

PETER CARTRIGHT
BACKWOODS PREACHER

in

MENARD COUNTY
ILLINOIS

(Salem & Petersburg)

Taken from the book
*Pioneers of Menard and Mason
Counties*

BY

T. G. ONSTOT

1902

PUBLISHED BY T. G. ONSTOT, FOREST CITY, ILLINOIS.

PRINTED BY J. W. FRANKS & SONS,
PEORIA, ILLINOIS.

Reprinted 1978 by The Bookmark
P.O. Box 74, Knightstown, Ind. 46148





PETER CARTRIGHT
BACKWOODS PREACHER

in

MENARD COUNTY
ILLINOIS

(Salem & Petersburg)

Taken from the book
*Pioneers of Menard and Mason
Counties*

BY

T. G. ONSTOT

1902

PUBLISHED BY T. G. ONSTOT, FOREST CITY, ILLINOIS.

PRINTED BY J. W. FRANKS & SONS,
PEORIA, ILLINOIS.

Reprinted 1978 by The Bookmark
P.O. Box 74, Knightstown, Ind. 46148

Book of Lawrence P. Beckwith

Peter Cartright

The Backwoods Preacher



PETER CARTRIGHT
THE BACKWOODS PREACHER



The Backwoods Preacher

CHAPTER VIII.

BIRTH OF CARTRIGHT



IT WAS my good fortune to be well acquainted with Peter Cartright, and this acquaintance dates as far back as I can recollect. He lived all his life about six miles southwest of Salem and used to often come to Salem to trade, as it was a great deal nearer to him than Springfield. He lived on the same farm and was well fixed, though in early days; his salary for preaching would now be considered very small for the work done. He was a man of great force of character and whether as preacher or politician, generally carried his point; of medium height, but of gigantic build, with a forehead covered with a shaggy coat of hair, a broad chest, and small eyes deeply set, heavy eyebrows. He had great conversational powers, coupled with keen wit. He could interest a crowd as well as any man I ever knew.

He was born September 1, 1786, in Amherst county, Virginia. His father was a soldier in the Revolutionary war, and moved from Virginia to Kentucky in an early day. Thousands of hostile Indians and thousands of emigrants were ruthlessly murdered while on their way to Kentucky. Many young men joined the emigrants hoping to better their condition in the "Dark and Bloody State." There were

about two hundred families banded together for mutual protection, another hundred young men, well armed, who agreed to guard the families through, and as compensation were to be supported for their services. On the route they traveled they often saw where white people had been murdered and scalped by the Indians.

His conversion was as marvelous as St. Paul's, and we believe he had a great mission to fill in the world. We find young Cartright served the devil with all his might; when his face turned right about he commenced to serve the Lord as zealous as he did the devil. His mission was to spread scripture holiness in the form of Methodism, which is christianity in earnest. The old style Methodist preachers rode large circuits, swam rivers, preached every day in the week, rode horse back and carried saddle bags with books for sale. They preached as if the devil had no rights that they were bound to respect, never apologized for their attacks on Satan's kingdom. They sang old Methodist songs like this:

A Methodist is my name
And I hope to live and die the same.

or,

Oh, whip the devil around the stump
And hit him a crack at every jump.

This was the sentiment if not just the words.

He was a wonderful man, just suited for his day and generation, there never was but one Peter Cartright, there will never be another; the world needed a Cartright and there was not room for two.

In the early days of Methodism the preachers had to contend with the ignorance of the people. A few incidents will be to the point. Wilson Lee was one of the pioneer preachers. At one of his appointments at a private house they had a pet lamb—the boys had taught it to butt. They would make motions with their heads and the lamb would

back and come at them with all its might, and they would jump out of the way so the lamb would miss them. A man came to the meeting who had been drinking and frolicing the night before. He came in late and took his seat near the door and began to nod. Presently the lamb came along and seeing the man nodding and bending back and forth, took it as a banter, sprang forward and gave the sleeper a severe jolt on the head and tilted him over to the amusement of the congregation, who burst into laughter, and grave as was Bro. Lee, he almost lost his balance and laughed with the rest. He went on, however, with his sermon and urged them to take up their cross.

There was in the congregation a very wicked Dutchman and his wife, who were very ignorant. The woman was a common scold and made her husband very unhappy and his life miserable. After the meeting was over Bro. Lee started on his journey and saw a little ahead of him a man trudging along carrying a woman on his back. He naturally supposed the woman to be a cripple so she could not walk. The man was very small, while the woman was very large. When he came up, who should it be but the Dutchman, who was at his meeting. Mr. Lee rode up and inquired what had happened to his wife. The Dutchman replied, "Be sure, did not you toll us in your sermon dot we must take up der cross and follow Jesus or dot we could not get to Heaven, and I dose desire to get to Heaven as much as anybody, and dis wife is so pad she scold me all der dime and dis woman is der greatest cross I have in dis world, and so I takes her up and bears der cross."

