

the following reasons why he believed Sibsagar was the place in which to establish the future mission. First, Sibsagar had every advantage over Jaipur in reference to location, as it was only a few hours drive from the Brahmaputra River which served as the main thoroughfare and was a two days ride over a comparatively good road from Dibrugarh. The road to Jorhat was also open and brought it within one day's journey of Sibsagar. Jorhat was the most densely populated district of the province, and the capital of the Assamese Rajah. Second, the populous part of North Lakhimpur, a district on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, could be visited from Sibsagar better than from any other place. Third, Sibsagar had a physician, — an item of importance, as past experiences had proved, and this physician was friendly to the missionaries and gave all needed medical attention free. Fourth, Barker felt that he could more safely leave his family in Sibsagar, while he was about distributing tracts in various communities, than he could in any other place. Fifth, the principal government of the district was lodged in the court of Sibsagar, which brought together the most active, learned, and intelligent people and afforded an important channel of communication with the whole district. Sixth, the headquarters of the army was there; and because of that a monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 was being made. This gave a strong impulse to trade and contributed to the permanency of the population. There were also a hospital, a jail, and a number of brick edifices in process of construction. A government school was to be established, similar to the one at Gauhati, in which English and Bengali were to be taught. Further, Captain Jenkins was of the opinion that there was no likelihood of the headquar-

ters ever being changed from Sibsagar, at least not for many years to come.

On May 24, 1841, at about twelve o'clock noon, a little canoe, containing many strange boxes indicative of European ownership, moored on the muddy banks of Dikho River, in the village of Sibsagar. Mr. and Mrs. Barker, the new missionaries, had arrived to make this place their permanent residence. A few weeks later another canoe brought the Brown family thither for medical attention, and as it turned out, for residence, for in a consultation with the other brethren the Browns were advised to remain in Sibsagar. Bronson, although reluctant to leave the Naga Hills, also had been impressed by Sibsagar; and he was quick to see that his usefulness as a missionary could be enhanced if this station was made headquarters; and while he thus relinquished the work among the Nagas he did so with the hope that by winning the Assamese the Nagas would also come to the knowledge of Christ. The historical significance of Sibsagar is of interest; and much could be said in regard to its relation to the province. Suffice it to say that it had been the headquarters of native rule for several centuries; and in 1839, when the British took over the government from the Ahom rajah, they also moved headquarters to Sibsagar. It thus became the capital of upper and central Assam; and Brown wrote in 1841: "It is now probably the largest village this side of Gauhati."¹

The mission bungalow was located on the banks of the beautiful artificial Siva's Sea — a sheet of water covering an area of one hundred twenty acres and from which the village got its name. Legend has it that it was dug in 1733 by Siva Singh, one of the Ahom rajahs, to commemorate his conversion to Hinduism.