

What Ever Happened to... James Shelland

James C. Shelland was born in the village of Worcester, in Otsego County NY, on January 13, 1845, to Isaac Shelland¹ (1803-1880) and Abigail [nee Wright] Shelland (1807-1873). Isaac was an officer in the local Congregational Church at Worcester, and James was raised in a pious home within that denomination. At some point he identified with the Methodists and was admitted into the Wyoming Conference on trial in 1870 while attending Union College in Schenectady – from which he graduated in 1871. His first four appointments were all in Otsego County NY (or, in the case of Sidney, just across the county line). His service record as given in the Wyoming Conference journals is as follows.

1870	admitted on trial
1872	ordained deacon
1874	ordained elder
1870-71	Westville NY
1871-73	Morris NY
1873-75	Sidney Plains NY
1875-76	Hartwick NY
1876-78	Carbondale PA
1878-80	New Berlin NY
1880-83	Wyoming PA
1883-86	missionary to Dakota
1886	no longer listed

This is strange for a number of reasons. First, the Methodist Episcopal denomination was typically rather careful about accounting for people – and an explanation was expected in the “disciplinary questions” section of the journal for people who were dropped from the conference’s ministerial roll. Among the possible disciplinary choices for no longer being listed were transferred to another conference, located, withdrew, expelled, or died – but Rev. Shelland appears in none of those categories. And so... what happened?

Second, James C. Shelland was not the type of person the conference was likely to allow to fall through the cracks. He was a college graduate and had worked his way up through the ranks to some of the most prestigious appointments in the conference: Carbondale PA, New Berlin NY and finally Wyoming PA – the home of the conference’s educational institution. It may be assumed that he was sent off as a missionary to the Dakotas with great fanfare and expectation – especially as

¹ Isaac Shelland passed away in Wyoming PA. It is unknown whether the widowed father had been living with his son, or was just visiting. He is buried beside his wife in the family plot at Maple Grove Cemetery in Worcester NY.

persons serving in the Dakota Missionary Conference, which at that point was still a missionary endeavor, retained membership in their home conferences.

While it was not uncommon for nineteenth century pastors from the Wyoming and Central Pennsylvania Conferences to head westward, never to return, more often than not an obituary in the journals of one of the western conferences can supply all the missing pieces. Such is not the case for J.C. Shelland, who was apparently was not a member of any Methodist conference when he died. And so the question remains... what ever happened to the promising James C. Shelland?

Marriage and Family

Although the conference journals are silent on the matter of any marriage or children for Rev. Shelland, secular records can fill in some of these missing pieces. While still a student at Union College, James C. Shelland married Miss Annie Dorothy Trickey in 1869. Annie was the daughter of John Trickey (1809-1882) and Elizabeth Jane [nee Young] Trickey (1812-1882). Both natives of New Hampshire, John and Elizabeth had lived in Boston MA before settling in Worcester NY. The moderately affluent Trickeys were not church-goers and were somewhat taken back when their college-educated daughter professed conversion and committed herself to a man planning to be a Methodist itinerant – but there was no ill will, and John Trickey donated the bell when the Worcester Methodist Episcopal church building was erected in 1871.

James and Annie had two children that lived into adulthood: John T. (1872) and Annie (1878). The missionary report in the 1883 journal for the Wyoming Charge lists donations of \$2.00 each for the parents Rev. J.C. and Mrs. A.D. Shelland, and 50 cents each for the following: Annie Shelland, John T. Shelland, Effie Trickey,² and Eddie Shelland.³

The work in the Dakotas

Both of Annie's parents died in 1882, and that was likely a factor in the timing of the Shellands' decision to present themselves as missionaries to the Dakotas. While the Wyoming Conference journal gives no details as to the specific

² Effie is often the short form of Euphemia, but no Euphemia Trickey can be identified. This may be Mrs. Shelland's older sister Ellen Augusta Trickey (1846-1922) who was still single and did not marry [Elmer Ellsworth Pickett (1858-1927)] until she was about 40. A reasonable scenario is that she had been living with her parents and came to stay for a time with the Shellands after John and Elizabeth Trickey died in 1882.

