

Ness Monument



Marker Location: *Ness Lutheran Church, 24040 580th Avenue, Litchfield, Minnesota.*

Buried in one grave under the Ness Monument are the remains of the first five victims of the U.S.-Dakota War. Their names are Robinson Jones, Viranus Webster, Howard Baker, Ann (Baker) Jones, and Clara D. Wilson. The violent act of four young Sioux who were starving because of broken treaties and thieving traders sparked a war that killed hundreds of people on both sides.

The 4 sides of the monument read as follows:

- **North side:** ERECTED BY THE STATE IN 1878 UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MEEKER COUNTY OLD SETTLERS ASSOCIATION
- **South side:** IN MEMORY OF THE FIRST FIVE VICTIMS OF THE GREAT INDIAN MASSACRE OF AUGUST 1862 AND BURIED HERE IN ONE GRAVE
- **East side:** FIRST BLOOD
- **West side:** ROBINSON JONES, VIRANUS WEBSTER, HOWARD BAKER, ANN (BAKER) JONES, CLARA D. WILSON

The Ness Monument is the third oldest monument in the state and was erected by the State of Minnesota under the direction of the Meeker County Old Settlers Association. The unveiling took place on September 13, 1878 at 2 p.m. In 1964, Governor Karl Rolvaag and Russell Fridley, Director of the Minnesota Historical Society, spoke at a rededication of the cemetery and state monument.

On August 19, 2012, the historic Ness Lutheran Church held the 150th Anniversary Observance of

the U.S.-Dakota War where various healing ceremonies took place under the Ness Monument. Sun dancer, pipe carrier, and ordained Presbyterian Minister, Alan Kitto, lead the ceremonies while smoke from burning sage filled the air. The following individuals spoke at the historic ceremony: Dave Lindberg – President of Ness Lutheran Church, Roger Trudell – Chairman Santee Sioux Nation, Stephen Elliott – Director of Minnesota Historical Society, Cora Jones – Secretary Santee Sioux Nation, Charles Watterson – returned exiled Maintenance Supervisor Morton, MN, Pastor Stephen Cook – Bethlehem Lutheran Church, John Robertson – Episcopal Priest, Jeff Williamson – Great Great Grandson of John Williamson, missionary to the exiles, Dean Urdahl – great grandson of Ole Ness, and Mark Ritchie – Minnesota Secretary of State.

The U.S.-Dakota War was the bloodiest and most tragic event in Minnesota history. The 150th Anniversary Observance at Ness Church was a moment in history where old wounds began to heal. Speakers said they felt their ancestor's spirits present.

All of the speakers talked about the need for forgiveness and understanding as people on both sides work to move past the hurt of the past. During the "Gathering of the People" ceremony, the Sioux sang the "Four Direction Song." As they sang, most of the crowd joined the singers as they turned north, east, south and west. The 7th generation direct descendent of Ole Ness, Violet Urdahl, walked the Trail of Tears to the Ness Monument and laid a beautiful wreath. Ole Ness had been part of the Acton Burial Party in August of 1862. It was a very moving historic moment that commemorated all who had died.

The "Wiping of Tears" invited everyone in the audience to file past four Dakota sun dancers to wipe away historical sadness or any kind of hurt in a person's life. The sun dancers tapped each person with Eagle's feathers and then used a small square of red cloth to symbolically wipe away tears from the cheeks of each person.



The Dakota Sioux sun dancers sing "Four Direction Song."



Most of the crowd turned with the sun dancers as they sang.

The "Round Dance of Unity" involved the crowd walking in line and circling around and around until they formed a tight circle around the Dakota drummers. Prayers were prayed and the Dakota drummers sang.

