

church, of which church he was a member.

"On the bank of the Iroquois, where now basks our lovely county seat, in 1835 were Indian cornfields and wigwags. David Phlegly had squatted near what is now Crockett's graveyard; William Donahoe had settled in Gillam.

"Then it was that Joseph Yeoman and wife, John Nowels and his little son David built the first house in what is now Rensselaer's main business street.

"This was a cabin without floor or chimney, and yet in this little cabin Mrs. Yeoman stayed alone many a night while the Indians fished near by.

"A lady who could sleep quietly in sight of Indian torches was worthy to be called mother by those good citizens of our county. David H. Yeoman and Mrs. Sarah O. Lang.

"In 1834 our town site was visited by George Culp and Thomas Randle, father of James, Nelson, John and William, whom we all know, but they preferred the Pinkamink to the Rock-wis, as our stream was then called.

"In those days neighbors were scarce and yet social visiting between families was indulged even more than at present. The chief difficulty arose from the almost impassable roads and the lack of speed in ox teams.

"The pioneer, however, would load up his family in a wagon Saturday noon and with oxen go to his neighbors and stay for a full Sunday's visit. There were no bridges and the streams were only fordable in certain places and in certain seasons. The history of each of the five settlements in the county was like the story of a separate colony.

"In the Fork settlement, when Eliza Parkinson, grand-daughter of Simon Kenton, the Indian fighter, married J. M. Hiff, the first wedding of the colony was duly celebrated. The first funeral was that of Simpson Randle, whose four sons are now our neighbors.

"Game was plentiful, and meat, while mostly deer, was in its season very cheap in all the settlements. Its profusion made it stale and good beef and pork was regarded as a delicacy.

"Along the trail, leading from the Wabash to the then village of Chicago, hogs were driven to market; some escaped, and feeding on acorns waxed fat and were hunted, giving a pleasant variety to the table. David Nowels and Mr. Yeoman, in 1836, tracked some hogs into the prairie in the south west portion of the county; the weather growing warmer, the snow melted and they lost their bearings, and were without shelter or food for three days. The prairies were then considered as a desert, without fuel or shelter, and wholly unfit for human occupancy.

"The pioneers uniformly settled in or near the groves and along the streams. It was not until 1853 that the driest season ever known enabled the people to determine that the mucky prairies were the fastest and best of our farm lands. It was soon after this discovery that the population and wealth of the county began to increase by great strides.

"Prior to 1839 the civil process of the law was wholly inadequate to restrain the commission of crime. The Jasper Rangers were organized as a vigilance committee to protect the people, their money and their property from organized counterfeiters, thieves, burglars and murderers. The horse then, more than now, was the subject of an intense human love, and horse thieves were deemed worthy of death, and even punishment after death.

"Until the prosecution of the mob that slew Wardell in 1872, the reign of law was not complete and perfect within our borders. It is common for commentators on our early settlement to ascribe to them power and better moral nature than we possess. When we consider that in those days timber was common property, that horse stealing was a science, that our silver money was coined at Bogus Island, that fat hogs were the property of the first to take, and that distilleries were considered as essential as grist mills. There is a doubt whether truth will uphold such moral eulogy of all that early community.

"Take the Yeomans, Benjamins, Faris, Randles, Culpes, Parkisons, Welchs, Kentons, Phlegleys, Crocketts, Phillips, Mallatts, Spittlers, Sharlings and others of the first families, and cleverer neighbors never lived. Had all been as they, neither locks nor bars were needed to doors or windows.

With them the latch string was ever out. Quiltings, huskings and other social events were common. The richest were poor and the poorest could secure an abundance of plain food and clothing. Store clothes and foreign fruits were unknown. The early settlers were as one family.

"In the Mexican war our volunteers were few, and little ardor or enthusiasm prevailed.

"In 1861, however, under the leadership of Robert H. Milroy, Jasper stepped to the front and furnished three hundred and forty-five blue coat soldiers. The ladies were loyal, too, and donations to hospitals were in order whenever called for. From our volunteers were made generals, colonels and numerous line officers. In the 9th, 12th, 17th, 48th and 87th infantry and the 12th cavalry and 4th artillery our brave boys fought for national unity to the finish.

"In 1850 we had three stores, two doctors, one lawyer and fifteen houses. The first store was opened by Harper Hunt. The first birth was T. J. Yeoman. The first funeral was Mrs. Irwin. The first marriage was Edward Dryer to Elizabeth Barr, who obtained the first divorce. The town was incorporated in 1858. It died in 1860 and was resurrected in 1866. At that time the quickest thing was 'sand.' Dog fennel and other fancy flowers prevailed as a border for the wagon tracks along our streets. The sidewalks were miry. A frame school house was built in 1863.

"The people of Jasper have pure water and their children are not obliged to have the ague, rheumatism and boils in order to ward off diseases. The stagnant ponds have disappeared. The mill dams have all been dammed. The muddy roads have given place to turn pikes and iron bridges. In the place of the cabins stand modern frame and brick residences. Home spun cloth is more curiosities. We have the healthiest, wealthiest, best, most lovely finest dressed and happiest citizens to day that we ever had. There is no place here for the cynical ravens of society to ply their suicidal arts. We ought all to keep eyes to the front, look for the 'silver lining in the cloud,' and do for those who come after us as much in the way of better schools, churches, roads and labor-saving inventions as our ancestors have done for us."