In those exciting times a new exercise broke out among the people, it was unlike anything that had been, since it lasted about forty years and then disappeared. It was called the "jerks" and was overwhelming upon the minds and body of the people. No matter whether they were saints or sinners they would be taken under a warm song or sermon and

seized with a convulsive jerking all over and the more they resisted the more they jerked. If they would not strive against, and prayed in good earnest, the jerking would usually abate. Cartright says that he has seen more than 500 persons jerking at one time in his large congregations. Usually, persons taken with the jerks, to get relief as they said, would rise up and dance, some would try to run away but could not, some would resist, and on such the jerks were very severe. To see those proud young gentlemen and young ladies dressed in their silks and jewelry and gew-gaws from top to toe take the jerks would often excite Cartright's risibilities. The first jerk or so you would see those fine bonnets, caps and combs fly and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long loose hair would crack almost as loud as a waggoner's whip.

At one of Cartright's appointments in 1804 a very large congregation had turned out to hear the Kentucky Boy, as he was formally called, among the rest were two finely dressed and fashionable ladies attended by their two brothers with loaded horsewhips. Although the house was large it was crowded. The two ladies coming in late took their seats near Cartright and their brothers near the door. Cartright was not feeling well and had a vial of peppermint in his pocket. Before he commenced preaching he took out the vial and swallowed a little of the peppermint, while he was preaching the congregation melted to tears, the two young men moved off to the yard fence and both of the young ladies took the jerks and were greatly mortified.

As Cartright dismissed the meeting a man stepped up to him and warned him to be on his guard for he had heard the two brothers say that they would horsewhip him for giving their sisters the jerks. "Well," said Cartright, "I'll see about that." He went out and said to the young men, "I understand you intend to horsewhip me for giving your sisters the jerks?" One replied they did. Peter undertook

to expostulate with them on the absurdity of the charge against him, but they swore he need not deny it, for they had seen him take out of his pocket a vial in which he carried some truck that gave their sisters the jerks. Quick as a thought it came to his mind how he could get clear of the whipping, and jerking out the peppermint vial said: "Yes, if I gave your sisters the jerks I will give them to you." In a moment he saw they were scared. Cartright moved toward them and they backed, as Cartright advanced they wheeled and ran warning Cartright not to come near them or they would kill him. It raised the laugh on them and Cartright escaped the whipping.

JUDGE OF HUMAN NATURE

Cartright was a fine judge of human nature, he could read a man's character by the time he got acquainted with him hence he had a different way of dealing with the various characters he met with. There was one way he had with dealing with preachers who read their sermons, he believed that if God called a man to preach he would furnish him with something to say. "Open thy mouth and I will fill it," or "it shall be given you that how and what you shall say."

Fancy John Wesley reading one of his sermons. Fancy Christ reading his sermon on the mount. Fancy Peter preaching his pentacostal argument by manuscript. Fancy Felix making his eloquent argument by note. Fancy all of the witnesses in all ages. Fancy presiding elder spending about six hours' at an appointment preaching a short essay that perhaps was borrowed and holding two quarterly meetings in a week leaving home Saturday morning and getting back Monday evening and then wanting about thirty dollars for the work that was worth two dollars and a half, and then compare their work with Cartright's that would make the rounds of his district in six weeks. Preaching from seven

to ten times a week and not getting on an average a dollar a day. It is no wonder that the "power has left the church and that the pastor can preach the whole winter and his words fall like water on a duck's back without leaving any impression. Another common amusement of the present day is church fairs, church entertainments, where the church and the world meet on a common level, where the church lays aside her ecclesiastical toga and says lay there till I drink in this feast the world has prepared for me. In Cartright's time it was always in the guise of a dance. How he managed one of these gatherings is illustrated by the following anecdote.

CARTRIGHT AT A DANCE

He was once traveling through Kentucky and stopped at a country tavern and asked to stay all night. The landlord told him he could but he was afraid he could not enjoy himself as there was to be a dance there that night. Peter asked how far it was to the next house and was told it was seven miles. Cartright told him if he would feed his horse well and treat him civilly he would stay. Being assured of that he dismounted and went in. The people came in large companies. There was not much drinking going on.

Peter took his seat in one corner of the house and the dance commenced. He sat quietly musing, greatly desiring to preach the next day. After concluding to spend the Sabbath there he asked the privilege to preach there on the morrow. A tall and beautiful young lady now approached him with pleasant winning smiles, asked him to dance with her. He, in a moment resolved on a desperate experiment. He rose as gracefully as he could with many emotions. The young lady moved to his right side. He grasped her right hand with his right, while she leaned her left arm on Cartright's; in this position they walked on the floor, the

whole company seemed pleased at this act of politeness shown the stranger. A colored man, who was the fiddler, began to put his fiddle in good order.

Cartright then spoke to the fiddler to hold on a moment and said that for several years he had not undertaken any matter of any importance without asking the blessing of God upon it and now he desired to ask the blessing of God upon the beautiful young lady and the whole company who had shown such acts of politeness upon a perfect stranger. He here grasped the young lady's hand tightly and said, "let's all kneel down and pray," and then dropping on his knees commenced to pray with all the power of soul and body he could command. The young lady tried to get away, but he held her tight; presently she fell on her knees. Some of the company knelt, some looked curious, some sat still, the colored fiddler ran out in the kitchen saying, "Lord, O Massy, what's de matter! What dat mean?"