The historical event was temporarily marred by the appearance of civil rights activist and founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM) Clyde Bellecourt. As Bellecourt approached the stage, Kitto shouted, "He is not Dakota; we don't want to hear him." Many of the Dakota Sioux lowered their heads in despair as Bellecourt spoke. Bellecourt is Ojibwe. When Bellecourt left the platform, Reverend Kitto directed Charles Watterson to cleanse the area with burning sage. Bellecourt damped the observance by talking about the atrocities of the past. Reverend Kitto said, "This is a day to pray for the dead and wipe the tears," he said, "and start growing strength from the deaths this thing caused."

In the end, it was evident that the crowd paid close attention to the speakers and willingly participated in all of the ceremonies. Reverend Kitto remarked, "This is the beginning of healing." One thing is certain. August 19, 2012 at Ness Church was one of the most significant events in Minnesota history.

PHOTOS FROM THE HISTORICAL MOMENT



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Trail of Tears leading up to the Ness Monument.



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Reverend Kitto and President of Ness Church, Dave Lindberg, discuss the program.



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Dean Urdahl, great grandson of Ole Ness, speaks to the crowd.



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Charles Watterson burning sage.



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The attentive crowd.



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Reverend Kitto speaks to the crowd.



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Many of the Dakota hung their heads as Bellecourt spoke.



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Dakota sun dancer



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Cora Jones and Reverend Kitto



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Secretary of State, Mark Ritchie

WIPING OF TEARS





Laying of the Wreath



Round Dance for Unity



150th Anniversary Observance of the U.S.-Dakota War Handout

SERVICE

Green Lake Blue Grass Band -
12:00 -1:00 P.M. (Pre-Service)

Greetings and Introductions
Dave Lindberg, Ness Church

Invocation - Pastor J. David Nelson

1878 National Anthem
Hail Columbia - Savannah Joldersma

Speakers
Representative Dean Urdahl
Secretary of State Mark Ritchie

Ceremony of Healing

Opening
Reverend Alan Kitto - Sun dancer and Pipe Carrier,
Ordained Presbyterian Minister
Explanation of the Healing Ceremony
Spirit Calling Song
Hymn: How Great Thou Art, Dave Eliason
Prayer Song - Drum Group
Prayer - J. David Nelson
Dakota Song - Many and Great

Gathering of the People
Four Direction Song

West: Roger Trudell - Chairman Santee Sioux Nation
How we came to be Santee
Stephen Elliott, Director of Minnesota
Historical Society - Minnesota historical
relationship with Dakota people

North: Cora Jones - Secretary Santee Sioux Nation
Purity in Death when we walk this Spiritual Road
Pastor - Spiritual walk as we join together today

East: Charles Watterson - returned exiled
Maintenance supervisor Morton, MN
Living as a Dakota in this modern day
Pastor Stephen Cook, Bethlehem Lutheran
Church, St. Cloud, MN
Learning to understand and respect the Dakota

South: John Robertson - Episcopal Priest, Morton, MN
Rebirth of spirituality between Christians and
traditionalists
Jeff Williamson - Great Great Grandson of John
Williamson, missionary to the exiles
Recognizing the parallels between the Christians
and traditionalists

Wiping of the Tears Ceremony
Four Dakota Sundancers
Gail Watterson, Proctor, MN
Terri Remick, Santee, NE
Lydia Conito, Redwood Falls, MN
Cecelia Kitto, Santee, NE

Round Dance for Unity - Everyone in attendance

Laying of the wreath
Violet Urdahl - 7th generation direct descendent of Ole
Halverson Ness who was a member of the Acton burial
party

Benediction - J. David Nelson



TPT PBS filmed the entire event.

References:

- Kenneth Ness., n.d., The Original Worship Site
- Ness Church Preservation Board, n.d., Love Never Ends
- Vanderwerf, Linda, 2012, August, 20, Hope for an era of healing: Organizers hope Ness Church ceremony will wipe away tears, Retrieved from www.wctrib.com/news/region/354490-hope-era-healing-organizers-hope-ness-church-ceremony-will-wipe-away-tears