³ Eddie Shelland is unknown. It appears that James and Annie did not have a son by that name. Considering the order of the names, it is possible that Eddie was brother to James just as Effie is suspected of being a sister to Annie. The diminutive form of Edward may suggest a person with special needs, which agrees with the previous possibility that James' widowed father who died in 1880 had been living with them.

nature or location of their work, the General Minutes indicate the following appointments in the Dakotas.

1883-84	Alexandria
1884-86	DeSmet and Norland
1886 ⁴	“transfer” to [South] Dakota Conference
1886-87	Gary and Canby
1887-89	Vermillion
1889-90	Millbank
1890-92	Aberdeen
1892-94	superintendent of Indian Schools, Sisseton Agency
1894	transfer to Minnesota Northern Conference

Shelland immediately took an active role in the South Dakota Conference, both in the workings of the conference and out in the field, and his name appears in numerous conference materials in various contexts – such as “Methodism dates in Blunt from May 6, 1883, when J.C. Shelland organized the work with 20 members.”⁵

The Indian School at Sisseton SD was a boarding school under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and it was common practice for clergy from various denominations to be involved with the schools – as this provided the denomination an established (and financed) structure to use as a point of contact with Native Americans. The following 1893 report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs gives a good picture of the scope of Shelland’s work there.

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF SISSETON SCHOOL

SISSETON AGENCY, S. DAK. June 30, 1893

SIR: It is a pleasure to report the improved physical, mental, and moral conditions of this school. The increased comfort in the boys’ home, and the thoroughness of the matron as to cleanliness and sanitary precautions, have been our protection from an epidemic which was felt in our neighborhood, but of which not a single case has developed in the school.

Beside the thorough system of gymnastics, a military drill was added this year, which has improved the bearing as well as the health of the pupils. The school has given its time to solid studies, yet its holiday exhibitions have been highly gratifying. The teachers have done that faithful work which has already resulted in the passing of a

⁴ This is the year that James C. Shelland is no longer listed as a member of the Wyoming Conference. In 1886 the North Dakota Conference was formally organized, but the Shellands were living and ministering in South Dakota – where the work continued to operate as the Dakota Mission Conference. That work seems to have evolved within a few years into the South Dakota Conference, with James as ministerial member, without any formal organization or list of charter members.

⁵ John G. Palmer’s 1888 *Palmer’s Directory of the Methodist Episcopal Church for Dakota Conference*, page 38.

large number of pupils up to studies of a higher grade. Beside such regular recitations as were not provided for other teachers, I have been hearing classes in algebra, botany, rhetoric, typewriting, and telegraphy.

The harness and shoe maker has taught several boys to do a very fair grade of shopwork. The farm looks better and has an increased acreage. The garden is larger and has a greater variety. Twenty prizes have stimulated the students to do their best work in every department, and those who made faithful effort, yet did not attain prizes, have been liberally encouraged.

Severe but kindly discipline has resulted in improved order. With the opening of the spring our pupils have ranged on Saturdays for miles, and runaways seem to have entirely ceased. While corporal punishment has been ready for any pupil who might need it, it has lately been rarely needed, and employees are obeyed with prompt affection in most cases.

The teachers have shown a hearty desire to lift up this people in morals, in manners, and in spiritual things. A Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor has held its meetings every Friday evening, and the pupils as well as the employees have taken turns in conducting its exercises. The pupils have attended religious services three times on Sunday.

Yours very truly,

J.C. Shelland, Superintendent

The Minnesota Northern Conference

The record of J.C. Shelland in the Minnesota Northern Conference [later re-named the Northern Minnesota Conference] is an interesting mix of urban, rural, and repeated appointments.

1894	transfer to Minnesota Northern Conference
1894-95	Hutchinson Vineyard
1895-96	Montevideo and Rosewood
1896-97	Ortonville and Pleasant Valley
1897-98	Minneapolis Thirteenth Avenue
1898-00	Ortonville and Pleasant Valley
1900-01	Montevideo and Rosewood
1901-02	Minneapolis Western Avenue
1902-03	Granite Falls
1903-05	conference evangelist
1905-09	retired
1909	withdrew

Mrs. Shelland died in 1897, while James was serving Montevideo and Rosewood. Because her obituary⁶ gives additional interesting insights, it is reprinted here in its entirety.