While Cartright prayed some wept aloud and some cried for mercy. He rose from his knees and commenced to exhort, after which he sang a hymn. The young lady, who had invited him on the floor, lay prostrate and was crying for mercy. He exhorted, sang and prayed nearly all night. About fifteen professed that night. The meeting lasted the next day and night and as many more were converted. Now, this condition of affairs would not be tolerated in some places. A man with such a bold manner of combating, the popular sin of dance, would be laughed at to scorn or be mobbed by the crowd whose designs he had frustrated. It was in politics that he had great power with men. Born a Jackson Democrat, when the Whigs and Democrats, both bowed their knee to slavery, he was an active worker in the Democratic party, both were proslavery alike. Cartright was elected to the Legislature twice over Abraham Lincoln. Of this he speaks with some pride, though when Lincoln beat him for Congress he does not say much about it. We

can explain this, that Cartright generally came out ahead in everything he undertook. It was his victories that he talked of, not his defeats. After his defeat for Congress, he sank out of the political horizon and did not appear again till treason's dark and damning cloud appeared to darken the horizon, did he make himself appear as a flaming torch. He canvassed the state as a war Democrat, preaching with the people to stand by the Government and Abraham Lincoln.

A FATAL ACCIDENT

While Cartright was moving to Illinois an accident occurred to his third daughter and she was instantly killed. His wagon was overturned and came near killing his oldest daughter. After righting up the wagon they concluded to camp for the night on the spot, as they were very tired. After getting things righted up and the evening being very warm, they concluded not to stretch their tent for the night, so a fire was kindled at the root of a small tree, the tree appeared to be sound. They all lay down and slept soundly.

Just at daybreak the tree, at the root of which they had kindled the fire, fell, and it fell directly on his third daughter, and it is supposed she never breathed afterward. Cartright heard the tree when it started to fall and sprang up very much alarmed and seized the tree before it struck the child but it availed nothing. Although it was an awful calamity, yet, if they had stretched their tent that night the way the tree fell, it would have killed the whole family. The tree was sound on the outside to a thickness of a carving knife, but the inside had dry rot. Cartright sent his teamster to those living near by for aid, but not a soul would come nigh. The teamster and Cartright went to cutting the tree off the child, and carefully drew the child out. Cartright laid her in the feed trough and moved on twenty miles.



CHAPTER IX.

ANECDOTES OF CARTRIGHT



PE WILL be pardoned for a few Cartright anecdotes. The Methodist conference was being held at Nashville. Jackson was then in the youth of his power; it was before he was a "good man." Peter was to preach in one of the fashionable churches in Nashville and the people was afraid that he would say something that would offend Jackson.

So he had announced his text; just then Jackson and his suite came into the church and the preacher pulled Peter's coat-tail and told him that was Gen. Jackson. Peter stopped and said in a loud voice, "Gen. Jackson; who is Gen. Jackson; if he don't repent of his sins and be a better man God Almighty will damn him as quick as a Georgia nigger." Peter's friends then tried to get him to leave the city at once, feeling sure that Jackson would kill him on sight the next morning, but Cartright said no; that he was taught to love everybody and fear nobody. The next morning, sure enough, one of Jackson's aides came into the hotel and handed Cartright a note to call at the Governor's mansion at once. His friends expostulated but he went. Jackson met him on the sidewalk and extended his hand, saying: "You are a brave man, just the kind of a man I have been looking for. If I had a regiment like you I could whip the whole British Nation. Now," said Jackson, "you make my house your home as long as you stay in the city." This incident only illustrates Peter's character.

He never fained or fancied greatness, one man was as good as another. How different from many preachers who bow down to wealth and kiss the big toe of rich men, while the poor are too often neglected. Cartright may at times seemed warlike, too much like a boy with a chip on his shoulder. I recall the times he preached at Rock Creek campmeeting, when he would give his Cumberland brethren a jolt in final perseverance, and with a merry twinkle of his eye, appeared to see how they enjoyed it. He was as bold as a lion and as soft as a cooing dove. There was none before him like him, there was none in his time like him, and none after him like him.

It has often been thought strange that Cartright should have died worth \$50,000, when he spent his whole life traveling large circuits, with only a small salary. His estate consisted of a large farm, which he bought at Congress price, and he always lived on it, never moved from one district to another. He settled on his farm away back in 1830 and the farm got to be quite valuable. It was situated eight miles southwest of Petersburg, in the edge of Sangamon County, but we always considered him a citizen of Menard, as he came to Salem very often.

He had quite a family. One daughter married Wm. Newman, who was a presiding elder; another married W. D. Trotter, who was another noted preacher. Another married Patten Harrison, who was one of the most noted rowdies of his day, and who caused Peter a great deal of trouble in his day. While his sons, Peter and Matt, were not noted for the piety, but the farm was run in Peter's absence in good order. He had about 600 acres and always held onto it and had a good home where he could rest from his long circuits. He would start north for 100 miles, then cross the Illinois River to Rock River, then down to Galesburg; thence to Canton, then to Pike County, cross at Beardstown, then home after six weeks' absence.

CARTRIGHT'S APPEARANCE

Cartright, ever since I knew him, always wore a white hat with a broad rim. It must have been a brother to the one Horace Greele wore. It looked like the hat that Martin Waddle, the hatter, in Salem, used to make; the nap and fur on it were a half inch long. I have often seen him come to Salem, and I knew him by his hat if nothing else; the hat he wore in the "thirties," might not have been the hat he wore in the seventies, but it was the same kind and was made on the same block.

