



REV. SANFORD HAINES

PIONEER PREACHERS

Scarcely had the pioneers of Polk County begun to turn over the sod of the wild, unbroken prairie, when the pioneer preacher began work in the new field. In the rude log cabins and huts of the pioneers, they proclaimed the same gospel that is preached in the gorgeous temples of to-day, but somehow it seemed to have gained a firmer discipline, and wielded a wider influence amid the simple life of the pioneer than in these latter days, amid the surroundings of wealth and fashion.

Going from place to place, hunting up Christians scattered in the wilderness, getting together a few of the faithful—often only the father and mother—in the cabin, or perchance in the shade of some wide-spreading tree, the Word would be expounded, a song of Zion sung, a prayer uttered, words of cheer, hope and consolation spoken. Thus they went about, founding societies, toning up moral sentiment, directing public thought, and made the advancing line on Christian civilization as it pressed upon savage life and the wilderness.

Of such a type was Sanford Haines, born in Champaign County, Ohio, December Sixteenth, 1816, of Scotch-Irish descent. His father was a farmer, and on a farm he remained until 1841.

During his boyhood days, he acquired such an education as was possible in the common schools of that time and place, which he supplemented with untiring effort at self-education during early manhood. At the age of fifteen, it was necessary for him to leave his home and fight the battle of life on his own account, and he lived mostly among strangers, his associations not being very favorable to good morals, but the early training of his Christian parents was a good guidon for him. In 1840, he attended a prayer-meeting in Union, Ohio, was converted and united with the Methodist Church. He was very methodical, and kept a diary in which he recorded every day its events,

showing the place, time and Bible text, of every sermon preached. Of his conversion, he wrote, in 1855:

"I made it a point to do my duty from the hour of my conversion. I bless the name of the Lord, that He has given me the grace to help in every time of need."

Immediately after his conversion, he attended school three months, to study Arithmetic, English Grammar, and Natural Philosophy.

The Church, in recognition of his zeal and consistent life, in 1841, gave him license to exhort in schoolhouses in the vicinity of his home. September Third, he was admitted to the Conference and licensed to preach. For three years, he preached in schoolhouses on the Sabbath, and worked on the farm during the week, devoting every spare moment to study and mental improvement. His license to preach was a surprise to him, as married men were not then generally admitted to preach under the itinerant system, the wife being deemed an obstruction.

At the Ohio Conference, in 1848, he was elected to Deacon's Orders, and ordained to that office. In 1850, his health and that of his wife being impaired, and their parents having settled in Henry County, Iowa, he decided to come West. In the Spring of 1850, he shipped his household goods from Zanesville to Keokuk, and, with his wife and children, drove overland, crossing the Mississippi at Burlington, June Twenty-sixth. On the Twenty-seventh, he reached his father's family in Henry County, where he passed several weeks with relatives and driving over the country with his wife. In his diary, he wrote:

"We saw much at which to wonder, and much to admire. The prairie scenery at this season of the year is beautiful and lovely beyond description. The rolling prairies, the groves of timber, the rich soil, and the running brooks threw around us a charm such as Nature alone can do. We were spellbound."

In August, the Iowa Conference met at Fairfield, at which he was ordained as Elder. He wrote in his diary:

"I was very forcibly struck with the appearance of the Conference, both as to number and age of the ministers. They were truly a band of boys, and

only about fifty in number, while the Ohio Conference had about three hundred, and many of them fathers in Israel."

He was assigned to the Maquoketa Circuit, and met there a cold reception, the people having got the impression that he lacked force in Ohio, and was therefore sent "Out West." But during the year, he so ingratiated himself into the hearts of the people, at the next Conference they unanimously petitioned for his retention another year, which was supplemented with his personal request, because of the rapidly failing health of his wife, who desired to be near her relatives. Great was his surprise and disappointment when the appointments were read in the Conference that he was assigned to Fort Des Moines, a distance of one hundred and twenty-five miles. His strong, sympathetic temperament and a little of the Old Adam was aroused thereat, for he wrote in his diary:

"I confess I thought it was an outrage upon the rights, claims and feelings of humanity. My friends in Maquoketa were afflicted and grieved."

He, however, decided to take the assignment, and ten days later, his diary says:

"We started, Mrs. Haines scarcely able to sit up in the carriage. We traveled as best we could. About three o'clock on Saturday, we reached a prairie twelve miles wide which we had to cross, but night overtook us, we got lost, and were compelled to remain in that open field all night, without anything for ourselves or horse to eat, my wife sick, with paroxysms of coughing that are indescribable. The carriage was so constructed, she could not lie down. The next morning, we reached Mr. Rice's, her uncle, safely."

