

Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biography By John W. Jordan, LL.D., Librarian Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Author of "Colonial Families Of Philadelphia;" "Revolutionary History of Bethlehem," and Various Other Works. Illustrated, Volume I, New York, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914



**NORCROSS, Rev. George**, Educator, Clergyman. The **Reverend George Norcross**, D. D., of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, for nearly half a century the devoted and deeply loved pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in that city, belongs on his father's side to a family of English origin, while through his mother he is a descendant of Scotch-Irish ancestors.

**Abraham Norcross**, great-grandfather of the **Reverend George Norcross**, was born in New Jersey, and in early manhood settled at Milton, Pennsylvania, subsequently removing to the then new county of Erie, in the same State, where he passed the remainder of his life. He married **Nancy Fleming**, and their son **John** is mentioned below. **John**, son of **Abraham** and **Nancy (Fleming) Norcross**, was born in New Jersey, but grew to manhood on the banks of the Susquehanna River. He preceded his parents to Erie County, where he married **Margaret McCann**, who was born about 1790, in the North of Ireland.

**Hiram**, eldest child of **John** and **Margaret (McCann) Norcross**, was born July 9, 1809, near the town of Erie. He continued to reside in that part of Pennsylvania until 1844, when he removed to Monmouth, Illinois, where the latter part of his life was spent. During all his active years he followed agricultural pursuits, and for nearly four decades was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. He married, June 1, 1837, **Elizabeth**, only daughter of **Thomas** and **Sarah (Gibson) McClelland**, of Crawford County, Pennsylvania. **Mrs. McClelland** was the youngest daughter of **Hugh Gibson**, who was captured by the Indians in 1756, in Sherman's Valley, at the same time that his mother, the widow of **David Gibson**, was shot and scalped. The scene of this tragedy was Robinson's Fort, near the site of Centre Church, Perry County, Pennsylvania. Of the children born to **Mr.** and **Mrs. Norcross** the following lived to maturity: George, mentioned below; **Hon. William Charles**, a banker in Wichita, Kansas; **Hiram Fleming**, a lawyer, of Los Angeles, California; **Isaiah**, of Monmouth, Illinois; **Thomas Rice**, of Liberty, Nebraska; and **Sarah Gibson**, deceased, wife of **Henry Beckwith**, of New London, Connecticut. The death of **Hiram Norcross**, the father of the family, occurred in 1879. **George**, eldest child of **Hiram** and **Elizabeth (McClelland) Norcross**, was born April 8, 1838, near Erie, Pennsylvania, and was six years old when his parents removed to Monmouth, Illinois, where he received his early education in the public schools and at the select school presided over by Mr. W. B. Jenks. He then entered McDonough College, at McComb, Illinois, passing thence to Monmouth College, where he graduated in the class of 1861. He then began his theological studies at the McCormick Chicago,

and in his second year was given a professorship in Monmouth College. April 18, 1863, he was licensed to preach, and for seventeen months served as supply of a church at North Henderson, Illinois. In the autumn of 1864 he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, remaining one year, and at the end of that time received a call from his old church at North Henderson. On June 6, 1865, he was ordained and installed as the pastor of those who had so greatly appreciated his services, and among whom his labors were signally blessed.

In 1866 **Dr. Norcross** was called to the Presbyterian Church of Galesburg, Illinois, where he remained two years and a half, at the end of that time receiving a call from the Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, which he accepted, and in January, 1869, entered upon the duties of his pastorate. Under his leadership the work of the church flourished greatly, the membership being largely augmented. During his first year the manse was built, and during the second the old church edifice was torn down to make way for the present Gothic structure, which was dedicated on May 29, 1873.

