

Publication Number Twenty-two

OF THE

ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL LIBRARY

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Transactions

OF THE

Illinois State Historical Society

FOR THE YEAR 1916

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Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Society, Springfield,  
Illinois, May 11-12, 1916

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SPRINGFIELD, ILL.  
ILLINOIS STATE JOURNAL CO., STATE PRINTERS  
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**PART II**

**Papers Read at the Annual Meeting  
1916**

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## EARLY PRESBYTERIANISM IN EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS.

(Rev. Ira W. Allen, A. M., D. D., Paris, Ill.)

Let me ask you to call upon your historical imagination and paint in the inner chambers of the mind a picture, indeed, a pictorial series.

A farm in Kentucky is the background of the first scene. A missionary has just started for the New Purchase in Indiana. It is September of the year 1822. The day is one of golden sunshine and almost summer warmth. The pioneer sits upon the driver's seat of a covered wagon, holding the reins that guide four horses, and beside him sits his wife holding a two-year old girl in her lap. From the rear an older girl looks out.

Within are the supplies usual for a migration to a home in the wilderness, but in addition to these are a few books and some missionary reports as well as the minister's Bible.

Scene second: A lovely autumn day is coming to a close. Not by the roadside, for there is no road, but in a glen stands a covered wagon. Not far away four hobbled horses are eagerly biting the half dried grass. A camp fire is burning beneath a giant hickory, and near it sits the missionary's wife. A large iron kettle is suspended by a long pole sloping high enough above the fire not to burn. The pole's lower end is under a log. It runs upward supported by a forked branch driven in the ground. The older child is feeding the fire. The father is picking the feathers from a wild turkey. A rifle lies on the ground beside him. The youngest child is asleep in her mother's arms.

Scene third: It is raining steadily. The horses are sinking every step into a miry road. Their sweaty coats steam in the rain as they struggle slowly onward. In great coat and coonskin cap the missionary sits on the driver's seat. The back flaps of the wagon are drawn down tight. He is the only human being visible. The wagon wheels sink, sometimes sharply and deeply. Then the smoking horses strain against their collars and the wheels give curious sucking sounds in the water and mud. Around a curve the wagon disappears.

Scene fourth: A log cabin stands where great trees have been cleared away. Near it are some stumps, testifying by their size to the forest giants that fell before the missionary's axe. Between the logs of the cabin walls appear the chips that await the plaster to make them firm and keep the wind away. The rough stone chimney is unfinished, but smoke is coming from it. Little patches of snow are on the ground. The clearing is shut in on every side by mighty trees.

Scene fifth: The cabin is finished. White plaster, flush with the outside of the squared logs, shows in all the cracks and crevices. The chimney is up to its full height. A door squarely fills in the doorway, with a leather thong hanging out through a small hole where the knob

of a modern door would be. The clearing is much larger and in one place young corn is growing and bean vines are showing themselves. On one log of the cabin is roughly carved: "Cottage of Peace."

Scene sixth: Under the trees of a grove a small settlement are gathered some scores of people. Of homespun goods are their clothing, rough and clumsy their shoes. They are all brown from the sun and wind. They all face one way and their heads are bowed, for with uplifted face the missionary is praying. On many cheeks are tears, but it is very still in the grove. The only sounds are the missionary's voice and the stirring of the leaves.

Scene seventh: In the corner of a room so small as to seem a toy room, a chamber of a child's playhouse, is a bed of poles and skins. On it lies an emaciated, white haired woman. Beside it sits the missionary. A Bible is open in his hands. To the dying woman he reads the words of Jesus:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Mr. President, unless some such pictures illustrate the text which is to follow, it will seem dry and juiceless, as lifeless as a surveyor's description. To understand at all what a farm is, after we have read a legal designation of its metes and bounds, we must picture its fields and meadows, its spring and its woodlot, its fertility and lush life. These last indeed give the farm its value and make its legal description worth the writing.

