

Judson J. Hunt

THE PEOPLE'S PILOT.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH EDITION.

VOL. V. RENSSELAER, IND., THURSDAY, OCT. 17, 1895. NUMBER 17.

First Presbyterian Church.

PASTOR—Rev. M. R. Paradis.
ELDERS—John Coen, Fletcher Monnett, D. E. Hollister, Emmet L. Hollingsworth, Geo. K. Hollingsworth and James W. McEwan.
DEACONS—John C. Porter and Cyrus W. Duval.
TRUSTEES—F. J. Sears, M. P. Chilcote, W. B. Austin, John Eger and E. D. Rhoades.
USHERS—T. P. Wright, John Schanlaub, Frank Kelley and Earle Duval.
SERVICES:
Sunday School..... 9:30 A. M.
Morning Service..... 10:45
Junior Endeavor..... 2:30 P. M.
Christian Endeavor..... 6:30
Evening Service..... 7:30
Prayer Meeting (Thursday)..... 7:30
Ladies' Industrial Society (every Wednesday)..... 2:00
Missionary Society..... Monthly
To all the above services all are cordially invited.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

BY W. B. AUSTIN.

It has been said that railroads are the forerunners of civilization. That this is true is undisputed, but we would still have darkness had we waited on railroads to enlighten us. The church came here in 1847, the railroad in 1877, thirty years later.

Like that of the Puritans and Pilgrims of old, the history of the church at this place has not been altogether roseate.

Nine persons, headed by James Van Rensselaer, the father of the town, formed the nucleus from which has been evolved the church society of to-day. There were times when the church had apparent prosperity, but on the other hand, for long stretches of years, at one time from 1806 to 1883, not one ray of light came. That the organization did not entirely disband was due altogether to the efforts of a few faithful ones in maintaining the Sunday school, and in sowing seeds, which in later years have ripened and been harvested, and to-day form the bulwark of the church at this place.

Man is of a peculiar nature; he is not always satisfied with his lot. A minister of the gospel is but a man, has a man's wants and inclinations, consequently if he is not paid for his services he cannot be expected to continue his employment, and hence it is that this struggling congregation in its early history had four pastors in that many years.

The first minutes of the church society read as follows:

"RENSSELAER, INDIANA, Feb. 20th, 1847.

"At a meeting of the persons friendly to the organization of a Presbyterian church in Jasper county, Rev. E. W. Wright was called to the chair. After prayer it was resolved to proceed to constitute a church, and Rev. Jesse Edwards and Z. Sheets, elders from the church at Monticello, were invited as a session to judge of the testimonials of membership. The following persons were received on certificate:

James Van Rensselaer, Susan Van Rensselaer, Susan C. Weston, Ezra Wright, Martha Wright, Lucinda Mahaffie, Henry Barkley, Ira Allen, Louis B. Allen.

Resolved, That we now proceed to the election of two elders, and the vote being counted Ezra Wright and Henry Barkley were declared duly elected, and it was agreed that these brethren be ordained to-morrow at three o'clock p. m.

Resolved, That this church be denominated the Presbyterian church of Rensselaer.

Whereupon the meeting adjourned."

EDWARD WRIGHT, Chairman."

Rev. Edward Wright was a supply for the new congregation which met whenever convenient, until 1848, when Rev. Thomas M. Chestnut was duly installed as pastor, and continued as such until 1852. Mr. Chestnut was the father of Mrs. Fletcher Monnett and Mrs. Sharp. The minutes of June 2d, 1850, are as follows:

"Session met and was opened with prayer, Rev. T. M. Chestnut, moderator; elders present—Henry Barkley and Ezra Wright. The following persons were received on certificate from the church at Coal Creek: John Coen, a ruling elder, and Asaueh Coen and his wife, as members of this church."

The pioneers of our church, like the pilgrims of old, were very strict in discipline, and although the old-time Calvinistic doctrine of election, even in that day, received many assaults, yet the session stood manfully by the confession and at one

time declined to grant but a modified letter of dismissal to James J. Porter, who to some extent questioned the strict Calvinistic interpretation of this doctrine of election.

Gen. R. H. Milroy was a member in good standing of the Presbyterian church until a certain political incident occurred, which, owing to the prominence of the parties involved, deserves to be set out in full. The other persons involved being General, after Governor, Gideon E. Moody and Hefner, afterward notorious with Dodd, Bowler and Milligan. The minutes of the session read as follows:

"Rensselaer, Ind., March 28, 1861. Session met according to previous notice and was opened with prayer. Present, H. A. Mayhew, moderator; elders, C. Hutton, E. Wright, John Coen, and R. H. Milroy, who voluntarily declines to act at this time.

