

Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi and his family protected her from murder, starvation and, at one point, from sexual assault.

Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi was found guilty for the murder of a white man and “other sundry hostile acts toward whites” and was sentenced to death. According to Jane Lamm Carroll in the book ***Daybreak Woman: An Anglo-Dakota Life*** (2020), during the Dakota War Trails in Redwood on November 1862, “Although he was reprieved when President Lincoln reduced the execution list, he was mistakenly handed in at Mankato when the name *Caske* was called and he stepped forward, taking the place of another man who went by the same name.”

Sarah Wakefield was horrified when she read a newspaper account two days after the execution and found *Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi*'s name among those who were hanged. She demanded an explanation from Reverend Stephen Riggs, who had assisted in transferring the prisoners to the gallows. Riggs had earlier pressured Wakefield to testify that she had been raped during her captivity, but she would not lie.

This is Reverend Stephen Riggs' explanation of the mistake in the letter he wrote to Sarah Wakefield after the execution:

Mrs. Wakefield, Dear Madam:

In regard to the mistake by which Chaska was hanged instead of another, I doubt whether I can satisfactorily explain it. We all felt a solemn responsibility and a fear that some mistake should occur. We had forgotten that he was condemned under the name of We-chan-hpe-wash-tay-do-pe (Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi). We knew he was called Chaska in the prison and had forgotten that any other except Robert Hopkins, who lived by Dr. Williamson, was so called. We never thought of the third one; so when the name of Chaska was called in the prison on that fatal morning, your protector answered to it and walked out. I do not think anyone was to blame. We all regretted the mistake very much. S. R. Riggs.

However, Riggs' story was not easily believable. He and the clergy and soldiers who gathered the prisoners together the morning of the execution had come to know the Dakota men very well during their

imprisonment of many months, and they especially knew *Chaska*.

Wakefield came to believe that *Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi* (*Caska*) had been deliberately executed, in retaliation for her testimony and in reaction to rumors that she and *Caska* were lovers. General Sibley, who appointed the tribunal that convicted *Caska*, privately referred to him as Wakefield's 'dusky paramour,' though she had assured Sibley there had been no sexual relations between them.

Sarah Wakefield said, "I will never believe that all in authority at Mankato had forgotten what *Caska* (*Wicaŋǰpi Wašedanpi*) was condemned for, and I am sure, in my own mind, it was done intentionally."

John and Sarah moved back to Shakopee. After the war, they had two more children, Julie E. in 1866 and John R. in 1868.

Author Kathryn Zabellet Derounian-Stodola described Dr. John Wakefield as a drinker, smoker, and bon vivant who died with outstanding debts that took up \$4,500 of an estate valued at \$5,073.

There was speculation that he may have committed suicide when he died suddenly from an overdose of opiates in February, 1874. He died at his home in Shakopee. After her husband's death, Wakefield moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. She married a younger man for a short time. Sarah Florence Brown Wakefield Henderson died on May 27, 1899. She is buried at Valley Cemetery.



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**Sarah Florence Brown
Wakefield Henderson**
1829-1899

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Sarah Florence Brown was born to working-class parents in Rhode Island on March 18, 1829. In 1854 Sarah lived in Minnesota Territory. Sarah married Dr. John Luman Wakefield, a fellow New England transplant on Sept. 27, 1856 in Jordan. Dr. Wakefield was a land speculator, legislator, and had a medical practice in Shakopee, Minnesota.

Their relationship seems to have been rocky from the start, and it wasn't helped when the doctor chose in 1861 to move with Sarah and their two very young children to the Dakota reservation in southwestern Minnesota. John Wakefield would serve as the Upper Agency physician.

Though Sarah did not view the Dakota as equal to her, she nevertheless respected them to a significant degree and valued their friendship. According to some reports, Sarah preferred the company of Dakota more than that of the Agency whites, who sometimes looked down on her. The Dakota called Sarah *Tonka-Winohiuca waste*, or large woman.

Sarah hired Dakota women and girls to help in her home; she rode out to Dakota camps to sit fireside with the women, smoking pipe with them as they cooked, learning their language and their stories.

Traditionally the Dakota people had sustained themselves by hunting and trapping, gathering and foraging, raising some crops, preserving and storing up caches of meat, fruits and vegetables, moving their camps with the seasons, rotating where they knew food would be most abundant.



Wakefield's home at the Upper Sioux Agency in 1860, where the house was located next to the agent's quarters and warehouse building. The Doctor's House was a one and one-half story farm house, measuring 30' X 20' was. It was erected for use by the agency physician, Dr. J.W. Daniels, and later Dr. J.L. Wakefield and Sarah Brown Wakefield and their two children lived here. Construction of a burr mill in the 1880s destroyed all but a few traces of the house.



But in August of 1862, the Dakota were confined to the reservation. They were largely dependent for food on unscrupulous local traders and on the rarely honorable U.S. government. Late annuity payments to the Dakota, a shortage of wild game, crop failures the previous summer and fall, extreme hunger and disease, pent-up rage over broken promises and treaty violations, resentment of government policies intended to destroy the Dakota way of life, a flood of white settlers into the traditional Dakota homeland—all of these factors and more created a tinderbox that concerned Indians and settlers alike, according to Phyllis Cole-Dai.

In pioneer riverman-turned-farmer William Cairncross' memoirs, there's a story from 1861 that took place at the Upper Sioux Agency near modern-day Granite Falls, Minn. He'd brought supplies by wagon to the Indian reservation a year before the U.S.-Dakota War erupted.

When a Dakota father with a sick child asked agency Dr. John Wakefield for some medicine, the doctor — smoking his cigar with his feet up — told him to go to hell.

"At that I was angry, and jumped up to my feet and pointed my finger at the doctor and swore an oath," Cairncross wrote, "that if I was that Indian and had come ten miles to get something for my child, and the doctor sat at the stove and refused something for him, so help me, he would never doctor another, if I were to hang for it.

There were just such things as that that made the Indians break out and massacre the whites, and I could hardly blame them," said William Cairncross from a quote in "Tales deliver a 'hot dose' of river life in the mid-1800s," by Curt Brown from the **Minneapolis Star-Tribune**, May 13, 2017.

At the onset of the U.S.-Dakota War, Wakefield's husband decided that she should travel with her children to Fort Ridgely. George Gleason, a clerk at the Lower Agency warehouse, drove Wakefield, 33, her 4-year-old James Orin, and Lucy Elizabeth (Nellie), an infant.

Two Dakota Indians stopped them. *Hapa* wished to kill both of them. *Wicaŋhpi Wašedanpi* persuaded *Hapa* to spare Wakefield, and she was taken as a war captive. Gleason was killed.

Wakefield spent six weeks living among the Mdewakanton Dakota, often in danger from a few Dakota who felt captives should be killed. *Wicaŋhpi Wašedanpi (Caska)* and his family intervened. Wakefield was still nursing her daughter. Her body was weak and unaccustomed to the outdoors.