So is it in this paper. The real religion, the desire for God, the longing for eternal life, the aspiration for noble living, the craving for some assurance of acceptance with God, the hunger of the heart for the divine sympathy and compassion, and the complete satisfaction of all these desires in the simple gospel preached by the missionary—these give the real meaning to the accounts which follow.

Further, the hardships and struggles of pioneer life did not smother these desires, nor the dangers of river and wilderness deter the missionary. Sacrifice and courage on his part and on theirs, faith, prayer, trust and persistence in religious duties on his part and on theirs, must be understood to get the real significance of the organization of Illinois' early churches.

The Presbyterian history of eastern Illinois really begins with the coming of isolated members of that church from eastern states, principally Ohio, Virginia, and east Tennessee. Here and there a communicant could be found in one of the log cabins, in the forests or on the edge of the prairie, who longed for the coming of a missionary, desiring to hear the gospel preached and to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

How real that longing was in many breasts may be judged from the fact that often a man or a woman would walk eight or ten miles to attend a meeting, would ride or drive twenty or thirty. But the formation of churches began when the Rev. Isaac Reed, a minister of a little pioneer church in Owen County, Indiana, and a missionary of the Connecticut Missionary Society crossed the Wabash River on a journey to Paris, Ill.

There he organized the first church in this section of our State. I quote from a report he made and from his diary.

“The Cottage of Peace, IND., *November 24, 1824.*”

GOOD NEWS FROM THE FRONTIER.

“I have just returned from a short missionary tour across the Wabash. I was as far out as Paris, Edgar County, Illinois. Indeed this was the point of my principal aim. I went by the particular and earnest solicitation of some people, in that vicinity, (who had removed there from Ohio and from East Tennessee, but whom I had never seen) that I would come and bring them into church order. They had been about two years there with their families, and no minister had yet found his way to their settlement. The appointment had been a good while made, and I was therefore expected. Brother D. Whitney also went with me. We crossed the Wabash three miles above Fort Harrison the fourth inst. That night we had a meeting two and a half miles from the river. There were present three female members of our church, all of them from the state of New York. One had been seven years there, and the others four years; neither had been at communion since they came into the country, nor had they heard a sermon for almost two years—and this purely because they had no opportunity. The next day at evening we began our meeting in the neighborhood of Paris. Nothing unusual appeared. The people seemed pleased to receive us, and in the prospect of a church and the sacrament.

“On the sixth we preached in town. It was a new and small place, though the seat of justice of Edgar County. The services were performed in a schoolhouse. Whilst preaching, a very uncommon solemnity and deep attention seemed to prevail. Numbers were affected to tears. After sermon the church was constituted out of the members present. They were twelve; three elders were chosen. An examination then commenced of persons who desired to become members; and on the following day, thirteen were admitted on examination, and another by letter, making twenty-six. Four adults were baptized. And a very deep and tender impression seemed to exist in the minds of many of the hearers—many shed tears, and confessed, when enquired of, that their minds were awakened into concern for their souls. It seemed that a revival of the Lord’s work was begun. They had for nearly two years kept up society meetings on the Sabbath, and seemed to have desired and hoped and prayed for a preacher to come and see them, until they were prepared, when he came, to receive him as sent them of the Lord; and they seemed to wish to attend to his message and to follow the Lord’s will. The eighth we constituted a Bible Society auxiliary to the American, and left them. But we did not so soon leave the traces of the Lord’s work. Where we held a meeting that night, a woman convinced of sin, when repentance was the subject of discourse, wept aloud.

“The next day we had preaching seven miles further toward the Wabash; here also members seemed concerned, and at night, in another part of the settlement, five miles distant, it was yet more manifest. There were several children baptized; one household of eight; and two days after, six persons were admitted on examination to the communion of the church.

"In short in five days we examined and admitted nineteen persons to communion, constituted a church in a settlement beyond the point to which any of our ministers before had traveled—administered the Sacrament twice, baptized four adults and nineteen children."

Now I read an extract from the Rev. Isaac Reed's diary:

"A Macedonian call had been sent me at Vincennes, the first week of August, from Paris, Ill.; I had returned word I would come.

