lands, where they were joined by malcontents from other agencies. Short Bull at the Rosebud and Big Foot at the Sheyenne, also persisted in the dance.

October 9, 1890, a party of Indians under Kicking Bear left the Sheyenne Agency to visit Sitting Bull. He had invited them to visit them at his camp on the Grand River to inaugurate the ghost dance there. The dance had begun at Sheyenne River in September.

Sitting Bull's heart was bad. He had broken the pipe of peace which had hung on his cabin wall, since his surrender in 1881, declaring that he wanted to fight, and that he wanted to die. He had ceased to visit the agency. As a young man he refused to live at the agencies. He had spent the summers on the plains and the winters in the Bad Lands, or mountains, or in the timber on the Mouse river. Though a medicine man rather than a warrior, he had great influence with the Indians, drawing them to him and wielding against the whites the malcontents of almost every tribe.

Agent James McLaughlin, of the Standing Rock Agency, visited Sitting Bull's camp to induce him to return to the agency but he failed and the dance went on. Colonel W. F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, was employed by the Indian office at Washington to go to his camp, in the hope that he could influence him, but without avail. Major McLaughlin, who had succeeded much better than the other agents in controlling the Indians under his charge, advised against Sitting Bull's arrest at that time, lest it should lead to an outbreak, but his arrest had been determined upon by the Indian office. It was known that he intended to join the malcontents at the Pine Ridge Agency and that he had been invited to come there for "God was about to appear." He had asked permission to go but had prepared to go without permission. So on September 14, 1890, it was determined to make the arrest without further delay. There were some forty Indian police available and two companies of military, by forced marching from Fort Yates, were placed in supporting distance.

Sitting Bull's arrest was made without resistance, but the police were immediately surrounded by one hundred and fifty or more of his friends on whom he called to rescue him. Whereupon they rushed upon the police and engaged in a hand to hand battle. One

of Sitting Bull's followers shot Lieutenant Bull Head, the officer in command of the Indian police, in the side. Bull Head turned and shot Sitting Bull, who was also shot at the same time by Sergeant Red Tomahawk. Sergeant Shave Head was also shot. Catch the Bear, of Sitting Bull's party, who fired the first shot, was killed by Alone Man, one of the Indian police. There were eight of Sitting Bull's party killed, including his seventeen year old son. The Indian police lost six killed or mortally wounded. Most of Sitting Bull's followers joined the Indians in the Bad Lands.

Two weeks later, under the humane and fearless work of the military officers most of the Indians who fled to the Bad Lands on the approach of the military, had been induced to return to their agencies.

Big Foot's band and a few of Sitting Bull's Indians only remained in the field. Big Foot had agreed to surrender. He was ill with pneumonia, and the army physician had made him comfortable in his tipi. The pipe of peace hung on the center pole of his lodge. A white flag floated from the middle of his camp in token of his surrender. The women and children stood about the doors of the tipis, watching the soldiers in their camp, without thought of harm. The camps of the soldiers entirely surrounded the Indian camp. The military officers had demanded the surrender of the Indians' guns, in order to remove the temptation of another uprising, and had promised food and clothing, and transportation for their return to their respective agencies. A group of soldiers stood near the tipi of Big Foot. The Indians had been requested to come out of their tipis and deliver their arms. About twenty worthless pieces had been surrendered, while fully two hundred were known to be in their possession. A party of soldiers were searching the tipis for more arms. There was a growing feeling of anger among the Indians. Yellow Bird was circling about the camp, incessantly blowing a whistle made from an eagle bone, and urging the Indians to resist, possibly reminding them of their promise to Short Bull that some one should fall dead and the soldiers would be in their power. Presently he ceased blowing the eagle bone and threw a handful of dust into the air. At that moment Black Fox, a young Indian from the Sheyenne Agency, fired on the soldiers, who instantly responded with a volley at such close range that their guns almost touched the Indians, many of whom fell dead or wounded. Their