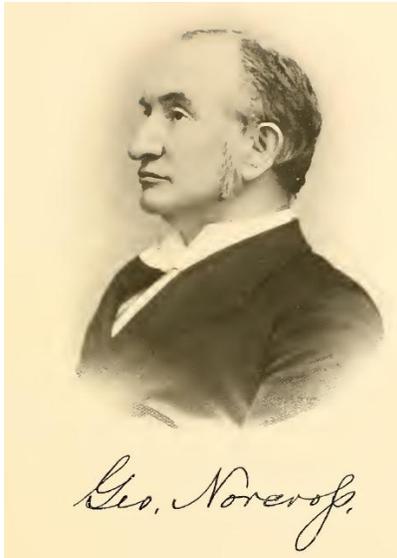


Biographical and Portrait Encyclopedia of the Nineteenth Congressional District, Pennsylvania, Containing Biographical Sketches Of Prominent And Representative Citizens Of The District Together With An Introductory Historical Sketch Samuel T. Wiley, Esq.; Philadelphia: C. A. Ruoff Company, 1897.



Rev. George Norcross, D. D. the eloquent and scholarly pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is a son of **Hiram** and **Elizabeth (McClelland) Norcross**, and was born near Erie, Pennsylvania, April 8, 1838. He is of English and Scotch-Irish ancestry and his father, grandfather and great-grandfather were well-to-do farmers in their day. The great-grandfather, **Abraham**, was a native of New Jersey, where he married **Nancy Fleming** and after some years removed to Milton, Pennsylvania, where he continued to reside until his removal to Erie in the same State where the latter part of his life was spent. His son, **John Norcross**, was born in New Jersey September 22, 1783, but his boyhood was mostly spent on the Susquehanna in Central Pennsylvania. When a young man he sought his fortunes in the new County of Erie, which had been purchased from New York by the Keystone State. Here he married **Margaret McCann**, who was born in North Ireland

about the year 1790.

Hiram Norcross, their eldest child, was born near Erie, July 16, 1809, where he resided until the fall of 1844, when he removed to Monmouth, Illinois, where he died in 1879. He was a farmer by occupation and a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church for nearly forty years. He married **Elizabeth McClelland**, of Crawford County, Pennsylvania, June 1, 1837. To this union were born the following named children, who lived to reach maturity: **Rev. Dr. George**, the subject of this narrative; **Hon. William Charles**, Judge of Warren County, Illinois; **Hiram Fleming**, a lawyer of Los Angeles, California; **Isaiah**, of Monmouth, Ill; **Thomas Rice**, of Liberty, Nebraska, and **Sarah Gibson**, deceased, wife of **Henry Beckwith**, of New London, Conn.

Mrs. Norcross, the mother of our subject, was the only daughter of **Thomas** and **Sarah (Gibson) McClelland**, both of Scotch-Irish extraction. **Sarah Gibson** was the youngest daughter of **Hugh Gibson**, who was taken captive by the Indians in 1756, at the time of the famous Indian raid through the Cumberland and contiguous valleys. At the same time his mother, the widow of **David Gibson**, was cruelly murdered. The scene of this tragedy was Robinson's Fort in Sherman's Valley, now the site of Center Church, Perry County, Pa.

Dr. Norcross was brought up chiefly at Monmouth, Illinois, where he prepared for college. He subsequently entered Monmouth College, an institution under the care of the United Presbyterian Church, where he was graduated with credit in the class of 1861. He then pursued his theological studies at Chicago in the Seminary of the Northwest, now McCormick, and in the Theological Seminary of the U. P. Church, at Monmouth. During the latter part of this period he served as the supply of the North Henderson Church, besides holding a professorship in Monmouth College. In October, 1864, he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New

Jersey, where he spent his last year of study in preparation for his life-work. Having received a call to the congregation which he had already served as stated supply for about seventeen months, he was ordained, June 6, 1865, to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church and installed as pastor of the North Henderson Church, Mercer County, Illinois. Here he was among a kind and appreciative people where his labors, first and last, were greatly blessed.