"Sept. 14th, 1825.—I left the Cottage of Peace on my way to preach the gospel to them. Rode 25 miles and preached at 5 o'clock p. m. Baptized 5 children. This was the household of one of the members of the new formed congregation of Greencastle."

"15th.—Started at sunrise, and went on to Greencastle, 5 miles to breakfast; found my friend Mrs. O—, very sick of a fever. Prayed with her. Hope she may recover. Stopped only for breakfast and went on. Passed through 17 miles woods with only a single cabin. Met and passed numbers on the road. Though very new, it is the leading way from Ohio to the upper parts of Illinois, and near where the National road is expected to pass. Rode this day 31 miles, and stopped with Mr. Samuel Adams; found the woman ill. Spent the evening in reading loud to the family a printed missionary report, and part of two sermons."

"16th.—Started at sunrise, and rode to Mr. T's, 4 miles. He is an elder of our little church, on Big Raccoon Creek. It was formed near three years ago, by a missionary of the General Assembly, but has no minister nor meeting house, nor meeting, except when a missionary comes along. Went on through a very lonely and wet tract, 10 miles to the Wabash River. Crossed it 12 miles above Fort Harrison, a place famous in the late war. Rode 14 miles further to Mr. M'C—'s, where I had appointed to preach. This is on an arm of the Grand Prairie in Illinois."

"On my way I met a man whom I had known 6 years ago at New Albany. He had been used to attend my ministry, but I had not known anything of him since. Enquired of him respecting his mind—found it troubled and dark, without a Christian hope; but uneasy. Exhorted him, and requested him to come to the meeting at Paris. This prairie has a grand and beautiful appearance. It is dry, grassy, and flowered. Preached—the attention was good. Had an interesting conference with the man of the house, his wife and another woman. They are zealous Christians in their first love; each has united with the church in less than a year."

"17th.—Rode into Paris 8 miles. Met the congregation at the court house. Preached immediately. Text, Act 16:10. A large number of hearers and very good attention. Ordained a ruling elder and gave a charge to him, and another to the congregation. Held a meeting with the session; examined and received 2 persons, both young converts. Preached again at night to a numerous and solemn assembly."

"Paris is the county seat of Edgar County, but is a very small place of about 8 cabins. It lies on the prairie. The church here was formed by my ministry, last November, with twelve members. It seemed in a state of revival, and I left it with 26. Sixteen had been added—Now 42."

"18th.—Sabbath. Held prayer meeting at the court house half after nine a. m. Baptized one adult. Preached and administered the Lord's Supper. There were three tables. A large number of hearers, very well behaved. Rode  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles to lodge. Read aloud to the family a missionary report.

"19th.—Rode to Paris and preached at 11 a. m. The sermon was a funeral one for Mr. John Young, missionary, who died at Vincennes, Aug. 15th, aged 28 years. He had spent some months with these people, where his labors appear to have been greatly blessed. Dined and took leave of these interesting people. They are anxious to obtain a minister, and I hope they can soon support one. Rode 10 miles and preached at night."

"20th.—Rode 9 miles to New Hope meeting house. Met the congregation and preached the same funeral sermon as yesterday. Here, too, Mr. Y. had labored—been successful, and was much beloved. It was a feeling time. Baptized 1 adult and 1 infant. This is a wonderful society. It has grown up from 9 to 70 members in 10 months, and there seems still a reviving influence. They subscribed \$10 toward printing the funeral sermon. They have built a new meeting house. Preached again at night, and baptized four children."

"21st.—Found where there is a pious lad, now a scholar of the Sabbath school; anxious to learn and makes great proficiency. I expect he is to be called to the ministry. Rode 11 miles to the village Terre Haute. This is a singular place—has about 200 population and much mercantile business. It has no religious society of any order. But at present a great disposition to hear preaching. And its gentlemen have formed a Sabbath reading meeting at the court house. They read printed sermons. There is also a new-formed Bible society and there is a small Sabbath school. I am told, \$300 salary might be raised here for a preacher. Preached to a large congregation at night. In the afternoon, visited and prayed with the school."

