

intelligent for \$1,200 and immediately signed his deed of emancipation,” said Joel Hoekstra in an article in **The Growler** called *Up From Slavery: How Early Settler James Thompson Became a Pillar of St. Paul*, March 2020 (pp. 18-22.)

Bunson and Thompson set up a mission at Kaposia, and Marpiyawecasta was reunited. By 1839 the mission fell apart, and Brunson abandoned his post. James and Marpiyawecasta settled near Fort Snelling and then nearby Pig’s Eye settlement, a bend of the river that eventually became St. Paul.

The Thompsons moved to the less-settled area of Sha K’ Pay in 1853, where they lived with the Barnes family in Eagle Creek (now Shakopee). From 1853 until 1860, Mary and James lived in Shakopee, along with their two children, George and Sarah.

Between 1860 to August 1862, the family moved near the Lower Sioux Agency. Thompson left his family realizing (correctly) that his Dakota wife and half-Dakota, half African American children would remain safe. After the U.S.-Dakota War, James was reunited with his family and eventually returned to St. Paul.

“A collection of \$17.65 was then taken up for James Thompson, a colored man, the oldest settler in the state. Thompson came to Fort Snelling in 1828, as a slave of one of the officers. He is the only man who was ever held in slavery in Minnesota, and the only colored man who is a member of the association,” according to the **Minneapolis Daily Tribune**, June 2, 1883, p. 5, column 3.

In 1884, James and Marpiyawecasta moved to Nebraska to be closer to their son. Marpiyawecasta Mary Wabashaw Hapah Cloud Man Thompson died October 11, 1884 at her son, George Thompson home at the Santee Reservation in Nebraska.



Shakopee ca 1858 Edwin Whitefield. Minnesota Historical Society

Four days later, her husband, James Igmosapa Thompson died on October 15, 1884 also at his son’s residence at the Santee Agency, Kpox, Nebraska.

According to William D. Green in his book, **Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865-1912**, University of Minnesota Press 2015, p. 126, “In fall 1884, the man many considered to be the ‘oldest settler of Minnesota’ died on the reservation four days after his wife Mary had passed on, far from the city he had helped to build, far from the stigma of being black, far from the kind of society that St. Paul had become”



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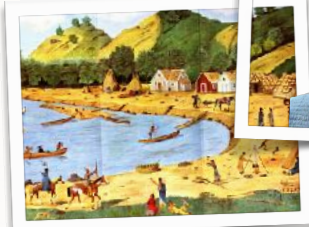
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Marpiyawecasta  
Mary Wabashaw  
Hapah Cloud Man  
Thompson

1817-1884

(Picture not of her)



Marpiyawecasta Mary Wabashaw Hapah Cloud Man was born in a Dakota village near Fort Snelling in 1817.

Her father was Maŋpiya Wičhášta Cloud Man, who was born around 1780 in Minnesota Territory. After the U.S.-Dakota War, Maŋpiya Wičhášta was forced into internment camp at Fort Snelling. “About 1,300 of the surrendered Dakota were brought down to Fort Snelling. A large picketed enclosure was built on the river bottomland and here the Dakota were interned, living in their worn-out buffalo skin lodges,” said Mark Dietrich. “Living conditions were deplorable and disease spread quickly in the crowded lodges. During the winter, about 130 people died, particularly of measles, and Cloud Man was among them. He probably was buried somewhere in the bottomland of the Minnesota River,” noted Dietrich in *The Life and Times of Cloud Man: A Dakota Leader Faces His Changing World in Ramsey County History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 2001, p. 21, at [https://publishing.rchs.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/RCHS\\_Spring2001\\_Dietrich.pdf](https://publishing.rchs.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/RCHS_Spring2001_Dietrich.pdf).

Marpiyawecasta Mary Wabashaw Hapah Cloud Man’s mother was Mniyodutawinj Scarlet in the Water Woman Cloud Man, the second wife of Maŋpiya Wičhášta Cloud Man. She was born in 1785 and died in 1855 in the Minnesota Territory.

10	William Barnes	28	M	77	England	1	Farmer
"	Sarah Barnes	20	F	72	Minnesota		
"	Mary E. Barnes	2	F	77	"		
41	James Thompson	69	M	77	Kentucky	1	"
"	Mary Ann Thompson	30	F	72	Maine		
"	George A. Thompson	74	M	72	"		
"	Charles St. Clare	8	M	72	"		

In the 1857 Census of Eagle Creek Township in what was later called Shakopee, the Thompson's, Barnes', and St. Clare all lived on a farm. James and Mary Thompson, their adopted son, Charles St. Clare, and their other two children, George and Sarah Thompson Barnes lived and work here from 1853 until 1860.

Marpiyawecasta lived with her family at village on the shore of Bde Maka Ska called *Ĥeyáta Othúnwe*, or The Village Set Back (from the Mississippi River) starting in 1829. Maŋpiya Wičhášta never intended to become a white man. He intended to always remain Dakota. He and other families developed the agricultural village, known as *Ĥeyáta Othúnwe*, as a means to survive as Dakota people. The success of the village can be measured in their ability to share food with villages in the area. *Ĥeyáta Othúnwe* prevented starvation and ensured the survival of descendants of these villages, according to <https://bdemakaska.net/place/ĥeyata-othunwe/cloudman-maŋpiya-wicasta/>.

In 1833, Marpiyawecasta married James Thompson. James was born around ca. 1799 in Virginia. His father was a white man, and his mother was Courtney, who was enslaved. James, along with his siblings and other relatives had been “owned” by George Monroe, nephew of U.S. President James Monroe, also also enslaved people. According to Walt Bachman, “George Monroe’s gambling debts compelled him to sell off Thompson and five of his kin, a transaction that apparently separated Thompson forever from others on his enslaved family.”

James Thompson was resold to John Culbertson, a sutler licensed to sell merchandise to the First Infantry. Culbertson, from New York. and First Lt. William Day headed to Fort Snelling in 1828, and Day purchased James Thompson. In fact, of the 38 officers stationed at Fort Snelling, 33 of them used an enslaved servant at

some point. In fact, slaveholding was the norm at the fort. In fact, Day repeatedly identified “James, Slave” (with no surname) as his servant on pay vouchers, according to Bachman.

In 1833, Marpiyawecasta Mary Wabashaw Hapah Cloud Man married James Thompson. During this time, James learned the Dakota language.

According to James Thompson’s half-breed scrip affidavit, #68 (signed with an “X”), Scrip Rolls, gives 1833 as the year of his marriage to Marpiyawecasta Mary Wabashaw Hapah Cloud Man, a full-blood Dakota woman, documented by Walt Bachman in his 2013 book, **Northern Slave, Black Dakota: The Life and Times of Joseph Godfrey**.

After 3 years, William Day was reassigned to Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien, and James had to move there with Day, and without Marpiyawecasta. In Prairie du Chien. Missionary Alfred Brunson wanted to convert the Dakota, but couldn’t speak the language. So Brunson devised a scheme to buy the freedom of James, who could speak Dakota from his wife, and hire him as an interpreter. “On March 14, 1837, with funds from Methodist abolitionists back east, Brunson purchased Thompson—a man deemed pious and quite