RENSSELAER TO-DAY.

Enterprise of the broad gauge sort is what has kept the town moving steadily on its prosperous way. Surrounded by a rich and thriving agricultural territory naturally tributary to it, her citizens have created it a commercial center that claims for its patrons people who come from greater distances than is usual to most county seats. This has been accomplished by a general manifestation of public spiritedness, that has not overlooked the comfort of those who come to the town to transact business. The stranger at the gate has been hospitably received; he has found courtesy was shown him on every hand, that the vendors of goods were disposed to deal fairly with him. The town has been clean, the main streets well adapted to the hauling of heavy loads, the roads leading to the town have been kept in good repair and are now well graveled; there has been good hotels and eating houses, conveniences for hitching and watering teams are excellent, and in all respects the people have been liberal minded and builded an enviable reputation for their town.

As a trading point it is reputed for its varied assortments of goods and their uniform excellence, ranging from the common grades, which sharp competition has kept at reasonable prices to those higher classes of goods which are usually found only in the shops of large cities, and which only progressive merchants who desire to meet the requirements of all their patrons would bring to a town of this size. It is true that Rensselaer shop keepers are always abreast of the times, taking pains to display the latest fashions in every department simultaneously with the great stores of the big cities, and especially it is gratifying to the feminine heart to know that the articles she buys are correct in style and texture. People are daily seen here purchasing large bills of goods who live in or beyond other trading points.

POPULATION.

Rensselaer through its recent accession of territory and the



USHERING IN THE NEW YEAR.

marvelous growth of the past year has nearly or quite 2,500 souls within its boundaries and another year of equal development will see it crowd the 3000 mark closely. It has sufficient population to entitle it to a city charter and the same will soon be asked for.

STREETS.

Washington street, the main thoroughfare of the town is macadamized from gutter to gutter for two blocks. All other principle streets are well graded and graveled making excellent road beds for light vehicles as well as heavy traffic wagons. A complete system of graveled streets will gradually be provided. In summer the great beauty of many of the shaded streets is remarked by those from abroad, so like leafy bowers have they been made.

RELIGIOUS.

There are eight denominations who worship in their own church buildings and several societies, not yet strong enough to have property of their own, who meet in other churches and halls.

An inspection of the several illustrations in this paper demonstrates the interest that is taken in having substantial, attractive and even costly church edifices, comparing favorably with cities even more pretentious than this unassuming community. In fact all the buildings show the thrift and zeal of a truly religious people, and the exteriors of the churches are even less noticeable than the neat and comfortable interiors. Rensselaer is reputed for the warm welcome that is extended to strangers who attend services at its churches, and visitors always find the right hand of fellowship extended to them.

This is not only a city of churches, but its people are inspired by high religious impulses, that are manifested conspicuously in their every day life and character. There is a charming unity of feeling and fraternity between all the sects, each seeming to realize the honesty of purpose in the creeds of their differing brethren. The right of each individual "to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience" being recognized not only in form but in full sincerity as well. It is a liberal, intelligent sentiment that permeates the whole religious body of the town.

In the early days a recent writer says, "the preachers visited the various settlements going from house to house, until the Methodists built a frame church on the corner of Cullen and Rutson streets in Rensselaer in 1855. In 1849 a log chapel was built at Independence. In 1859 the M. E. church at Remington was erected. Other churches have since been built, and the handsome brick on the corner of Angelica and Weston streets serves as a model to others."

"The P. M.'s have half a dozen classes and one or two churches. The Presbyterians organized in 1847 and soon erected a church which now gives place to the grandest and best

edifice in the county. A church was built in Remington in 1866. The Missionary Baptists organized in 1857; the Free Wills in 1853; the Church of God in 1860; the Disciples at Remington in 1867, while the Catholics built at Rensselaer in 1866 and at Remington in 1865. Within a few years the Lutherans and other denominations have erected places of worship at Wheatfield, Demotte, Kniman and various places in the county.

"Our citizens can enjoy as great freedom of religious opinion as anywhere on the globe."

In this connection the Pilot has endeavored to get a short article on each of the church organizations, and if some are short or omitted it is because the information could not be obtained. The editor has done the best he could to give all the essential facts regarding the history and present standing of each church and hopes that any errors will be pardoned. Thanks are extended to those pastors and others who have assisted in compiling matter for this department.

Rensselaer Methodism.

HISTORICAL DATA.—BY R. D. U.

Methodism invaded Jasper county in 1836. The year 1838 witnessed the organization of a Methodist society at the falls of the Iroquois, where the village of Newton soon afterwards was, and where the flourishing little city of Rensselaer now is,—the first church of any denomination within the present limits of the county.