The session took up the following item of business, to-wit: Robert H. Milroy, a member of the church and of the session, voluntarily came before the session and made the following statements in substance, to-wit:

1st. That sometime during the winter, he went, at the request of Mr. Moody, a member of the legislature, at Indianapolis. That after arriving there he found there existed a serious personal difficulty between Mr. Moody and Mr. Hefner, who was also a member of the legislature, growing out of words spoken in the heat of debate. That he used his influence to have the difficulty honorably settled without a "hostile meeting" of the parties. That the insult offered Mr. Moody by Mr. Hefner was serious; but that he hoped, at first, that the matter would pass

Hefner, he (Milroy) would have been in sight or hearing, and would have seen that Moody was not harmed. But that Hefner immediately left the state for the purpose of receiving any communication from Moody, evidently looking to the passing of a challenge to fight a duel. That Hefner went to Kentucky, and that he (Milroy) disliked to go thither with Moody, but that he (Moody) insisted upon his (Milroy's) accompanying him as a friend, he did accompany him and used every effort while there to bring about an adjustment, but without success.

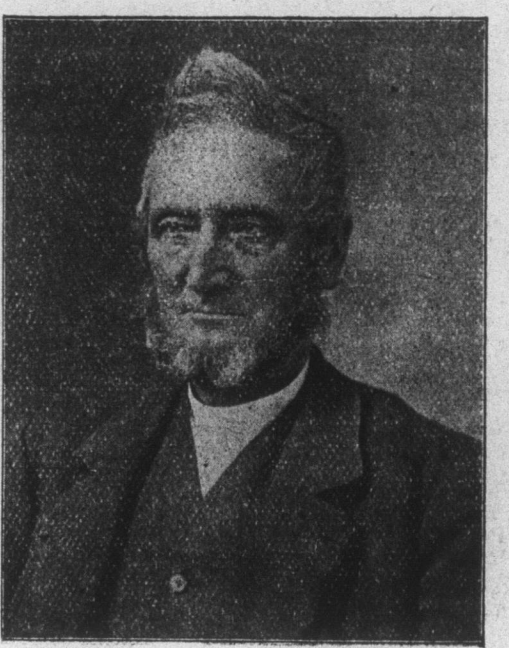
That Moody finally sent a challenge to Hefner to fight a duel; and that, through Col.

future punishment of the wicked, and that he now firmly believes that the doctrine of the endless punishment of the finally impenitent is not true, but that he believes that all will be finally restored."

That he makes, voluntarily, the foregoing statements to the session upon both foregoing matters, in order that the session may deal with him as may be in the judgment of the session be for the best interest of Zion.

In view of the above statements the session, after carefully weighing all things in the foregoing statements contained, adopt the following resolutions, to-wit:

1st. Resolved, That we



George and Mary Kannal.

George Kannal was born in Columbiana county, Ohio, March 13, 1813, being the eldest of thirteen children. His parents came from Pennsylvania, being of the old "Pennsylvania Dutch" blood. The father, Joseph Kannal, served in the war of 1812.

Mary (McCoy) Kannal was born in Columbiana county, Ohio, September 10, 1815.

The subjects of this sketch were reared in the same neighborhood and married November 8, 1835. After seven years residence in the family of the groom, they moved to the home of Thomas McCoy, a brother of the wife. While here, on July 1, 1838, a daughter, Elizabeth, was born. They soon afterward removed to New Lisbon, Ohio, where George Kannal was engaged, during their seven years stay, in banking with Thomas McCoy. In 1847 they returned to live on a farm in their native country.

June 20, 1849, their only son, Emmet Kannal, was born. They continued to reside in Columbiana county until the spring of 1865, when they came to Jasper county, Ind. With them came their son, Emmet Kannal, and daughter, Elizabeth Hollingsworth, her husband, Thomas, and their son, Emmet L. Hollingsworth, a baby one year old. They settled in Rensselaer where they have had continuous residence.

George Kannal died June 10, 1885, being stricken with heart trouble while attending to his daily business duties. He was a man of modest and unpretentious habits, lived an extremely simple and busy life, accumulating a fair competence, and gaining the respect of the community.

The widow, Mary Kannal, survives, spending the declining years of her life in the old home among her grand children and friends.

