

OAHE CHAPEL NEWS

Winter 2021

Newsletter of the Oahe Chapel Preservation Society

Pierre, SD

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The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society was founded in 1984 to preserve and maintain the historic Oahe Chapel near Pierre, South Dakota. Funding for maintenance is provided through annual memberships with the Oahe Chapel Preservation Society, rental fees, donations, and fundraisers.

A Spotlight in History: Theodore Foster Riggs

Since the Oahe Mission was founded in 1873 and the building constructed later in 1877, the Oahe Chapel has witnessed a wide variety of influential people in South Dakota's history walk through its door. Although the Chapel is most closely associated with the mission's founder Reverend Thomas L. Riggs, his son Theodore Foster Riggs, likewise has a history deeply-rooted in the Pierre community. Theodore was the first child of Reverend Riggs and his first wife Nina. As a young boy, Theodore and his mother lived in a log house near the Chapel at its original location before the Oahe Dam's construction. This building was the center of the Oahe Mission and was used as a school and for worship services, as well as their living space. He grew up there surrounded by missionaries as well as local American Indians who taught him how to ride horses, hunt and speak the Dakota language. Years later, Theodore graduated from the prestigious Johns Hopkins Medical School in 1903 to become a surgeon.



Photograph: Circa 1874 photo of baby Theodore and his mother Nina.

Though he received offers for surgery positions at large institutions such as the Mayo Clinic, Theodore chose to return back to Pierre to work as a physician at the local hospital of St. Mary's where he stayed until 1954. He was an active member of the Pierre community in his later life, even serving over 30 years on the Pierre School Board. After the Pierre high school was built in the mid-1950s, the school was promptly named after him, T.F. Riggs. Theodore's legacy in Pierre is rich and all started with the Oahe Mission being formed all those years before.

Oahe Chapel Completes Major Renovations

The Oahe Chapel went through a variety of exciting and successful restoration projects throughout the year 2021! The renovations have restored the historic building's appearance and strengthened its foundation. These repairs will ensure the chapel remains in good condition for years to come for people to enjoy. The majority of the work was done on the exterior of the Chapel, two of the major projects included the roof and the siding. The cedar shake roof was badly damaged by hail several years back and in need of repair. The construction crew did an excellent job replacing it with new cedar shakes to revive its historic appearance. The clapboard siding was also replaced. The siding had not been replaced since the 1980s and had been severely damaged due to weather over the years as well. After these renovations and several more, the Chapel looks pristine and is ready for visitors!



Event Rentals Resuming in 2022

Over the past two years, the Chapel has not been available for reservations due to the pandemic and recent restoration projects, but event rentals will be resuming starting January 2022! The Chapel can be reserved for weddings, church services, family reunions, baptisms or other special events, and will be available to rent year-round at the cost of \$50 per day and, for members, a reduced price of \$35. The historic Oahe Chapel provides a unique setting and a beautiful view to make any event memorable! For more information and how to apply to rent the Chapel, please call (605)773-3458.



Things to Keep an Eye Out For



Memberships and Donations to go Digital: The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society has been working on an exciting project to digitize our membership and donation process! While mail-in memberships and donations will still be available, anticipated beginning January 2022 we will have a website up and running to streamline our membership program and receive donations on behalf of the Oahe Chapel. Follow our Facebook page for updates!



Pizza Ranch Fundraising Opportunity: The Oahe Chapel Preservation Society is hosting a fundraiser at the Pizza Ranch in Fort Pierre on February 8th, 2022! All money raised will go towards the continued maintenance of the Oahe Chapel. We would love to see you there! Keep an eye out on our Facebook page for more information.



Check us out on Facebook by searching Oahe Chapel Preservation Society!

Oahe Chapel Preservation Society Membership Form

Membership investment is for one year. Members will receive the annual Oahe Chapel News to keep up-to-date with current projects at the Oahe Chapel. Members are also eligible to rent the chapel at a reduced rate of \$35. Donations are tax deductible where allowed by law.

Please detach this form and mail to the address below with check payable to: Oahe Chapel Preservation Society

Oahe Chapel Preservation Society PO Box 7201 Pierre, SD 57501

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS (optional): _____

	New Member	Renewal <input type="checkbox"/>	*Donation of \$ _____
Sustaining Membership	\$500.00	Family Membership	\$40.00
Patron Membership	\$100.00	Individual Membership	\$25.00