In personal appearance Cartright resembled Dick Oglesby more than any other man I can think of. I knew both men, in their time they both had the same kind of voices, and both, in their declining years, had the same tremulous voice. The last time I saw Cartright was in 1868, when he stayed at my house for five days; the last time I saw Governor Oglesby was at the Old Salem Chautauqua in 1898; they had both outlived their days and generation, but people hung on their words with great reverence, as Oglesby was a power in the political world, so Cartright was a power in the religious world; nobody doubted the courage of Oglesby. He carried enough lead in his body to vindicate that and at the Salem Chautauqua, from his feeble voice, his unsteady step, most of the audience were conscious that they would hear his voice no more. When Cartright left my house in 1868, I said to my wife we will see Uncle Peter no more, it was his last round. He had fought a good fight and kept the faith and henceforth a crown was laid up for him.

A few years after the death of Peter Cartright, the final summons came to Mrs. Cartright, whose activity of body and mind continued to the last. This happened just as she had finished speaking at a Methodist love feast in the Pleasant Plains church. Her closing sentence was about

her life duties being so near finished; that she was "Only waiting for the chariot of the Lord," she sank back suddenly to her seat. Willing hands were reached to her assistance; she did not need them. The "Everlasting arms" had taken her spirit home. Rev. Harden Wallace, who had charge of the meeting broke silence by saying: "The chariot has come." It had. She was buried beside her husband in the Pleasant Plains Cemetery.

Samuel Hill, the Salem merchant, was not a man of much physical strength himself, but was in the habit of taking some delight in whipping any person that might be offensive to him. It was he that hired John Fergesson to whip Jack Armstrong, and for the job was to give a set of blue edged plates. John got the plates, but said it was the dearest set of plates he ever had. It was when Cartright was at his best that Hill conceived a dislike for him, but no bully ever took the job of whipping him from Hill. Cartright appeared to take great pleasure in coming and sitting under Hill's porch and annoying him. He would come and sit for hours and laugh and talk about Hill, while Hill stayed indoors. He was describing one day to a crowd how he viewed Hill's soul. He said he had some doubts whether he had a soul till one day he put a quarter of a dollar on Hill's lips, when his soul came guggling up to get the piece of silver.





CHAPTER X.

RIDING HIS CIRCUIT



IN THE pioneer days there were no roads, the prairie grass was as high as a man's head, and paths were the only guides the pioneers had. Cartright would travel all day without passing a cabin of the hardy pioneers. It was easy to travel through the timber, but the prairies were not then settled. When he would come to the edge of the timber the cabins would end. Then he would strike across the prairie from one point of timber, and would have to go by the sun or some other natural course. Sometimes night would overtake him and he would camp out. Think of that, ye ministers of these latter days, who ride in pomp and splendor in palace cars and get four times as much for doing half the pioneer preachers did!

They had these routes through the timber belts marked by blazing. They would take a line of trees in a row, and with an axe scalp the bark on the right side about four feet from the ground, so that a traveler could always have a half dozen scalped trees ahead of him. So Cartright traveled by paths through the prairies from point to point and through the timber by scalped trees, not meeting a fellow traveler from ten to twenty miles. During those miles of solitude he had time to think up a good sermon, for it is when alone that the best thoughts of man come to him—there being nothing from the outside world to distract his thoughts. One reason why he performed so much work

was his strong and hardy frame; for it is a fact that a strong and vigorous frame produces strong and vigorous thought; a short face, narrow between the eyes, indicate a narrow mind and feeble thoughts. Give me a preacher like Cartright—one of vigorous frame and intellect. Cartright wore a $7\frac{3}{4}$ hat. It was only a hat made by the home hatters, and weighed double that of the hats made now. The body of his hats were always a quarter of an inch thick, with a rim five inches wide, the crown eight inches high, and the nap one-half inch long, heavily lined with silk. The hat he wore when I first knew him I think lasted him twenty-five or thirty years.

He was nothing if not friendly; no man or boy escaped his attention. Full of wit and good humor, he could entertain a crowd of one or one hundred. When he thought he was right no earthly power could persuade Cartright to abandon a principle. He was like Henry Clay; he would rather be right than be president. I will relate an incident which will illustrate this: On a certain occasion he met an interesting family, the father of which was a drunkard. The family joined the church and the old man was also friendly. They met one time at a store. The drinking man called for cherry bounce. He sweetened it for Cartright, out of pure love for him, and invited the preacher to drink with him. Cartright refused, and told the man that he had given up the practice. The man then told Cartright that if he did not drink with him he would be no friend of his or of his family, and that he would never go to hear him preach again. Peter told him that it was all in vain to urge him, that his principles were fixed and that he would not violate them for man or mortal. The man then flew into a rage and cursed and abused him. Peter walked off and left the man in his glory. He never forgave Cartright, made his family leave the church and lived and died a drunkard.