In 1879 Princeton University conferred upon **Dr. Norcross**, in recognition of his literary attainments and faithful ministerial services, the degree of Doctor of Divinity. While devoting himself rigorously to the work of his own congregation, he was known, both as a minister and a citizen, as the friend of every reform. He gave much thought and labor to the temperance cause, and when the question of constitutional amendment in the interest of prohibition "was before the people in 1889 he addressed many public meetings in its behalf, and his famous "Ox Sermon," or "Our Responsibility for the Drink Traffic," preached before the Presbytery, was printed and widely circulated. In 1886 the centennial anniversary of the Presbytery of Carlisle was celebrated, and **Dr. Norcross** became the editor, compiler and in part the author of the publication entitled "The Centennial Memorial of the Presbytery of Carlisle." The work consists of two volumes, and is a valuable historical and biographical review of the origin and growth of Presbyterianism in Southern Central Pennsylvania. As the result of this and other literary work **Dr. Norcross** was made a member of the American Society of Church History, the American Historical Association, and of the Scotch-Irish Society of America. In 1896, at the request of the committee of arrangements, **Dr. Norcross** prepared a paper on "The Scotch-Irish in the Cumberland Valley," which he read before the Eighth Scotch-Irish Congress in Harrisburg. In 1898 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church celebrated the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Westminster Assembly which was convened by the Long Parliament of England in 1663. **Dr. Norcross** was requested to prepare a paper telling "The Story of the Westminster Assembly," which he delivered during the sessions of the General Assembly at Winona Lake, Indiana, in May, 1898. This paper was published in the volume, "Westminster Anniversary Addresses." In the autumn of 1899, **Dr. Norcross** was made moderator of the Presbyterian Synod at Erie, Pennsylvania. In 1877 he was an associate member of the first Pan-Presbyterian Council held in Edinburgh, Scotland, and in 1899 was a member of the Seventh Council convened in Washington, District of Columbia. He has represented the Presbytery of Carlisle four times in the General Assembly: in 1871 at Chicago, in 1874 at St. Louis, in 1885 at Cincinnati, and in 1895 at Pittsburgh, serving in the last two assemblies as chairman of important standing committees. A pastorate of thirty years' duration was remarkable in the history of Carlisle, and the thirtieth anniversary of **Dr. Norcross's** devoted service in the Second Presbyterian Church was appropriately commemorated by the congregation. The celebration extended over two days, January 1-2, 1899, and ministers and laymen participated with equal

freedom in the interesting and memorable exercises. The sermons and historical addresses were published by the board of trustees in book form, under the title, "The Story of a Thirtieth Anniversary," a volume which constitutes an important chapter in the history of this favored church, favored to the still greater extent of witnessing the fortieth anniversary of the union of pastor and people. On this occasion **Dr. Norcross** preached from the text, "Forty years in the Wilderness." He then withdrew from the arduous activities which, during this long period, had engrossed his time and thoughts, and has since been the honored pastor emeritus of his beloved church, lending the aid of his long experience and mature wisdom to young men pursuing their theological studies.

**Dr. Norcross** married, October 1, 1863, **Mary Sophia Tracy**, of Monmouth, Illinois, who died March 25, 1866. He married (second) April 22, 1867, at Galesburg, Illinois, **Louise (Jackson) Gale**, daughter of **Samuel Clinton Jackson**, and widow of **Major Josiah Gale**, son of **Rev. Dr. Gale**, the founder of Galesburg. By his first marriage **Dr. Norcross** became the father of one **child** who died in infancy, and to his second union the following children were born: **Delia Jackson**, wife of **Judge Carl Foster**, of Bridgeport, Connecticut; **George**, who died at eight years of age; **Elizabeth**, wife of **Henry M. Esterly**, of Portland, Oregon; **Mary Jackson**, at home; and **Louise Jackson**, wife of **Francois Lucas**.

In 1877, after attending the sessions of the Pan-Presbyterian Council in Edinburgh, **Dr. Norcross** and his wife made a tour of the continent, and in July, 1890, accompanied by his entire family, he again visited the Old World, spending seven months in Leipsic, and six months in travelling through Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and France, returning to this country in August, 1891.

After the strenuous and varied labors of many years **Dr. Norcross** is enjoying a well-earned season of repose among a people by whom he is revered and loved, and to whom he has ministered, both by precept and example, for nearly fifty years.

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