

## Lesson 1

### Oscar Micheaux and Gertrude Simmons Bonnin

Beginning in 1904, people settled the lands west of the Missouri River. They took land claims on the newly opened reservation lands. They came from all over the world and from all walks of life. One man was the son of former slaves.

### Oscar Micheaux

Oscar Micheaux was born on a farm in the Ohio River Valley in January 1884. His parents had been slaves before the Civil War. They had thirteen children to help them work their farm. Oscar did not like farming, but he liked selling what his family grew.

As a teenager, Oscar Micheaux left home to work in Chicago. He worked for the railroad as a **porter**. In 1904, he heard about land openings on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. The land was in Gregory County, South Dakota. He signed up for the

land lottery (you read about this in Unit 6).

His number was not drawn. Instead, he bought a claim from someone else. It was just south of the town of Gregory.

Micheaux became a successful farmer. Five years later, he bought more claims in Tripp County. This land was just west of Winner. Now he owned nearly one thousand acres of land.

Micheaux also wrote about life in South Dakota. His first **novel** was called *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer*. Another one was *The Homesteader*. In these books, he told the story of living and working on the land based on his life. He gave the people and towns new names. Gregory became “Megory.” Winner became “Victor.” Then drought came, and crops failed. Micheaux lost his land. He moved away.

Micheaux started a film company in New York City. He made films of his books. He made *The Homesteader* into a

movie in 1919. He was the first African American to make a movie in the United States. The film was also the first to star African Americans. A film crew came to Gregory County to make it. Micheaux made over thirty-five films. Some were set in South Dakota. Micheaux has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He died in 1951.

### **Gertrude Simmons Bonnin**

By 1900, there were hard times on the reservations. The Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota (Sioux) people were poor. Their **culture** was under attack. Children were sent away to school. The government wanted them to be like white people. The Indians wanted their own way of life.

Gertrude Simmons Bonnin was the daughter of a white man and a Yankton woman. She saw the needs of the Indian people. She spoke up for them. She was born on the Yankton Indian Reservation in 1875. Her Nakota name was Zitkala-Sa (“Red Bird”). She went to local schools and

to boarding schools. Later she taught at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.

Children went there from all over the United States. They were taught to be like white people. Bonnin did not want the old ways to be forgotten. She wrote her first book. It was about the **traditions** of Indian peoples. It was called Old Indian Legends.

Bonnin began to work on reservations in South Dakota. There she saw the hard lives of the people. The government had divided the land into farms. The Dakotas, Lakotas, and Nakotas had no **experience** as farmers. Their land was not good for growing crops. Farming failed. Indian people sold their land at low prices. The government gave them less food and supplies. The Indians were very poor.

Gertrude Bonnin was angry. The United States government was not doing the right things. It was treating her people badly. It was not doing what it said in the treaties. The people were sick and dying. They lived

in shacks. The government was not taking good care of Indian lands. It did not see the value in native ways. Bonnin spoke about these things in public. In 1916, she moved to Washington, D.C. There she worked for Indian rights. Later she started the National Council of American Indians to speak up for Indians. Her work helped. The government made changes for the better in the 1930s.

Bonnin died in 1938.

### **Vocabulary**

**culture** (n.), ways of doing things that are learned from one's society or community

**experience** (n.), learning gotten by seeing and doing

**novel** (n.), a long story made up by the writer

**porter** (n.), a person who waits on people riding in a railroad car

**traditions** (n.), customs passed down from older to younger people

## Lesson 2

### Peter Norbeck and Mary Shields Pyle

At first, the people who governed the state of South Dakota were from other places. They came to the state as adults. They were homesteaders or town builders. After 1900, people who grew up in the area took over the task of governing. These leaders helped the state find its own identity.

### Peter Norbeck

Peter Norbeck was the first **governor** to be born in Dakota. He was also the first United States senator from South Dakota to be born here. As a young man, he helped to solve water problems. As governor and senator, he built parks and roads. His work left a special heritage for South Dakota.

Norbeck was born in a **dugout** in southeastern Dakota Territory. The year was 1870. Later his family moved west of the Missouri River. They homesteaded in

Charles Mix County. Here he learned that low rainfall made farming hard. Wells were needed to water the crops and the livestock. Most wells in South Dakota were artesian wells. They were very deep. It cost a lot of money to drill them. Norbeck found a way to drill wells that cost less money. Soon he was drilling wells all across South Dakota.