CARRIGHT GETS A LITTLE BOOZY

Brothers Walker and Cartright were out once together. They started early in the morning, traveled twenty-five miles and arrived at Knoxville about noon. They rode to a tavern, but finding a great, noisy, drunken crowd, Cartright said to Walker: "This is a poor place for weary travelers; we will not stop here." They rode on to another tavern, but it was still worse, for the people were drunk and a real bully fight was going on. Cartright proposed to Walker that they go on where they could find some private entertainment where it would be quite. So they went on. Presently they came to a house with a sign over the door of "Private Entertainment and New Cider." Cartright said: "Here is the place; if we can get some good light bread and new cider that's dinner enough for me." Walker said that was exactly what he wanted. They accordingly halted and an old man came out. Peter inquired if they could have their horses fed, and obtain some new light bread and some new cider. "Alight," said the landlord, "for I suspect you are two Methodist preachers and have been to Baltimore to the conference." They replied they had. The horses were then well fed, and a loaf of good light bread and a pitcher of new cider was set before them. The landlord was an Otterbean Methodist. His wife was sick and she sent for the preachers to come and pray for her. They did so, and then returned to eat their bread and drink their cider. The weather was very warm, and soon they were laying in the bread and cider at a rapid rate. It seemed to Cartright, however, that it was not only new cider, but something more, and he began to rein up his appetite. Walker laid in liberally, and at length Cartright said to him, "You had better stop, for this is surely something more than cider." "I reckon not," replied Walker.

Cartright was not in the habit of using spirits at all.

He knew that very little would floor him, and presently he began to feel light headed. He instantly ordered their horses, fearing that, for once, both himself and Walker would get a little boozy. They then mounted their horses and started on their journey. When they had ridden about a mile Cartright rode up to Walker and cried out, "Wake up! Wake up!" Walker roused up, his eyes watering freely. Cartright then said, "I believe we are both drunk. Let us turn out of the road, and lie down, and take a nap till we both get sober." But they rode on, not drunk, but they felt it flying to their heads. I have thought it proper to mention this in order that others might be put on their guard.

CAPACITY FOR WORK

Cartright accomplished a wonderful amount of work during his ministry—more than any of our modern presiding elders of the present day, while his salary was scarcely \$100 a year, and more often less than more. He always contended for the Methodist usages—the campmeetings, class meetings, prayer meetings and love feasts. When Methodism began to throw off these meetings the church was shorn of its strength and was a Sampson in the hands of Deliah. In these early days its members always looked forward to a quarterly meeting with delight as a season of refreshing from the Lord. But how is it now? It is rather dreaded. The elder comes and reads a sermon that he probably borrowed from Talmage, or if he didn't, it would have been better if he had, for the congregation would have had a better one. At the close of the sermon then comes the tug of war; the preacher announces that it is necessary to raise about \$15 for the elder, and when the congregation seems to have its mind in a suitable frame to take the sacrament, the struggle for the \$15 begins. How many

\$1 men, the preacher asks, are in the house. After that, how many 50c. men, and then how many 25c. men. If it still lacks a little the steward will wait on the congregation and gather up the fragments, that nothing may be lost, says the preacher, and the result is that it requires all the talent the preacher in charge has to raise the elder's claim, well knowing that his next appointment depends on his ability to raise money for the elder's one sermon, while the early father spent about a week for one-fourth of what he got. I speak this not in a spirit of criticism or fault-finding, but as a real fact that exists. Cartright appeared to have the spirit of prophecy and to see in the future what has come to pass. The church has lost its power. The bishops have sounded the alarm—"the church lost thousands of members last year." What is to be done? Let a voice from the grave of Cartright answer: "Return to the old paths, do thy first work over, lest thy candle stick be removed out of its place." The Methodist church, in its primitive state, was the gospel to the poor. In all of our large cities the poor have to take a back seat in the church. "Do thy first works over." Pardon this digression. The only apology we make for this style is that we feel like it, and, like Carrie Nation, only do it because those in authority refused to speak out.

When Cartright first started out as a preacher, a single man was allowed to receive \$80 a year, if his circuit could raise that much, but he seldom received over \$30 or \$40, and this, with a few presents and wedding fees, was all he got. He traveled eleven circuits and twelve districts; received on probation and by letter 10,000; children baptized, 8,000; adults, 4,000; funerals preached, 500. For twenty years of his ministry he preached as often as 400 times, which would make 8,000 sermons. Nor did he have his sermons written. In the last thirty-three years of his life he averaged four sermons a week, making in that

time, 6,600; total, 14,600. He was a great man for camp-meetings and prayer meetings. He was converted at a camp-meeting, and in his early ministry lived in a tented grove from two to three months in a year. He said; "May the day be eternally distant when camp-meetings, class meetings, prayer meetings and love feasts shall be laid aside in the Methodist churches."

Cartright was never afraid to rebuke spiritual wickedness in high places, as the following instance will illustrate: While a member of the Legislature he was invited to take supper with the Governor. They sat down to the table, and the Governor was going to pass the dishes when Cartright said: "Hold on, Governor, ask a blessing." The Governor blushed, stammered and excused himself, and then asked Cartright to ask the blessing. The preacher did so, and then gave the Governor a lecture about a man of his high position eating without offering thanks to the Giver of the supper. No doubt the Governor never sat down to a meal after that without thinking of the rebuke.





CHAPTER XI.

THE BAPTISTS



THE Baptist church played an important part in the spiritual welfare of the people of Menard County in its early days. The Hardshells were perhaps the most numerous back in 1840. They often had preaching at my father's house in Salem, because it was the largest house in the village. John Antle, who lived at Salisbury, and who was the father of the late Dr. Francis P. Antle, was a fair preacher, though he had an ah-h-h at the end of every sentence. Then there was Crow and Bagby, who could not preach without the holy tone and who like Whangdoodle thought it better to have a hardshell than no shell at all.