There he halted to consider the situation with friends. His wife in the last stages of Consumption, with two children to be supported, fifty dollars expenses for moving, going to a new, sparsely settled country; he declared it would not be done. It was a case, he recorded, "of a kind which did not occur in the history of Methodism." His wife, however, advised him to go and see the people and tell them plainly the circumstances, which he did. The good people at The Fort gave him a hearty welcome, and he decided to remain. In his diary, he wrote:

"To my utter astonishment, they met the claim for the first quarter. They told me I might remain with my family all the time necessary, and preach

for them whenever I could consistently, and they would be perfectly satisfied. Nine weeks previous to my wife's death, I was with her night and day. The year was one of the most prosperous of my ministry. I received all my claim, and a number of presents beside."

During that year, he went to Saylor Grove, gathered together a few of his faith, and organized a Class in one of the log cabins. In 1852, he was again assigned to Des Moines. At that session of the Conference, there was a vigorous tussle with secret societies, the Council being determined that no member of a secret society should fill the office of Presiding Elder, which stirred up a hornet's nest, but Bishop Ames appointed two, which pleased Elder Haines, who was an Odd Fellow.

In 1853, he was assigned to Keosauqua. His diary says:

"Had to move one hundred and fifty miles, foundered one horse on the way, had to leave it, and it died soon after. She was an excellent, animal, worth one hundred and fifty dollars."

Of his new charge, he wrote:

"The place is cursed with infidelity, politics and whiskey. Abner Kneeland's influence hangs over it like an incubus on the people." In 1854, he was sent to Keokuk, where he remained three years, and did good work, bringing peace and harmony in a charge he found in disordered and factional strife.

In 1858, he was sent to Fairfield, where he gave such satisfaction, an unanimous petition was sent, to the Conference for his return there, and he also received his full salary of five hundred dollars for the year, but he was again sent to Des Moines, and his salary increased to seven hundred dollars. During the year, the National Conference divided the state, and he fell into the Western Iowa Conference, which, at its first session, in August, 1860, assigned him to the Des Moines District, with eleven charges, in which he passed the remainder of his days.

I do not think any person throughout Central Iowa was more generally known than Elder Haines, and wherever he went, he won the highest esteem, for he possessed that temperament which made and held friends. As a minister, his dominant trait was earnestness and sincerity. His sermons

were logical, forceful, and often pathetic. As a pastor, he was untiring in watchfulness for the welfare of his charge. Nature so endowed him with tenderness of heart and sympathy, his visitations to the sick room and sorrowing were blessings treasured long after. As a man, he was an ideal citizen. Righteousness, right-living, and no compromise with wrong-doing was his rule of action. I recall a prayer he made in the old Methodist Church, on Fifth Street, during the excitement which prevailed throughout the country respecting the impeachment proceeding against President Andrew Johnson. Johnson had been sustained. He said: "Oh, Lord; bless and preserve our Nation, bless our rulers, keep them sober; but if they must get drunk, don't let them all get drunk at the same time."

The Elder was vivacious and social. At social functions of young or old, he was usually the mirth-provoker. In 1850, while he was on the Maquoketa Circuit, he joined the Odd Fellows, which, says his diary: "Highly offended two or three old fogies. I paid no attention to them—just let them flounce and flounder as they pleased. They were not able to effect anything." In later years, he let his membership lapse.

He was an enthusiastic lover of the beautiful in nature and art. He found much pleasure in a fine painting, a landscape, the babbling brook, the majestic river, the warbling of birds, and the flowers of the field. He exemplified that temperament in his homestead and its surroundings, with blooming shrubbery, trees and vines, just south of the Windsor place on Grand Avenue, where he deceased in 1871.

The first preacher I have been able to locate was a Methodist missionary named Pardoe, who occasionally preached in the cabin of "Uncle Tommy" Mitchell, in 1844, at Apple Grove, in what is now Beaver Township. He was considered the first preacher in the county. There were then but three or four families in the county, outside of Fort Des Moines.

In 1845, a few more families came in, and, simultaneously, Ezra Rathbun, a Methodist preacher. He traveled on foot over the county, preaching wherever he could get two or three Christian people together.