"22d.—This day was rainy. Rode 21 miles—rested for the night; but not without being solicited to preach."

"23d.—Preached a funeral sermon for the death of a married woman—she has left children. Rode 13 miles and lodged at D——'s on Raccoon Creek—this is a Presbyterian family from Ireland."

"24th.—Repassed the long woods to Greencastle, 18 miles—preached at night. My friend appears recovering from her fever, but is very weak."

"25th.—Rose early and retired to the woods. Visited and prayed with a sick woman. Met the congregation—prayed—ordained a ruling elder, and gave him and the congregation a charge. Preached and administered the Lord's Supper, in the new church at Greencastle. There were few to commune, but many to hear—went home with the elder. When we entered his house, his son was weeping aloud. The Bible lay open on the table—and the first words he spoke were, "The Lord has found me." He seemed greatly agitated and distressed. I endeavored to direct him to the Savior and read and explained to him and the family the parable of the Prodigal son."



"26th.—The young man was still serious but more calm. Left him a reference to some chapters. Rode home about 24 miles and found my family in peace. I had been absent 13 days—rode 222 miles—preached 13 sermons—administered the Lord's Supper in 2 churches—ordained a ruling elder in each church—baptized 2 adults and 6 children."

And now the account of the organization of the Paris church from the minutes of the meeting:

"At a meeting held in the schoolhouse at Paris, Illinois, November 6th, 1824, after public worship, the following persons, members of the Presbyterian church were by prayer solemnly constituted into a church, by the name of the Presbyterian Church of Paris: John Bovell, William Means, James Eggleton, Adriel Stout, Amzi Thompson, Samuel Vance, Christian Bovell, Nancy Thompson, Barbara Alexander, Elizabeth Blackburn, Hannah Baird, Mary Vance."

"Samuel Vance, John Bovell, and William Means were then unanimously elected Ruling Elders—they each having held that office in other congregations."

"The Session then held a meeting to examine persons for membership, when, at a meeting on Sabbath morning, Nov. 7th, the following were examined and admitted to communion: James Ashmore, Cassandra Ashmore, Rebecca Ives, Susanna Means, Elizabeth Jones, Polly Wayne, Eliza Stout, Jane Ewing, Margaret Crozier, Betsy Burr, Miron Ives, Sarah Ives, Asenath McKown, Rachel Ashmore.

Four of these, viz: Mrs. Means, Miss Ashmore, Mr. Ives and Mrs. Ives, his wife, were baptized; and the communion was administered.

ISAAC REED, *Moderator*.

(Copy from the Original, abridged May 22, '27. Sam'l Vance, Clerk.)"

Here are further records of early Presbyterian activity in church organization:

"The Records of New Providence Church, Edgar Co., Ill."

"According to previous notice a number of people of the settlement of Sugar Creek met at the house of Mr. Martin Ray on the 15th of May, 1829, for the express purpose of organizing a Presbyterian Church.

"The Revd. Clayborne Young being present opened the meeting with prayer, presided and by appointment acted as temporary clerk. Motion being made, an election was held, for two persons to serve as Ruling Elders and the votes being counted it appeared that Messrs. Alexander Ewing, 2nd and John W. McNutt were duly elected and this election was publicly announced and the meeting then adjourned until Saturday the 16th. Concluded with prayer."

"Saturday, May 16th, 1829 Messrs. A. Ewing and J. W. McNutt having signafyed their willingness to serve and presented certificates from New Providence church (E. Tenn.) were sollemnly ordained of this church according to the Presbyterian form of government. A door was then opened for the admission of members—the following persons were then received as members of this church."

"See Tabular Form No. 1, page 112.

ALEXANDER EWING, *Cl'k*.

Sabbath, May 17th. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered."

"Monday, 18th. Session convened, Revd. C. Young, Moderator and recd. on Profession &c."

"See Form No. 1, page 112."