Walker, Hefner indicated a choice of the bowie knife as the weapon to be used. That he (Milroy) promptly told Col. Walker, Hefner's second, that in view of the great disparity in size between Hefner and Moody, which disparity was against Moody, he (Milroy) would take the responsibility without consulting Mr. Moody, to say that he (Moody) should not fight Hefner with such a weapon; and that he (Milroy) requested Col. Walker to inform Mr. Hefner that if he (Hefner) insisted upon bowie knife he (Milroy) would take Moody's place and fight him (Hefner) with that weapon. That he (Milroy) did not at the time believe Hefner would fight him, but that if he had consented to do so he does not think he (Milroy) would have "backed out." That he (Milroy) remained with Moody in Kentucky till at length, through the mediation of other persons, the difference was arranged, after the parties had arrived upon the ground designated as the place for their "hostile meeting."

That he (Milroy) did not act as Moody's second, strictly speaking, but that he did carry several notes from Moody to Hefner's while there existed any prospect of arranging the matter without a fight, and before a challenge passed. That he believes duelling to be immoral, but that there seemed to be a necessity for his engaging in it. That in the future he hoped he would, under like circumstances, act differently; that he would, under circumstances, advise any one either to fight a duel or otherwise retaliate by violence.

2d. Mr. Milroy also made to the session at the same time the following voluntary statement, to-wit: That for sometime past his mind had been undergoing a change upon the doctrine of

deem the statements of Bro. R. H. Milroy, upon either of the foregoing matters, as sufficient to require his suspension from the privileges of the church.

2d. Resolved, That Bro. Robert H. Milroy is hereby suspended from the sacraments of the church, till he give satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of his repentance.

3d. Resolved, That the moderator is hereby directed to publish to the church from the pulpit the foregoing action of the session on the next Sabbath. Several years after this episode General Milroy was again received into the church of his youth.

A somewhat amusing incident to the older members was the church trial of Dr. Joshua Clark for alleged slandering of the Ladies' Sewing Society. The trial commenced April 7th, 1852, and occupied about fifty pages of the minute book. It seems that Dr. Clark had taken exception to certain exercises which occurred at the sewing society which met at Col. Work's residence, on the farm now occupied by Mr. James Matheson, and wrote and circulated a paper, the substance of which is as follows:

"Whereas, The present sewing society was principally gotten up for the purpose of procuring funds for the completion of the Presbyterian church.

"And, whereas, certain gymnastic exercises are to a certain and proper extent to be desired, and are promoters of the health of the members;

"And, whereas, in the conduct of these exercises certain small improprieties have of late crept out to the just scandal of the good name and fair fame of said society;

"And, whereas, it is apprehended that unless these indis-

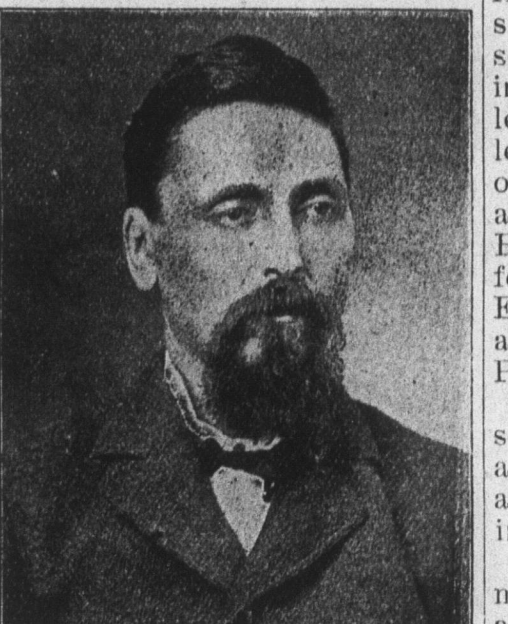
cretions are corrected some of the strictest may be disposed to withdraw their connection and support from us, which must materially hinder success. Therefore, be it resolved, by the Ladies' Sewing Society, of Rensselaer, that hereafter, in the exercises of the meeting, there shall not be more than one polka dance on an evening, and such dance no member shall raise her foot more than so high, etc."

The evidence shows that a lady member had edited the society with a polka step, a dance which was then new, and had sung the song "Ben Bolt."

Rev. Thomas Whallon was pastor from 1855 to 1859, and Rev. H. A. Mayhew from 1856 to 1865, then occurred one year pastorates of Revs. L. D. Wells, J. S. Patterson, Wm. A. Patton, and Mr. Goodeson. Then for a long period of seventeen years the church was without a pastor struggling for life. During this time came the trouble involving Cicero H. Tatman and Gen. R. H. Milroy, and which affected Ezra Wright financially; and John Keller, Stephen Donaldson, and Fletcher Monnett, moved away.

During this period the spiritual life and corporate existence of this society rested entirely upon the two Miss Smiths and Elder John Coen. Within the last twenty years Mr. Coen has carried wood from his residence on the outskirts of town to warm the church for Sunday-school on cold Sunday mornings. All hail to these spirits who, through the chaos attendant upon the closing of the war and other troubles, carried our church ship through and landed her safely in the harbor.