He was a college graduate, an eloquent speaker, very unostentatious, gained friends wherever he went, and did much to establish Methodism in

the county. The people were poor, and for support he did manual labor on week days. On Sundays, he went to preach in the settlements. He preached the first sermon delivered in Fort Des Moines. It was at the funeral of a child of Colonel Grier, of the Garrison, in September, 1845, and that death was also the first in the town.

He was active in civic affairs, became quite prominent, and was greatly esteemed as a person of high ideals and excellent character. He was never pastor of any church organization. It may truly be said he helped to lay the foundation of the Methodist Church in Des Moines. Very early in the Spring of 1845, he, with Benjamin T. Hoxie, formed a Sunday School of seven children and a few adults. Under their fostering care, and aid of Mr. Rathbun's daughters, the school increased in numbers, and with it as the nucleus, the church was organized. To that school was presented the first Sunday School library in Des Moines.

He was an active helper, being a carpenter, in building the first Methodist meeting-house. It was a frame building, on Fifth Street, where the Iowa Loan and Trust Building is now. It soon became so overcrowded, a larger one was necessary. The frame building was removed across the street, and used for a carpenter shop, and one of brick commenced later in 1856. The people were poor, money was scarce, and progress slow. Early in 1857, the walls were up and the floor laid, when A. J. Stevens, James Callanan, and S. R. Ingham loaned the Trustees three thousand dollars with which to complete the basement for use, and the last week in September, the first Quarterly Conference was held there, Bishop Ames presiding.

During the sessions, among those asking license to preach was a Southerner, who did not hesitate to declare that slave-holding was a Divine right, and that he preached it. There was strong opposition to him, but after a protracted contest, he was granted a license to "preach against sin." thus leaving the sinfulness of slave-holding a mooted question. During the examination of candidates, one was found who did not meet the requirements and was rejected, whereupon he expressed his indignation by saying, in contemptuous tones: "I hope the fathers in Israel will not forget

their own examinations." The Bishop was a large, portly man, of quiet manner, very like Samuel Miller, a Judge of the Federal Court, who had a habit of sitting with closed eyes, as if asleep, while lawyers were making arguments. So had the Bishop, but on hearing the outburst, of the rejected candidate, slowly opened his eyes and quietly said: "Brother, we have no evidence yet that they have forgotten them."

The church being unable to pay the loan, Ingham foreclosed the mortgage, took possession, and fitted up the upper story as a public hall, for conventions, concerts, lectures, etc. It was known as Ingham's Hall. One day, Isaac Brandt and J. M. Dixon, the ubiquitous local editor of the *Daily Register*, went there to attend some kind of a show. As they entered the vestibule, Reverend George B. Jocelyn, pastor of the church, met them and very cordially invited them to go into the basement and attend service.

"Oh, no," they replied, "our entertainment is above."

"I fear it will be reversed in the future," quietly responded the pastor.

The onlooker from a street corner could never tell whether a crowd headed in there was going to prayer-meeting or a rag-time show, and it became a matter of town topics. Often, both floors were occupied at the same time, and the parting of the "sheep" and "goats" in the vestibule was amusing.

Subsequently, the church purchased the property from Ingham. Under the first Constitution of Iowa, a negro could not vote at any election. There was a strong pro-slavery element in the county, and on one occasion Rathbun went to the polls to vote, which he rarely did, and was challenged on the ground that he was a "nigger." He was, however, unquestionably of Portuguese and French descent, running back to Joshua Rathbun, a full-blooded Portuguese, recorded in the Mayflower list of Puritans. He was tall, slim, of swarthy complexion, and had thin lips. His hair and eyes were distinctly of the Portuguese type, seen every day on any of the ocean vessel docks along the Atlantic Coast. He certainly was not a negro. Politics was a great game in those days, and everything went that would win a victory.

In October, 1848, he entered eighty acres of land in Valley Township, and became a land-holder.

When the northeast corner of Sixth and Grand was sold to the Catholics for school purposes, the frame drug store of Doctor Grimmel thereon was purchased by Rathbun, moved to the corner of Ninth and Mulberry, remodeled for a residence, and there he resided until his death, in 1879.

