



ca. 1952

Oahe Chapel Preservation Society

The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society is a group of local citizens who joined together to save the Chapel after it was condemned. The initial emergency is over, but maintenance work on the chapel continues, and the Preservation Society is asking for your help in its effort to preserve the Chapel.

While the Oahe Chapel is owned by the South Dakota State Historical Society, the Preservation Society does not receive state funding. The work of this volunteer group is funded through annual memberships, donations, and rentals. Please consider supporting the Oahe Chapel by joining the Society and/or making a donation. All donations are tax deductible where allowed by law and greatly appreciated. Our contact information is below.

Write:
P.O. Box 7201, Pierre, SD,
57501

Call:
(605) 773-3458

E-mail:
oahe.chapel@state.sd.us;

Online:
history.sd.us/preservation/
OaheChapel/OaheChapel.
aspx



ca. 2009



ca. 1964

Hours

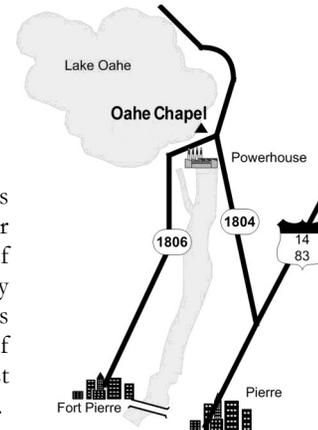
The key is available at the Oahe Dam Visitor Center located next to the Oahe Chapel, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily Memorial Day through Labor Day; Labor Day to Memorial Day, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Ecumenical Worship Services

8 a.m. on Sundays Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Rental Information

For reservations and information on rental fees, contact the South Dakota State Historical Society at (605)773-3458.



The Oahe Chapel is adjacent to the Corps of Engineers Visitor Center 4 miles north of Pierre on Highway 1804. The Chapel is on the eastern side of the Oahe Dam, just above the powerhouse.

Oahe Chapel



ca. 2002

Listed on the National Register
of Historic Places



Oahe Chapel Yesterday

In 1874, Reverend Thomas L. Riggs, a Congregationalist minister, and his first wife, Cornelia Margaret (“Nina”) Foster, established the Oahe Mission to serve the Sioux Indians of central South Dakota. The missionaries chose to build on the site of an old Arikara Indian village called *Ti Tanke Ohe*, later shortened to “Oahe.” The name of the Indian village was eventually given not only to the mission, but also to the dam and lake that now cover the site.

The Oahe Mission was located on the east bank of the Missouri River at Peoria Flats, about five miles upriver from the modern-day location of the chapel. In the beginning, a log house was the center of the mission. By 1877, the house had become too small, and the Indians agreed to help Reverend Riggs build a chapel, which was finished by September of the same year.



Like any frontier structure, the chapel was expected to serve a dual purpose—it served as a schoolhouse and as the center of religious life. Academic and religious classes were held in the chapel. Starting with an

ABC primer, the men, women, and children of the mission all learned to read the Bible first in the Dakota language and later in English. Because of these classes, a number of lay and ordained ministers were able to assist in the mission’s work on the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock reservations.



As Europeans settled in the community, they joined in Sunday and holiday worship at the chapel. Services were originally conducted in the Dakota language but by 1931 only English was used.



Oahe Chapel Today

In the 1950’s, when it became evident that the completion of the Oahe Dam would flood the mission location, the chapel was given to the State of South Dakota. The South Dakota State Historical Society was then put in charge of the restoration and preservation of the chapel. In 1957, the chapel was moved to a temporary location. It was relocated in 1964 to the eastern end of the Oahe Dam, where it still stands today.



In 1984, local citizens formed the Oahe Chapel Preservation Society in order to restore and preserve the chapel. With donations and volunteer labor, plus the assistance of the South Dakota State Historical Society and the State Historic Preservation Office, the major restoration was completed in 1988. The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society continues to maintain and preserve the chapel for the public’s enjoyment.