⁶ May 26, 1897, *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, page 23.

SHELLAND – Mrs. Annie D. Shelland, wife of Rev. Dr. J.C. Shelland, member of Northern Minnesota Conference, was born in Dover, N.H., October 13, 1847. In early girlhood she removed with her parents to Boston. She was graduated at Fort Edward Institute in 1867 with the honor of the French salutatory and honorable mention for high standing in a class which had in it Dr. Newell and Dean Julia Bulkley of the University of Chicago. She was converted at Fort Edward and went home to meet Benjamin F. Butler⁷ and Senator Cragin⁸ at her father's table and was invited to take wine. Her answer was a triumph. Within a few weeks she was invited to conduct family prayers in the household where neither of her parents was in church membership.

She was married in 1869 and had been in the ranks of the itineracy with her husband since April 15, 1870, when he joined the Wyoming Conference at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Several times she laid aside all else for personal work till hundreds had been converted. Yet she never made an exhortation and rarely prayed over two minutes at any one time in public. When affluence and position suddenly gave way to poverty and suffering she went with her invalid husband to South Dakota into a claim shanty, and for six years spent every summer on the homestead.

Three children died in infancy. Her husband, her son and daughter were with her when she passed away, May 4, 1897, in Hutchinson, Minn.

Three years after the death of Annie, J.C. Shelland married one of her close friends, Julia Ellen Bulkley – who was mentioned Annie's obituary. Once a high school teacher, Bulkley received her Ph.D. in 1895 and "had the distinction of being the fifth woman educator in the United States."⁹ At the time of her marriage to Shelland, she was Associate Professor of Pedagogy and Dean in the College for Teachers at the University of Chicago.¹⁰ Because of her significance, *The Chronicle* presents the following brief biographical sketch.

Julia Bulkley Shelland – Born in Danbury CT to Turney Bulkley (1816-1874) and Olivia [nee Warren] Bulkley (1820-1874), Julia Ellen Bulkley (1845-1935) was the product of two old New England families that valued on education and religion. Her paternal grandfather Rev. Nathan Bulkey (1787-1858) was a noted Baptist minister in Connecticut, and her maternal grandfather Rev. John Warren (1785-1868) was pastor of the Baptist church in Carmel NY for 30 years.

Miss Bulkley graduated from the Fort Edward Collegiate Institute in 1867 and began her educational career as a high school teacher in Danbury CT – an unusual position for a female in the 1860's, but only a sample of what was yet to come. She moved to Plainfield NJ in 1872, where she progressed through the ranks from high school teacher

⁷ Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818-1893) had been a Union general in the Civil War and was a nationally influential political figure. He later served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts and as governor of Massachusetts.

⁸ Aaron Harrison Cragin (1821-1898) was a prominent New England politician and U.S. Senator from New Hampshire 1865-77.

⁹ Henry Anson Castle's 1915 *Minnesota, Its Story and Biography, Volume 3*, page 1283.

¹⁰ 1899 *Annual Register of the University of Chicago*, page 17.

to high school principal to (after further graduate study) superintendent of the Plainfield Public Schools. She then studied at the University of Zurich 1892-95, from which institution she received her Ph.D.

The Christian Advocate for June 21, 1900, page 21, reported the wedding as follows:

James C. Shelland, of Northern Minnesota Conference, and Julia E. Bulkley, Ph.D., late professor in the University of Chicago, Dean of Women, and head of Beecher Hall, were married at the residence of Mr. N.T. Bulkley in Danbury, Conn., on June 6, Dr. A.C. Hubbard¹¹ officiating. On June 12, Dr. and Mrs. Shelland sailed from New York for Europe by the steamer Astoria.

As seen by Dr. Shelland's ministerial record, he returned from his honeymoon to serve in the Northern Minnesota Conference for four more years before retiring at age 59. But his ministry was not over.