Who will doubt that a charitable Jehovah watched over the



Simon P. Thompson.

Simon P. Thompson is the seventh of ten children of David and Eliza (McCoy) Thompson, and was born in Hancock county, Ohio, May 8, 1858.

Three of his brothers, David, Alfred and Thomas are citizens of this county. When four years old he began attending county school in the winter. He first taught, boarding round, in 1853. His father died February 16, 1854. In 1855 Simon began his self-supporting campaign for an education teaching in mid-winter, farming in mid-summer, and attending school in spring and autumn. His diploma from the normal school is dated July 18, 1860. He entered Oberlin college, classical class, in the fall of that year. In 1861 sickness of his mother, sisters and brothers called him home. The mother died September 20, 1861. In August, 1862, the school voters of Rensselaer, Indiana, elected him as principal at forty dollars per month. In 1863 a school house was built and Mr. Thompson was re-elected at sixty dollars per month. He was also selected as school examiner and served most of the time until 1872. Afterwards he served as school trustee and prepared the regulations and rules for the first union school of Rensselaer authorized to graduate its pupils. The system of school management in the county was changed under Mr. Thompson's administration, and the present excellent system has grown from the beginnings of 1862.

In 1864 Mr. Thompson was employed as clerk in the McCoy bank. In 1865 he selected the business of real estate broker and began the study of law. He commenced buying lands of non-residents and selling them to actual settlers. At his instance

many of the winding narrow roads were changed to broad highways, constructed of better material. In the town corporate action was invoked, railroads were invited and public improvements were advocated as an auxiliary to business. The mill dams were purchased and removed and the water channels shortened, straightened and deepened by private and public proceedings. October 10, 1878, he married May Foltz, at Oxford, Indiana, and they have two daughters, Grace aged 16, and Edna aged 13; also two boys, Firman aged 9 and Simon Jr. aged 2. The family has a happy home in south-east Rensselaer.

Mr. Thompson cast his first vote for the Lincoln electors at Harveysburg, Ohio, in 1860. He has acted as committeeman for town, township and county. Without a convention his name went on the republican ticket for prosecuting attorney in 1872 and 1874, and being elected all official duties were performed without assistance. He was voted for candidate in the republican congressional conventions of 1876 and 1880; and in 1886 he was nominated for the first and last time in a political convention for state senator, and was elected. His service as delegate to district and state conventions has often been called for by his party associates. In 1876 he was an alternate and in 1884 a delegate to the national convention. Since 1886 Mr. Thompson has freely assisted his friends to political preferment, but has discouraged the use of his own name in any convention.

struggling congregation with a pitying glance?

In 1885 Rev. Gilbert Small was pastor, and after him Rev. Aug. Taylor. And then many students came from McCormick seminary which terminated in the installation of Rev. M. L. Tressler as pastor in 1889. Mr. Tressler was the first installed pastor of the church. He remained about 18 months and after him Rev. I. I. Gorby was our pastor for 18 months. Then came Rev. Edward Beach for one year, and after a short period Rev. M. R. Paradis, our present pastor.

Mr. Paradis has proven himself a conscientious man, an agreeable and social gentleman, and a hard and aggressive worker in the Lord's cause.

It is probably due to his efforts more than any one else that we are enabled to have a new church building.

The Misses Smith were received July 21, 1860.

Rev. Mayhew received 40 members and dismissed 18.

Rev. Goodison received 6 members and dismissed 3.

Rev. R. L. Adams received 11 members and dismissed 2.

Rev. G. Small received 34 members and dismissed —

Rev. Aug. Taylor received 8 members and dismissed 2.

Rev. M. L. Tressler received 47 members and dismissed 5.

Rev. I. I. Gorby received 38 members and dismissed 7.

Rev. Edward Beach received 13 members and dismissed 10.

Rev. M. R. Paradis received 37 members and dismissed 8.

The old church building was erected in 1851-2, at a cost of \$1200, on ground donated by John C. Van Rensselaer and has done its duty long and well. It was parted with many pangs of regret, for the old house protected us during infancy, childhood and manhood. Here was the cradle of Presbyterianism in this county; here were baptized as infants and adults representatives of almost every family in town and surrounding country; and from this altar have been carried the remains of many of those who have gone "to that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns."

The old church has passed from our sight, but not from our memory. To many of us some of the fondest and sweetest memories of childhood and youth are entwined with this old building. The childish Sunday school songs, "Come to Jesus," "Climbing up Zion's Hill, and many others were first taught us within these walls. The songs, the Sunday school, the Christmas entertainments, the festi-