Turning to page 112 of the same book we find ruled columns extending across the two leaves of the opened book. It is the "Form No. 1," referred to in the minutes. Across the tops of the extended pages is written:

"Form No. 1. Acts of the Session."

The columns from left to right have the following headings:

"Names, When Recd., How Recd., Baptized, Dismissed, Suspended, Excommunicated, Restored, Died."

Here we find the names of the charter members:

Thomas Art, Mary Art, Elven Tucker, Elizabeth Tucker, Margaret L. Ewing, Elizabeth McNutt, George Ewing, Elen Ewing, Martin Ray, Jane Ewing, Rachel Ewing, Eliza I. Tucker, Nathaniel Ewing, Elisabeth Ewing, Margaret Ray.

To these names must, of course, be added those of Alexander Ewing and John W. McNutt, the elders elected. Thus the church was organized with seventeen members.

The following records of historic value explain themselves:

"At a meeting held in Palestine, Crawford County, Illinois, on the 14th, 15th and 16th of May, Anno Domini 1831, attended by the Revd. Isaac Reed and the Revd. John Montgomery, the following persons, members of the Presbyterian church from different parts, gave in their names and requested to be set apart and constituted into a Presbyterian church, to be called the Palestine church. And after due enquiry and examination they were set apart by prayer and constituted into a church, (viz:) John Houston, (sen.) and Nancy Houston Ann Logan, Jane Houston, Eliza Houston, Wilson Lagow and Nancy Lagow, Alfred G. Lagow, James Eagleton, James Caldwell, Phebe Morris and Anna Piper. These were constituted into a church on the 14th and on the next day there were added Margaret Eagleton, John Malcom and Ann Malcom and Hannah Wilson (Sen.)"

"The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered and an election held for two ruling elders when John Houston and Wilson Lagow were duly elected. John Houston being already an ordained elder, Wilson Lagow was ordained on the 16th and a charge was given to both the elders and to the congregation.

Signed,

ISAAC REED, *Missionary of B. M. G. A.*"

The little village of Grandview, ten miles southeast of Paris, has a history of idyllic flavor. A foresighted pioneer named John Tate gathered a party in Augusta County, Va., and led them to Illinois, where they arrived in September, 1837.

They came in wagons and by families. In this spot on the Grand Prairie they settled, giving it a name it well deserved. West and north they had as boundary to their view only the horizon. East and south

they looked to great woods. Fertility and beauty combined said to them: "Here shall ye stay!"

The thoughtfulness of these emigrants and their high valuation of religion and education appear when it is known that they brought with them their minister and school teacher, the Rev. John A. Steele, and their doctor, a brother of the clergyman.

Immediately divine service was held after the simple Presbyterian fashion in their houses, but the following year a church building was erected. The congregation was constituted a church in proper ecclesiastical form on the twenty-seventh day of July, 1838.

The record follows:

"GRANDVIEW, *July 27, 1838.*

Notice having been previously given that a Presbyterian church would be organized at this place on this day, immediately after sermon, the Rev. John A. Steele, a missionary of the Board of Missions of the General Assembly, having received certificates or other satisfactory evidence of church membership from the following persons, viz: James Hite, Ann W. Hite, John Tate, Nancy Tate, Robert M. Tate, Susan Tate, Margaret I. Tate, Jacob S. Brown, Ellen B. Brown, Wm. A. Cale, Sarah Cale, John Shultz, Susan Shultz, Catherine Steele, Rachel France, Matthias Snapp, proceeded to organize them into a church. On motion Joseph Brown was chosen secretary of the meeting. On motion it was resolved that four persons be elected ruling elders in this church and the following persons being nominated to that effect, to-wit: James Hite, Wm. A. Cale, John Tate and Joseph Brown were elected. On motion it was resolved that this church be known as the Presbyterian Church of Grandview.

On motion Robert M. Tate was elected treasurer.

Adjourned with prayer.

JOSEPH M. BROWN, *Secretary of the meeting.*"

These, Mr. President, are the names of the early Presbyterians of East Central Illinois and these are the records of meetings that meant much to the organizers of the churches and were influential for good then and to the present day.