In the Congregational Church

J.C. Shelland began serving the Congregational Church in Morris MN in 1904, the year of his official retirement in the Methodist Episcopal denomination. He continued his Methodist contacts for several years, however, as he was still listed as a conference evangelist for 1904-05, and he contributed an obituary to the *Northwest Christian Advocate* as late as 1907. But he returned to his Congregational heritage for good in 1909, when he formally withdrew from the Northern Minnesota Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and was recognized as an official Congregational preacher.

Shelland accepted two calls in the Congregational Church and served for a period of ten years before permanently retiring from pastoral ministry in 1914. Those calls were to Morris MN (1904-07) and Mizpah Church (1907-14) in the Hopkins section of Minneapolis MN. In each congregation he appears to have served with vigor and success – as seen in the following published accounts, one from each congregation.

¹²MORRIS – Rev. J.C. Shelland pastor. A great union meeting has just closed here. About 340 have accepted Christ or renewed their allegiance with him. People for miles around have attended the meeting. The services were conducted by Evangelist Chas. Cullen Smith¹³ and his singer, Prof. R.B. Holden.¹⁴

¹¹ Andrew C. Hubbard (1839-1907) was a nationally prominent Baptist pastor serving in Danbury CT. Being the pastor of a church in Springfield IL at the time, he was one of the pastors who officiated at the funeral services of Abraham Lincoln.

¹² *The Advance*, a publication of the Congregational Church, for March 15, 1906.

¹³ Charles Cullen Smith (1857-1931) of Chicago held union evangelistic campaigns across the United States.

¹⁴ Rollin B. Holden was a Congregational missionary/evangelist until entering the pastorate in 1916.

¹⁵HOPKINS, after a period approaching coma, has had a hopeful recovery under the attention of Dr. and Mrs. J.C. Shelland. The church building has been moved and improved, a parsonage is in the building, a Woman's Missionary Society is in successful operation, a prayer meeting has been instituted. Best of all, there is a spirit of unity and a disposition to do things such as not been seen in twenty years of church life. It is Hopeful Hopkins now.

James C. Shelland retired permanently from congregational ministry in 1914 – at which point he and Mrs. Shelland traveled extensively in Europe and the middle East, visited schools in other countries, and wrote about them in voluminous diaries. Those diaries are part of the Bulkley-Shelland Family Papers in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College in Northampton MA.

The Children of James and Annie Shelland

No account of what ever happened to J.C. Shelland would be complete without mention of his two children, whose careers reflect the priority that their parents placed on education and reaching one's full potential.

Son John Trickey Shelland, MD, (1872–1933) became a physician and surgeon of note within the state of Minnesota. He graduated from pharmacy school in 1894 and worked in that field for a few years before entering medical school and graduating from the medical school of Hamline University of St. Paul in 1900. He later took post-graduate courses in surgery at Hamline University, and in the eye, ear, nose and throat at the Chicago Polyclinic – and that has become his area of specialization.

Daughter Annie Shelland (1878–1964) continued the family tradition of female education, developing a state-wide reputation for her educational work in Minnesota. She is listed in the 1924 *Who's Who Among Minnesota Women*, page 345, and one account describes her as “the most interesting woman in the state of Minnesota today.”¹⁶ She was superintendent of Koochiching county schools from 1907 to 1916, and then assistant rural school inspector for the state of Minnesota from 1916 to 1920, before resigning to marry C. Eugene Williams.

The two children of James and Annie who died as infants, Ellen Elizabeth Shelland (2/4/1871 – 8/7/1871) and Abbie Shelland (11/12/1876 – 7/3/1877), are buried in Worcester NY – in the same cemetery as James' parents and many other Shelland relatives.

¹⁵ 1914 *Annual Minutes of the General Congregational Association of Minnesota*.

¹⁶ International Falls Press, March 6, 1913. International Falls used to be called Koochiching Falls. Annie Shelland was the first superintendent of schools in this large undeveloped region, and she became a well-known figure as she campaigned for the improvement of rural roads.