(The town of Newton, if the tradition is reliable, was founded in 1839 as the county capital; in 1841, on petition of James Van Rensselaer and Henry Weston, the name was changed to Rensselaer.)

The fall of 1839 Hachaliah Vreedenburgh was appointed to the pastorate of Monticello mission. The Rev. Dr. J. L. Smith, says: "This Mission included White, Jasper, and considerable parts of Carroll and Pulaski counties. I distinctly remember Bro. Vreedenburgh's telling me of his preaching at several points on the Pinkamink and Iroquois rivers, one of these points being the present site of Rensselaer."

"John H. Bruce, my colleague in 1840, who was appointed to the Monticello mission in the fall of 1837, often spoke of his tracking Bro. Vreedenburgh up and down the Iroquois."

"Enoch Wood had charge of Monticello mission one year, beginning in the fall of 1838. Sometime in the course of the conference year, presumably before the close of the calendar year 1838, he organized a society at the place now known as Rensselaer."

"There were two Enoch Woodses in the conference, cousins; one was known as Enoch G., the other, who was a man of considerable longitude, as Long Enoch. Enoch G. and the late well-known Aaron Wood, D.D., were brothers. It was Enoch Wood,—not Enoch G., but Long Enoch,—whose name is associated with the rise of Methodism in Jasper county."

FIRST CHURCH BUILDING.

"The first Methodist church built at Rensselaer was dedicated in 1850, during my second year as presiding elder and Bro. George Guild's first year as pastor. The timbers for the church were cut and hewn in the woods, the people turning out en masse, without money and without price, to do the work. All debts were provided for at the dedication."

CAMP-MEETING.

"A little way below the town, in the early autumn of 1850, we held a camp-meeting. The meeting resulted in several conversions. Some of the converts are yet living, and holding on their way."

OLD CHURCH.

The church of 1850, to which Dr. Smith refers,—the first denominational building erected in the present bounds of the county, it is supposed—stood on the south-east corner of Cullen and Rutson streets, and was occupied continuously till 1890, a period of forty years.

A parsonage,—the history of which, who knoweth?—was located across the street, west, and fronting the church.

IROQUOIS MISSION.

The Societies which had been organized in the Iroquois region, were detached from the Monticello mission, and made a separate pastoral charge, Iroquois mission, in 1840. The next year, 1841, the name was changed to Jasper mission; in 1842, to Rensselaer mission. "Mission" was dropped from the title of the charge in 1844.

RENSSELAER CIRCUIT.

The original Circuit included the territory—not less than all the territory in the present jurisdiction of Jasper and Newton counties. The church in Rensselaer became a "station", i.e., the one church a pastoral charge, in 1884.

NEW CHURCH.

The movement which culminated in the erection of the substantial and commodious Trinity church, south-east corner of Cullen and Angelica streets, began in the pastorate of Rev. E. G. Peiley. The walls of the building were up, and the roof on, when he was transferred to another charge. His successor, Rev. T. F. Drake, came to the charge in September, 1889. A few months later, January 26, 1890, the new church was formally dedicated by Bishop Stephen M. Merrill, of Chicago.

The building committee consisted of the pastor, chairman; Ezra L. Clark, secretary; Wallace Robinson, treasurer; Wm. E. Moore, James T. Randle, Dr. Moses B. Aiter, John F. Warren, and Rial P. Benjamin. The church is a solid brick structure, with slate roof and cathedral-glass windows; heated with furnace; has excellent acoustic properties and abundant seating capacity for a congregation of five hundred. According to a statement left on record by Rev. T. F. Drake, the cost of the building, exclusive of ground (and furnishing?) was \$7000, of which sum, \$1300 was subscribed on dedication-day. The subscriptions so taken, failed, as often happens in such cases, to produce the cash results expected. The accruing debt, however, was not much of a burden, and, for that reason perhaps, final payment was delayed until a few months ago.

PASTORATES

Rev. T. F. Drake, the first pastor of Trinity church, found, on coming to the charge a membership of but 114. He remained three years, reporting, Oct. 1892, at the close of his pastorate, 192 members. The next year, Rev. J. G. Campbell, pastor, there were 40 accession,—a net gain of 32 to the membership of the church. The present pastorate began September 11, 1893.

Presbyterian History.

The following is an abbreviated sketch recently published in the Pilot from the pen of William B. Austin.

"Nine persons, headed by James Van Rensselaer, the father of the town, formed the nucleus from which has been evolved the church societies 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 1866 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 from the bulwark of the church at this place.

"The Presbyterian church of Rensselaer was organized Feb. 20, 1847, the following persons being 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.

The first elders were Ezra Wright and Henry Wright.

"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 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.

"Rev. Thomas Wharton was pastor from 1855 to 1859, and Rev. H. A. Mayhew from 1856 to 1865, then occurred one year pastorates of Rev. 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 A. Tatman and Gen. R. H. Milroy, and which affected Ezra Wright financially; and John Keller, Stephenson Donalson 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 in the harbor.

"In 1855 Rev. Gilbert Small was pastor, and after him Rev. August 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. Then 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 2.

"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. L. 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 3.

"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," "Climb-