Immediately following Rathbun came Reverend B. H. Russell, a missionary rider of what was called the Fort Des Moines Mission of the Christian Church, which embraced the counties of Polk, Madison, Warren, half of Marion, Jasper, Boone, and Dallas. He traveled on horseback, his outfit consisting of a pair of saddlebags, one-half of which would be filled with corn bread and bacon—perchance a piece of chicken, quietly interpolated by the good mothers of the cabins where he tarried; the other half with a clean, coarse shirt and well-worn Bible. A trip of the circuit, required several months, over trackless prairies and bridgeless streams, a not unpleasant, task in Summer, but in Winter the danger from blizzards and severe cold was great, for the cabins of settlers were far apart. Means of communication from one section to another was limited to the chance passing of some person. Frequently, his family were in dire suspense from lack of tidings of him, and sometimes in absolute want of food and fuel. He was given a hearty welcome wherever he went, and did a good work in the vineyards of the Master. He was a man of great physical endurance.

While Russell was riding the Circuit, George W. Teas came into the field. He was very pretentious, effusive, and a little wobbly in his Methodism—in fact, he left the church and joined another denomination, declaring his change with the couplet:

“Let the news spread from shore to shore,
George W. Teas is a Methodist no more.”

He soon discovered he had got into the wrong place and returned to the fold, whereupon an enthusiastic brother, in a gladsome poetic effusion, exclaimed:

“Let the news spread from Georgia to Maine,
George W. Teas is a Methodist again.”

Reverend D. C. Marts, a Hardshell Baptist, came into the county and began preaching in the cabins in the Saylor Settlement. He was an earnest, Christian man, more noted for the force of his preachment than the elegance of his diction. He was emphatically a frontiersman. Dressed in Kentucky jeans, Bible in hand, his red hair standing pompadour all over his head, he would commence service singing at the top of his voice, and very likely close with the declaration that, "Religion is a mighty good thing—as good as a Fourth of July dinner." He was a zealous worker, but to get a living, he located in Polk City, set up a turning lathe, went to making chairs with bark seats, and finally drifted into the tavern business, giving meals of corn bread and bacon for twenty-five cents, but if of wheat bread and chicken fixin's, it was fifty cents.

A circuit preacher in 1847 was J. Q. Hammond. As his circuit embraced about one hundred miles, he preached at The Fort only once in four weeks. His home was in one of the vacated soldier's log cabins, 12 x 14, heated only by a fireplace at one end. It was a poor protection against the Winter storms, and his wife and young daughter endured much suffering. Snow drifted in through the cracks in the walls. There was no woodshed, and often they had to shovel paths to the woodpile and dig it out of deep snow. They were not disheartened nor discouraged. They were an integral part of the zeal, energy and high purpose of pioneer life, which was laying the foundation for better conditions and future greatness—for what we have to-day.

Among the very early preachers was Matthew Spurloch, a Methodist exhorter, who traveled over the country preaching in the little settlements, and at camp-meetings. He was fond of yellow-legged chickens, fast horses, and lucre. He finally "squatted" on a land claim of three hundred and twenty-five acres, where Summerset now is, on the Winterset Branch of the Rock Island Railroad, put up a log cabin, where he sold groceries, tobacco and whiskey. He was very loquacious, and a story-teller. It was related of him that he would get into a crowd of story-tellers, flip up a gold or silver coin, saying: "I can make you one hundred dollars of that kind of money for twenty dollars," and he would show some specimens. The bait was taken; he gathered in the gold and silver, and when the victims clamored for their

returns, he snapped his fingers at them, and told them the best thing they could do was to keep their mouths shut, which they did. With the gold and silver thus obtained, he paid for the land, and that is how Summerset was started. He was arrested several times for counterfeiting, but nothing could be proven against him. His victims would not "squeal."

In June, 1847, he borrowed sixty-five dollars and sixty-six cents of "Wall" Clapp, who kept a grocery on Second Street, and gave his note, payable on Christmas Day following, "in pork, at the cash price at said Spurloch's," to secure which he gave a mortgage on his land claim of three hundred and twenty-five acres, the title to which was still in the Government. It was the first mortgage placed on record in Polk County.