The Hardshells were opposed to the more progressive sentiments of the other sects. An incident will serve to illustrate: At a meeting in the Baptist Church near Felix Green's, where everything was done by the church, Bro. Green was turned out of the church for having joined Dr. Allen's temperance society. At the same meeting Bro. A—— was charged with being drunk, and was also turned out. Bro. P——, who was loaded for bear, got up and, steadying himself, pulled out a flask and shook it till it beaded, and said: "Brethering, it seems to me that you are not sistenent, (consistent) because you have turned out one man for taking the pledge and another for getting drunk. Now, brethering, how much of this critter have I got to drink to have good standing among you?"

Another portion of the early Baptist Church was represented by Tilford Clark, who was a fine preacher and conducted revival meetings in the school houses and private residences.

In 1842 Abraham Bale came from Kentucky and created a commotion. He was considered a great preacher. Tall, well formed, with a powerful constitution and a voice like a lion, he could wake the natives for a half mile 'round. He held wonderful revivals all over the country and baptized converts in the River Sangamon, even as John the Baptist did in the River Jordan. I have seen him administer baptism to fifty at a time, just below Salem mill. A couple of men or women would get the converts ready and pass them to Bale, who would soon have them put under the water in good style, while the rowdies above would throw in dogs and logs and otherwise disturb the proceedings, and when going to and from the river would run their horses and whoop and yell like Indians. At one of his baptizings, just as he was about to lead a sister out into the water, her husband, who was watching the ceremonies, cried out: "Hold on, Bale! Hold on, Bale! Don't you 'dround' her! I wouldn't take the best cow and calf in Menard County for her!"

Bale's star outshone every other star for a few years and then he moved away. His brother, Jacob Bale, tried his hand at preaching for a time but did not make much of a success at it.

"Pres" Curry has sounded the gospel trumpet in Menard County for nearly sixty years and has probably baptized more people, preached more funerals and married more couples than any other man. "Pres" does not take to any so-called improvements in theology. He thinks the Bible should be interpreted as it reads; hence his sermons are of the doctrinal sort, and he never considers a sermon complete unless he has the Baptist mode of baptism somewhere

in it. He is an earnest preacher, and still thinks the old time theology the best.

The Baptist Church in Menard County has filled its mission well and among the churches in Petersburg the one on Main street, south of the court house, has done as much to better the spiritual condition of the people as any other.

THE CAMPBELLITES

In early days it was no stigma to call this division of the army of the Lord Campbellites. They were the followers of Alexander Campbell and were not ashamed of their parentage. Now, we believe, they prefer to call themselves Christians, which is not objected to, unless they lay claim to being the only church that is entitled to the name. In early days it was said that the Campbellites and the dog-fennel took the town every fall; that is, the church had a revival about the time the dog-fennel crop ripened. Some worthy evangelist would come along and after a few days' preaching would increase fifty to a hundred and go on his way rejoicing. I remember Aaron White as a zealous advocate of the doctrines of this church. He always carried his Testament with him, with marked passages of scripture, ready to defend his faith.

At Sugar Grove William Engle was a preacher belonging to this church. He was a short, heavy-set man, of good speech, and never let any man get ahead of him in an argument. All old settlers remember "Bill" Engle. He was a jolly story teller. I heard him and "Fog" Atchison telling in Petersburg which had the fattest sheep. Engle said: "I tell you, Mr. Atchison, I have the fattest sheep. An ox hooked one the other day and we rendered it up. It was all tallow and its tail made a tallow candle." He got the laugh on Atchison.

The Christian Church has many schools and colleges. One at Eureka turns out many young men well educated. The church has taken advanced ground on the temperance question and most of its preachers and members are prohibitionists.

THE PRESBYTERIANS

Dr. Allen's coming to Petersburg in 1840 was the beginning of that church. For a time the meetings were held in the old court house, an old building in which Septimus Levering kept store at an early day. It was in the middle of the block, three blocks south of the public square and on the west side of the street. Jim Taylor kept store on the south corner of the block and the Hoeys on the north corner. After a while a small church was built north of where Rule's livery stable now stands, where other denominations also held meetings when it was not occupied by the Presbyterians. A preacher by the name of Gault held meetings there for a number of years. He was a good preacher, but, Presbyterian like, read his sermons, which lessened their effect. William Cowgill; the Frackeltons, Dr. Allen and a few others represented the Presbyterian Church in the "forties." A large and substantial brick church was erected one block west of the square later on. The old church is now occupied by S. B. Bryant as a paint shop.

METHODIST CHURCH

A representative man in the early history of the Methodist Church in Petersburg, was Rev. George Barrett, a young man, full of vigor and very popular. The old settlers remember his eccentricities. He would read his text and if anything engaged his attention he would make a remark

and go ahead. In reading his text one morning he said: "‘And the Lord said unto Moses’—Bob Davidson you be still!" Then he went ahead and finished his text. Barrett was a good feeder. One year his circuit took in Pecan Bottom, where the natives lived on pumpkins, cooked in various styles—stewed pumpkin, dried pumpkin, pumpkin pie, etc., etc. Barrett got tired of this kind of provender and one morning he thought he would tell the Lord about it; so he prayed: "Oh, Lord, we thank thee for the genial sunshine that causes the corn to grow, to fatten the the hogs for meat to eat, that thy servant may have strength to fit him for the arduous duties that lie before him. And now, Lord, may it please thee to blast the pumpkin crop, for we cannot perform our work on such diet." After that Barrett got all the meat he wanted.

