



MHA Women's History Month

2019



Sarah Walker Pease

Sarah Walker was born in 1866. She was the daughter of an Irishman, James Walker, and a Hidatsa woman, "Walks Amongst". In 1876, as a ten year old she was playing with her doll at the side of the road. Seeing a cloud of dust and horses approaching, she moved back a little away from the road side. It was an army regiment. Riding at their head was General George Custer, leading them west to Montana. The regiment met its unfortunate fate in June of that year at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

In the aftermath of the Custer Massacre, animosity against the Indians ran high. One consequence was a widespread movement to eradicate the Indian culture by re-educating Indian children. At boarding schools they were given "white" children names, were forbidden to their languages on threat of severe punishment, and their hair was cut in an "American" style. In 1878, at the age of thirteen Sarah, a half Indian was enrolled in Hampton Institute of Virginia. She arrived at Hampton along with Anna Dawson and Josephine Malnourie also from Ft Berthold. In later years she loved to reminisce about her school years. She felt honored to have had Booker T. Washington as one of her teachers. She was described as being "credit to Hampton".

In 1887, her education completed she moved to Montana to accept a position with the Bond Mission, operated by the Unitarian Church. Located twenty miles north of Hardin, Montana, the mission was only a few miles south of the former Ft. Pease. The mission hired Sarah as both an interpreter and seamstress. While there she met George Pease, son of Major Fellows David Pease. Sarah and George were married in Bond Mission in 1888. They settled along the Little Bighorn River about thirty miles south of Hardin and less than ten miles south of the Custer massacre site. Much of the present town of Lodge Grass is plotted on their original land. Sarah and George had ten children nine sons and one daughter. George lived until 1916 when he died of complications from an automobile accident.

Sarah Pease died June 1953. Her funeral was conducted at the Chivers Memorial Chapel of the First Crow Indian Baptist church by Dr. W. A. Petzoldt, who as missionary to the Crow Tribe had known Mrs. Pease fifty years. Sarah's sisters were Mary Walker Fredericks and Susie Walker Young Bird.