Norbeck set up his business in Redfield in Spink County. Voters elected him to the state senate in 1908. Later the people of South Dakota elected him governor. He tried different ways to solve problems for citizens. He set up state hail insurance for farmers. He started a coal mine and a cement plant. He helped to set up Custer State Park. Today, his work with parks is what we remember most.

In 1920, Norbeck won a seat in the United States Senate. From there, he worked to get scenic roads built in the Black Hills. Soon Needles Highway and Iron Mountain Road were built. Norbeck also found money

for other parks and memorials. Norbeck died in 1936.

## Mary Shields Pyle

From 1904 to 1915, many single women took claims in South Dakota. Married women still worked mostly in the home. Neither could vote, but many women wanted to vote. Then the First World War sent South Dakota men to the battlefield. Women took more roles outside the home. They soon wanted more rights.

Mary (“Mamie”) Shields was born in 1866. She moved to Dakota Territory as a young girl. She worked as a schoolteacher in Brookings and Hand counties. She married John L. Pyle and later moved to Huron. After her husband died in 1902, Mary Pyle had little money. She also had four children she had to feed. She took over her husband’s work. She ran his business. She was active in **civic** affairs. She served on the Board of Trustees for Huron College. She was active in the local Red Cross.

Votes for women seemed only right to someone like Mary Pyle. She worked to change the law that said only men could vote. Pyle was a good public speaker. Soon she was president of the State Woman Suffrage Association. She talked to people all across the state. She wrote about woman **suffrage** for the newspapers. In 1918, South Dakota women won the right to vote. They could vote in state elections. Two years later, women across the United States gained the vote. This was done through the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Pyle helped make South Dakota one of the first states to **ratify** the **amendment**.

The right to vote was important to Pyle. It made women full citizens. Now they could run for public office. Pyle died in 1949. Her daughter, Gladys Pyle, followed in her mother’s footsteps. Gladys Pyle served as a state legislator and United

States senator. She used the rights her mother had won.

### **Vocabulary**

**amendment** (n.), a revision or change

**civic** (adj.), belonging to a city

**dugout** (n.), a hole dug into a hillside used as a house

**governor** (n.), the head of a state

**ratify** (v.), to approve

**suffrage** (n.), the right to vote

## Lesson 3

### Charles Badger Clark, Jr., and Ida Anding McNeil

Before long, South Dakota had poets and writers to sing its praises. One of the best known was a man named Badger.

#### Charles Badger Clark, Jr.

Charles Badger Clark, Jr., wrote cowboy poetry. He painted word pictures of cowboys at work. He praised western values. He sang of the beauty of the Black Hills. Clark was only three months old when he came to South Dakota in 1883. By the time he graduated from high school, he had lived in the towns of Plankinton, Mitchell, Huron, and Deadwood.

Then his life changed. He got **tuberculosis**. A dry climate often helped to cure this disease. Clark spent four years as a ranch hand near Tombstone, Arizona. He wrote poems about working on the ranch. His stepmother sent one to a magazine. The magazine was called the *Pacific Monthly*.

Clark soon wrote for the magazine all the time.

In 1910, Clark returned to South Dakota. He settled in the Black Hills. His cabin in Custer State Park is called Badger Hole. He wrote several books of poetry. One book was called *Sun and Saddle Leather*. His book *Spike* was full of short stories. Clark's poems "The Job" and "A Cowboy's Prayer" became favorites all over the United States.

To earn enough money to live on, Clark toured the country telling stories. In 1939, the governor named him poet **laureate** of South Dakota. He died in 1957.

#### Ida Anding McNeil

In the 1920s, farmers and ranchers were often **isolated**. Towns were far apart in South Dakota, and roads were still poor. Telephones and radios helped shrink the distance. They put rural people in touch with the rest of the world. Ida Anding McNeil was a pioneer in radio **broadcasting**.

Ida Anding was born in 1888. She came to South Dakota when she was eight years old. Her father worked on steamboats. He came to fix a ferry on the Missouri River at Pierre and stayed. After Ida Anding graduated from high school, she worked for the South Dakota State Historical Society. She made the first state flag. She resigned from her job when she married Dana McNeil.

