

## THE REVEREND WILLARD RICHARDSON

The Reverend Willard Richardson was born in Harford Susquehanna County Pennsylvania on May 23, 1815. His father, Caleb Jr., was an ordained Presbyterian minister and was the founder of the University at Hartford Pennsylvania. As a young man he began teaching with his father. In 1830 he was an assistant at what would later be known as the Franklin Academy. He entered Hamilton College in 1832 and graduated in 1837. In 1837 he became principal of the academy at Franklin, Pennsylvania. It is said that 'he exerted a large influence upon his pupils and molded the character of a number who became prominent in national affairs.'

Rev. Richardson attended Auburn Theological Seminary. He married Harriet A. Tyler in 1840. After their marriage they both taught for a while in Bethamy, Pennsylvania. In 1846, Rev. Richardson was ordained at Mt. Pleasant (New York?). In 1848 he returned to the Franklin Academy and became a professor of mathematics and natural sciences. He also taught ancient languages and belles-lettres (literature taught for its aesthetic values).

In 1852 Rev. Richardson became pastor of the church at Milburn (Conkin) New York. As far as what is known, this was his first departure from the educational system and probably his first calling as a minister. Rev. Richardson was apparently a fervent abolitionist. Although the times were distressful, the church grew and participated in the activities of the day including the slavery issue and the oncoming rebellion. The expanding membership, revivals, political debates and humanistic concerns could not stop the onslaught of the Civil War.

Rev. Richardson continued to lead the Conklin Presbyterian Church until May of 1864, at which time, according to the church records, May 1, 1864: "Reverend Isreal Brundage preached in Milburn in the place of Reverend Willard Richardson, who had gone to the Army as Chaplin of the 86<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteers." At the end of the war, in 1865, Rev. Richardson purchased a large tract of land in Kent County Delaware, where later the village of Houston sprung up.

In 1866 he received a charge from the Presbyterian Home Mission Society to organize schools and churches in South Carolina among the freed

people. In 1869 Rev. Richardson arrived in Winnsboro. He established a Presbyterian boarding school and he became the first minister at Calvary Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. which was established in 1870. While in Winnsboro he was also the minister at Shiloh Presbyterian Church which was established in 1879.

Not only did he work to improve the educational opportunities for African-Americans, Rev. Richardson was credited with the graded school system in Winnsboro, and this system became a model for many other towns. He established summer schools for all teachers to upgrade the methods of teaching in white and black schools.

In the summer of 1887 Rev. Richardson left Winnsboro to retire to his farm in Houston, Delaware. He died there on March 19, 1897.

The African American Presbyterian, of Charlotte, N.C. wrote: "It is befitting that we express the warm appreciation we have always had for Reverend Richardson, by a memorial service at Winnsboro in June."

The Evangelist of New York wrote: "His gentle manner, kind disposition, unblemished character, made him an object of veneration and love. His presence was a benediction.