In the spring of 1866 he was called to the Presbyterian Church (O. S.) of Galesburg, Illinois. After nearly three years of labor in this field he was called to the Second Presbyterian Church, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he has labored efficiently and continuously for the past twenty eight years. At the beginning of his pastorate, January, 1869, the church had about 230 members and the Sabbath school reported an attendance of only 125 scholars and teachers. These numbers have been greatly augmented; the roll of communicants has increased to about 500 and the Sabbath schools of the church have an enrolled membership of about 600.

During his first year at Carlisle the Manse was built and during his second year the old church building was torn down and preparations were made for the erection of the present sanctuary. This beautiful Gothic church was finished at a cost of about fifty thousand dollars and dedicated May 29, 1873. In 1887 it was thoroughly renovated and improved at an expense of about ten thousand dollars. Provision for these improvements was largely made by the bequest of **Mrs. Robert Givin** and the generous gift of her only daughter, **Miss Amelia Steele Givin**. The benefactions of these faithful friends were supplemented by the congregation who made the addition to the Lecture Room at a cost of about two thousand dollars.

Dr. Norcross has represented the Presbytery of Carlisle four times in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, viz, in 1871 at Chicago, in 1874 at St. Louis, in 1885 at Cincinnati, in 1895 at Pittsburg. In the last two Assemblies he was the chairman of important standing committees. In 1877 he attended the first Pan-Presbyterian Council at Edinburgh, Scotland, as an associate member and was present during all the deliberations of that historic body. Subsequently with his wife he made the tour of the Continent. On July 5, 1890, he sailed again, and this time with his family, from New York for the Old World. Seven months of study were spent in the city of Leipzig, Germany, and six months were devoted to travel through Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and France, the family party returning early in August, 1891.

In the year 1879 the subject of this sketch received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Princeton College in recognition of well known literary attainments and faithful ministerial service. He evinces unusual culture and learning, is a forceful speaker and sustains an important relation to his adopted county, both as a minister and a citizen. Though rigorously confining himself to the work in his own congregation, he is known as the friend of every reform. When the question of Constitutional Amendment in the interest of Temperance was before the people in 1889 he addressed many popular meetings in support of Prohibition and his famous "Ox Sermon" preached before Presbytery on "Our Responsibility for the Drink Traffic" was printed and widely circulated. In his many activities in behalf of church and mission work he is ably assisted by his wife.

Dr. Norcross has been married twice. On October 1, 1863, he married **Mary S. Tracy**,

of Monmouth, Illinois, who died March 25, 1866. After her death he removed to Galesburg, Illinois, where on April 22, 1867, he wedded **Mrs. Louise (Jackson) Gale**, a daughter of **Mr. Samuel Clinton Jackson** and widow of **Major Josiah Gale**, the son of **Rev. Dr. Gale**, the founder of Galesburg. By his first marriage he had **one** child which died in infancy; and to his second union have been born five children: **Delia Jackson**, **George** who died at eight years of age, **Elizabeth**, **Mary Jackson** and **Louise Jackson**.

In the year 1886, upon the occasion of the Centennial celebration of the Presbytery of Carlisle, **Dr. Norcross** became the editor of a memorial publication in two volumes entitled "The Centennial Memorial of the Presbytery of Carlisle," which grew into a valuable historical and biographical review of the origin and growth of Presbyterianism in the central and eastern part of Southern Pennsylvania. As the result of this and similar literary work he was made a member of the American Society of Church History and the Scotch-Irish Sopartment of Church History which has manifested a growing interest in the department of Church History which has been exhibited in a course of carefully prepared lectures on "The Great Reformers." At the request of the committee of arrangements, he prepared a paper on "The Scotch-Irish in the Cumberland Valley" which he read before the Eighth Scotch-Irish Congress in Harrisburg in 1896. In this address he eloquently tells the story of the Scotch-Irish in the Cumberland Valley and presents the record of the establishment of the early Presbyterian churches in this region. In concluding his article and speaking generally of the Scotch-Irish race, he says, - "The War of the Revolution was begun and maintained for principles peculiarly dear to Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. As they were among the first to declare themselves in favor of separation from the mother country, so they were among the last to lay down their arms, and that only when the great cause was won. They were conspicuous in almost every battle of the great struggle; and when the conflict ended in the triumph of their aspirations, it is not strange that the free representative principles of their Church government should have been adopted as the model for our Federal Constitution. The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians at last had attained to their ideal: a free Church in a free State."

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