

Biographical Annals of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania; Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens and of Many of The Early Settled Families. Illustrated. Chicago: The Genealogical Publishing Co., 1905.



**Rev. George Norcross**, D. D. the eloquent and scholarly pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, is of English and Scotch-Irish ancestry. His great-grandfather, **Abraham Norcross**, was born in New Jersey, married **Nancy Fleming**, and afterward settled at Milton, Pa. After some years he removed from Milton to the then new county of Erie, Pa., where he lived the remainder of his life. **Abraham** and **Nancy (Fleming) Norcross** had a son, **John**, who was born in New Jersey, but grew to manhood on the Susquehanna in central Pennsylvania. He preceded his parents to Erie County, where he married **Margaret Mann**, who was born in the North of Ireland about the year 1790. The eldest child of **John** and **Margaret (McCann) Norcross** was born near the town of Erie, July 9, 1809,

and was named **Hiram**. He continued to reside in that part of Pennsylvania until in 1844, when he removed to Monmouth, Ill., where he died in 1879. He was a farmer all his working days and for nearly forty years a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. **Hiram Norcross**, on June 1, 1837, married **Elizabeth McClelland**, of Crawford County, Pa., who 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 captured by the Indians in Sherman's Valley in 1756, at the same time that his mother, the widow of **David Gibson**, was shot and scalped. The scene of this bloody tragedy was Robinson's Fort, near the site of Center Church, Perry County, Pa. Of **Hiram** and **Elizabeth (McClelland) Norcross's** children the following lived to maturity: **Rev. Dr. George**, the subject of this narrative; **Hon. William Charles**, now a banker in Wichita, Kan.; **Hiram Fleming**, a lawyer of Los Angeles, Cal.; **Isaiah**, of Monmouth, Ill.; **Thomas Rice**, of Liberty, Neb.; and **Sarah Gibson**, deceased, wife of **Henry Beckwith**, of New London, Connecticut.

**Dr. George Norcross** was born near Erie, Pa., April 8, 1838. His youth and early manhood were spent at Monmouth, Ill., where he was educated in Monmouth College, an institution under the care of the United Presbyterian Church. After graduating from college in 1861 he began his theological studies in the Seminary of the Northwest, now McCormick, Chicago, and continued them in the Seminary of the United Presbyterian Church, at Monmouth. During the latter part of this period he served as the supply of a church at North Henderson, and also held a professorship in Monmouth College. In October, 1864, he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton. N. J., where he spent his last year of study in preparation for the ministry.

Having received a call from the congregation which he for seventeen months had already served as stated supply, he, on June 6, 1865, was ordained and installed as pastor of the Presbyterian Church of North Henderson, Mercer County, Ill. Here he was among kind and appreciative people and his labors were greatly blessed.

In the spring of 1866 he was called to the Presbyterian Church (O. S.) of Galesburg, Ill., where he labored for nearly three years, and then received the call which brought him to the Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle. Here he has labored continuously and acceptably for more than thirty-five years. His pastorate began in January, 1869, at a time when the church had about 230 members, and the Sabbath school an attendance of only 125 scholars and teachers. Both numbers have been greatly augmented; the roll of communicants to about 500 and that of the Sabbath schools under his care to about 600.

A pastorate of thirty years' duration was remarkable in Carlisle history, and when the thirtieth anniversary in **Dr. Norcross's** devoted service in the Second Presbyterian Church arrived his friends gave the event a fitting commemoration. The celebration extended over two days, Jan. 1st and 2d, 1899, and ministers and laymen with like freedom participated in the interesting and memorable exercises. The sermons preached, and addresses delivered, along with many congratulatory letters received, were published in a volume called "The Story of a Thirtieth Anniversary," which forms an important chapter in the recorded history of this favored church.

During his first year at Carlisle the Manse was built, and during the second the old church building was torn down to make way for the present new Gothic structure, erected at a cost of fifty thousand dollars and dedicated on May 29, 1873. In 1887 the present edifice was renovated and improved at an expenditure of ten thousand dollars, provided largely by the bequest of Mrs. Robert Givin and the generous gift of her only daughter, Miss Amelia Steele Givin, now Mrs. Walter Beall. The benefactions of these faithful friends, at the same time, were supplemented by the congregation, who expended about two thousand dollars upon the Lecture Room.

**Dr. Norcross** has represented the Presbytery of Carlisle four times in the General Assembly, viz.: in 1871 at Chicago, in 1874 at St. Louis, in 1885 at Cincinnati, and in 1895 at Pittsburg. In the last two Assemblies he was chairman of important standing committees. In 1877 he attended the first Pan-Presbyterian Council at Edinburgh, Scotland, as an associate member, and was present at all the deliberations of that historic body. In October, 1899, he was elected moderator of the Synod of Pennsylvania, then assembled in the city of Erie. This is the second largest synod in the world, being outranked only by that of New York. The same year he was also a member of the Seventh Pan-Presbyterian Council, held in Washington, D. C. **Dr. Norcross** is a man of acknowledged learning and culture, a ready and forceful speaker, and in recognition of his literary attainments, and faithful ministerial service, Princeton College, in 1879, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. While he devotes himself rigorously to the work of his own congregation he, both as a minister and a citizen, is known as the friend of every reform. He has given much thought and labor to the temperance cause and when the question of Constitutional Amendment in 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. After attending the sessions of the Pan-Presbyterian Council in Edinburgh, in 1877, **Dr. Norcross** and

his wife made a tour of the continent, visiting the famous places of history and observing the different phases of European life. Accompanied by his entire family, he in July, 1890, again visited Europe, remaining abroad for more than a year. Seven months they spent at study in the city of Leipsic, Germany, and six months in traveling through Holland, Belgium, France, returning to their native land in August, 1891.

**Dr. Norcross** has been twice married. On Oct. 1, 1863, he married **Mary S. Tracy**, of Monmouth, Ill., who died March 25, 1866. After her death he removed to Galesburg, Ill., 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 there have been born five children, viz.: **Delia Jackson; George**, who died at eight years of age; **Elizabeth; Mary Jackson;** and **Louise Jackson**. Of these **Delia Jackson** is married to **Mr. Carl Foster**. **Mr. and Mrs. Foster** reside in Bridgeport, Conn., and have the following children: **Mary Louise, Julia M., Elizabeth Norcross** and **George Norcross**.

In the year 1886, upon the occasion of the Centennial celebration of the Carlisle Presbytery, **Dr. Norcross** became the editor of the publication called "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 he was made a member of the American Society of Church History, now merged into the American Historical Association, and of the Scotch-Irish Society of America. At the request of the committee of arrangements, he in 1896 prepared a paper on "The Scotch-Irish in the Cumberland Valley," which he read before the Eighth Scotch-Irish Congress in Harrisburg. In this address he tells of the work of this brave and hardy people, of the early churches they established, and the blood they shed in the cause of liberty, concluding with the following eloquent paragraph: "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 their ideal; a free church in a free State,"

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 did, and delivered same during the sessions of the General Assembly at Winona Lake, Ind., in May, 1898. This paper was published in the volume "Westminster Anniversary Addresses."