In 1846, the Whigs persuaded Doctor T. K. Brooks to become a candidate for Senator in the First General Assembly of the state, at the October election, to represent the counties of Polk, Dallas, Marion and Jasper. The Democrats put up "Tom" Baker, the United States District Attorney. It was a lively campaign, for both men were wide-awake. As it progressed, they decided to hold a joint debate over the district. Spurloch invited them to come to his place, and they went. After the debate, he kept them up until one o'clock, story-telling, and then put them to bed. In the morning, he went, to them very solemnly, saying he had bad news for them; a member of his family had died suddenly, and they must arise as quietly as possible. The sympathies of "Tom" and the Doctor were aroused, and the breakfast was eaten in silence. Then he told them the grave had been dug, the coffin made, and the funeral would be held at once. Headed by Spurloch, abjectly solemn, arm in arm, "Tom" and the Doctor marched to the grave of—a big pet Tomcat. The two mourners choked down their mirth as they turned away from the scene, seeing that Spurloch was in dead earnest, but "Tom's" smile was so effusive Spurloch heard it, and he pitched into him vehemently for his gross disregard for the proprieties of the occasion, and declared he would do all he could to defeat his election. Whether it was through his influence, or the personal popularity of the Doctor, "Tom" was elected by only three majority in a strong Democratic district, and he was elected President of the

Senate.

In 1848, came Father Thompson Bird, a missionary of the new school Presbyterian Church. (See Volume I, page Seventeen.)

The same year, the Reverend Mr. William Coger came into the McClain Settlement, in what is now Madison Township, and was co-laborer with Rathbun. The Winter of that year was that of the "big snow." One Sunday, he was plodding through the snow, after service in one of the cabins, when he saw a large prairie wolf. His "Old Adam" got the better of him, and he plunged after it, caught it and carried it in his arms eight miles to his home.

Reverend William Busick also came in 1848, preached in the cabins in the settlement about where is now Avon, and, being of a business temperament, he laid out a town with parks, broad streets, churches, railroads, and a steamboat landing on the river to facilitate the business of his embryo city. He called it Circleville. Several lots were sold, one log house erected, and a schoolhouse, but the town got lost in the shuffle of civilization.

In 1849, Reverend William Cory located near a timber belt at what is now known as Cory's Grove, in Delaware Township. He did missionary work among the settlers, organized churches, and became a very influential citizen.

In 1851, Reverend J. A. Nash came to Fort Des Moines, as a missionary of the Baptist Church. (See Volume I, page Thirty-three.)

In 1849, a Methodist preacher named Raynor preached in "Uncle Jimmy" Jordan's cabin, in the Walnut Creek Settlement. His coining was always greeted with great cordiality, for "Uncle Jimmy" was a devout Methodist. It was his custom to make preparation for the visits, and among other things to have hymn books and a Bible in place for the preacher. On one occasion, the preacher wanted the Bible, but it was not there. "Uncle Jimmy," seeing his omission, quickly picked up a large book—he was a little nearsighted—and gave it to the preacher, who turned over a few leaves, and laid it on the table. "Uncle Jimmy" thought it strange he did not read a chapter from the Bible, as usual, and on his departure, examined the book, and found it was a copy of the "Congressional Globe."

In 1855, Reverend E. M. H. Fleming organized a Methodist class and began preaching November Fourth, in the Lyon Schoolhouse, on the East Side. Mrs. A. Y. Hull, mother of Congressman Hull, was the only Methodist on the east side of the river. Subsequently, he became pastor of Wesley Chapel, and very prominent in church work.

I do not think old-timers have forgotten Morgan Edwards, the revivalist, who occasionally came to Des Moines to stir up the laggards and lethargists in the churches, and increase their membership. He was an earnest worker, sincere in his belief, companionable, made friends easily, and noted for the spontaneity of his speech. He spoke just as he happened to think. At one time, the whole Western country was suffering from drouth. The land was parched and dry. Farmers were troubled over the prospect of their crops. Water was scarce, even for domestic use. In one of his prayers, he asked for rain, "Not a freshet, good Lord, but a gentle sizzle-sozzle." At another time, in his requests for Divine favor, he said: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I am in need of a pair of shoes, and Doctor Dickenson is the man to give them to me." The Doctor furnished the shoes. He was a firm believer in Divine Providence—that the Lord would provide for His own. One morning, a poor woman came to his door begging. He gave her his wife's shoes, leaving her shoeless. During the day, a man gave him a five-dollar bill, with which he purchased his wife a pair of shoes.

He was accustomed to go about town, visit families, have a social chat, and invite them to attend his meetings. In one family was a woman who expressed a desire to attend, but she had no bonnet. Edwards, at the next meeting, did not forget it, and in his prayer said: "And, O Lord, send Jennie Sanford a new bonnet, so she can go to church."

His personal allusions were received without affront, for his sincerity, kindness, and true Christian spirit disarmed them of all sting.

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