Barrett died about ten years ago in Morgan County. He made a trip to Europe in the latter part of his life. Crowds of beggars beset him in his travels. He finally discovered that if he took his store teeth out of his mouth he could scare the beggars by running after them with his teeth in his hand. He was not annoyed any more by beggars.

OLD-FASHIONED CAMP-MEETINGS

In the early days of Menard County (then a part of Sangamon) there were no churches and the religious meetings were held in the little school houses or in private residences. Once a year camp-meetings would be held. The Cumberland Presbyterians appeared to lead. There were three large congregations of that denomination within the bounds of Menard County from 1830 to 1845. At Concord, north of Petersburg, where one of these camp-meetings was held annually, a large shed was built under which the preachers held forth. The Pantiers, the Rutledges and

the Berrys were the prominent campers. My father would move to the grounds on a Thursday afternoon. Camps would be built around the shed, and by Sunday the grounds would present the appearance of a small village.

Back of the camps the women would do the cooking. Two big logs would be put close together with an upright forked pole at each end. Across these forks another pole would be laid, on which were hung the pots and kettles in which meats and vegetables would cook while the meeting was going on.

A great drawback and an endless source of annoyance was the great number of dogs round the camp. Each man had from one to a dozen, and it kept the women busy trying to prevent the hungry canines from getting into the dinner. I remember one camp-meeting when James Berry had a dozen hounds there and it looked as though they would break up the meeting. I appointed myself a committee on dogs. The grounds were covered with a growth of walnut trees. A green walnut, applied with sufficient force against the side of a hound, would make him yelp for several seconds and the sound would travel down the ravine the echo would reverberate back again.

The preachers got onto the dog racket and determined to stop it. I had been pelting the dogs one afternoon and was watching as well as praying. Just after I had taken a good lick at one, Guthrie White ran up behind me, turned me around and when he saw who I was, exclaimed in astonishment: "Why, it's one of Bro. Onstot's boys!" "Now," said I, "I'm trying to protect these women's cooking from these hounds, and if Jim Berry don't want 'em hurt, let him keep 'em at home." Guthrie saw the point and I continued in the discharge of my duties as dog pelter.

It was the custom at those meetings to feed everybody that came and this made very slavish work for the women. There was good singing. The preacher would read the

hymn in a loud voice and then would "line" it and everybody would sing. Music boxes hadn't been invented then. The preacher didn't ask any of the brethern to "pitch and carry the tune."

Old Sammy Berry and James Pantier were the oldest of the members. Berry must have been over seventy and could talk and shout. He was of a serious turn of mind and seldom laughed or even smiled. He was a brother of Rev. J. M. Berry, of Rock Creek. Pantier was very eccentric. He would sit in front of the preacher and repeat his sermon as fast as the preacher preached it. Sometimes he would get ahead and sometimes approve what the preacher said; again, he would shake a finger at the preacher and say in a low tone, "you are mistaken," or "that is not so, brother." He was a faith doctor and could cure the bite of a snake or of a mad dog. He would take the patient into a room and rub the wound and mumble some hocus-pocus and the patient would get well.

There was sound preaching in those days. The preachers preached hell and damnation more than they do now. They could hold a sinner over the pit of fire and brimstone till he could see himself hanging by a slender thread, and he would surrender and accept the gospel that was offered to him.

There were a good many rowdies around Concord at that time. They would get steam up on whisky and go to the camp meeting to raise a row. I have seen some of these sinners get under conviction and start to run, and fall down and lie for hours before they were converted. Nowadays a church will just vote a sinner into the kingdom, or just have him hold up his hand, then publish "a great revival."

At Lebanon the camp-meeting was similar to that at Concord. Old Robert White, and the Rayburns, the Kincaids; the Williamses and other were always in attendance. I believe this was the oldest camp-meeting ground in the

county. Neal Johnson was a pioneer preacher in that section before I was born. He was a man of large stature and was accounted a great preacher. My father was converted under his ministry, before he moved to Salem, some time before the winter of the deep snow.

The Old Salem Chautauqua reminded me more of an old-fashioned camp-meeting than any gathering I have seen in late years, except that at the camp-meetings they had prayers at all the tents at sunrise. The voice of song arose from the tents and then some lusty old brother with a voice like a foghorn would wake up the natives by giving God advice and directions how to run this world of ours.

PETER CARTRIGHT'S TOMB

In less than two years after the death of Peter Cartright it was reported by some enterprising papers that his estate was insolvent and his wife left in destitution. B. F. Irwin, of Pleasant Plains, replied through the Springfield papers that Mrs. Cartright had been amply provided for in the will of Dr. Cartright, and that the probate records of Sangamon County showed his estate to be worth \$50,000.