Dana McNeil worked on the Chicago & North Western Railway. He also had one of the first **amateur** radio licenses in the country. Ida Anding McNeil broadcast the news to him during his train trips between Rapid City and Pierre. People on farms and ranches listened to her broadcasts. She started to say things for these extra ears to hear. She set up a schedule. People always knew when to turn on their radios for the news from Pierre.

In 1927, Ida Anding McNeil got a **commercial** license. Her station was KGFX.

She gave many hours to public service. Her most popular program was “Hospital News.” McNeil told about the patients at the hospital in Pierre. Doctors and ranchers liked this service. Ranch families who lived far away could learn about family members. McNeil let the family know when to come to town to take the patient home. McNeil also reported the weather so that ranchers could get their livestock in if a storm was coming.

McNeil was given many awards for her service to the community. She is in the South Dakota Broadcasters’ Hall of Fame. She died in 1974.

### **Vocabulary**

**amateur** (adj.), set up for fun and not for pay

**broadcasting** (n.), sending out a radio or television program

**commercial** (adj.), set up to make money

**isolated** (adj.), without any near neighbors; separate; alone

**laureate** (adj.), honored

**tuberculosis** (n.), a disease that causes sores on lungs and bones



## Lesson 4

### Oscar Howe and Francis Case

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt created the New Deal. This government program gave help to people during the Great Depression. This was a time of business failures and drought (read more about this in Unit 9). The New Deal gave jobs to **unemployed** workers. People could then pay their bills. In return, the country got roads, parks, dams, and works of art.

### Oscar Howe

As a child, Oscar Howe drew in the dirt with sticks because he did not have paper and pencils. He overcame many such troubles to become a great artist. Howe was a Yanktonais Nakota (Sioux). He was born on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation in 1915. He started school at the Pierre Indian School. Then his troubles began. His mother died. An eye disease nearly blinded him. He got a painful skin disease. He went

home to his grandmother to recover. She taught him many Nakota traditions and symbols. He used these in his paintings.

Howe later went back to school in New Mexico. Here he began studying art. He graduated second in his class from the art program at the Santa Fe Indian School. His work was shown in cities across the United States. Howe came back to South Dakota during the Great Depression. He began working for the Artists Project of the New Deal. He painted **murals** in Mitchell and Mobridge.

The Second World War (learn about this in Unit 9) ended the New Deal. Howe served as a United States soldier. He went to North Africa and Europe. When he came home, he began to work at the Mitchell Corn Palace. He created murals of corn for this building. Howe also started his college education. When he was done, he worked as art director for the Pierre schools. Later he became a teacher at the University of South

Dakota. Howe's art is known around the world. He was artist laureate of South Dakota. He died in 1983, but his art lives on.

## **Francis Higbee Case**

Many changes followed the Second World War. Projects began on the Missouri River. Four big dams were built in South Dakota. They made **irrigation** possible in dry years. In wet years, they helped with flood control. The dams made **hydroelectric** power in all seasons.

Francis Higbee Case helped bring these dams to South Dakota. He was born in Iowa in 1896. His family moved to Sturgis when he was thirteen years old. After college, Case went to work for the *Rapid City Journal*. He later worked for the *Hot Springs Star* and the *Custer Chronicle*. On the job, Case **promoted** the Black Hills. He asked President Calvin Coolidge to come to Custer State Park. Coolidge took his vacation there in 1927. Tourism boomed

when the State Game Lodge became the Summer White House.

In 1936, voters elected Case to the United States House of Representatives. He served seven terms in the House. He then moved to the Senate. In Washington, Case promoted dam projects. His efforts helped to fund four big dams on the Missouri River. Case was also known for his work for weather modification. He thought that scientists could change the weather. If it rained more, South Dakota farmers could grow more crops. Case also worked for better highways across the state and nation. He died in 1962.

## **Vocabulary**

**hydroelectric** (adj.), making electricity by the force of running water

**irrigation** (n.), bringing water to dry land through ditches, pipes, or streams

**murals** (n.), paintings or other works of art done on a wall or ceiling

**promoted** (v.), pushed to the front

**unemployed** (adj.), out of work; jobless