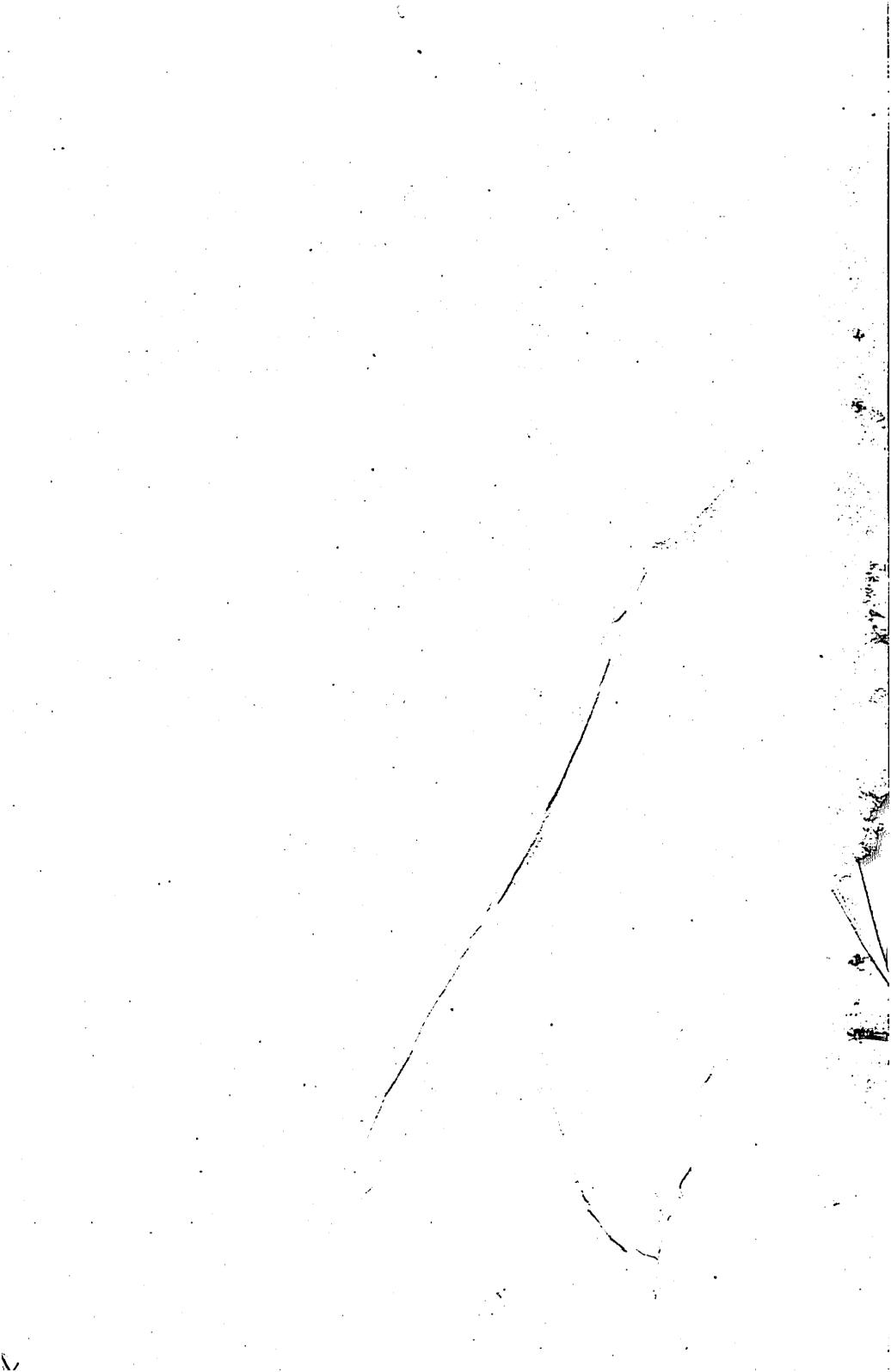
Several weeks since, a newspaper item went the rounds saying that Peter Cartright and his wife were buried in a private graveyard and their graves were unmarked and greatly neglected and overgrown. This item got into the Illinois papers quite generally. This was followed by various comments calling for "Organizing a society to erect a monument over the grave of Peter Cartright," etc., etc. Of course, as there are not yet enough little local societies to give everybody a "treasurership" or "presidency," this was a "taking" call for a new one, and efforts to organize began in some places.

But Mr. Epler, who is president of the Pleasant Plains Cemetery, started a denial of this story in the Journal of Springfield, saying the graves of Peter Cartright and wife were marked by an appropriate stone in the above cemetery, that their graves were not in a private burying place, and that the cemetery was "one of the best kept up ones in the state."

The facts are, further, that at the time of the death of Mrs. Cartright there was about \$3,000 left of the Dr. Cartright estate, to be divided among the heirs. And about the "unmarked grave," the facts are that two years before Dr. Cartright's death he had a \$600 double monument erected for himself and wife in the Pleasant Plains cemetery. The inscription in full for both, except the date of death, was placed on the stone as written by Peter Cartright. He had carved on his monument the first text he ever used, as follows: "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

There is such a peculiar unfitness of associating the names of Peter Cartright and his wife with a call for post mortem charity, that no one who knew either of them and their thrift and fore-thought would be liable to be deceived.







CARTRIGHT
Family

Estate Lawrence
P. Richmond

OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

The Orange County California
Genealogical Society

Does Not Circulate