

Armstrong County

PENNSYLVANIA

HER PEOPLE, PAST AND PRESENT

EMBRACING

A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY

AND

A Genealogical and Biographical Record of Representative Families

IN TWO VOLUMES

ILLUSTRATED

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REV. G. A. REICHERT.—Pioneer Work in Western Pennsylvania (*"Lutheran Observer,"* Feb. 8, 1877).

"The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" What the strength of the foundation is to a building, the character of pioneer missionary work is to the future of the church. Among the pioneers of the Lutheran Church in western Pennsylvania, Rev. Gabriel A. Reichert occupies a conspicuous place.

Father Reichert was born in Durlach, Baden, Germany, Feb. 25, 1796. His parents died when he was eleven years of age. He graduated at the seminary at fourteen, studied at the law school in Karlsruhe two and a half years, when he received a license as a government clerk, and on removing to Mannheim he held the office of notary public while he remained in Europe. He departed for America May 3, 1817, and arrived at Philadelphia July 28, after a voyage of seventy-six days.

After visiting several places in the vicinity, he heard of the arrival of a clerical friend at New York, where he joined him, and both proceeded to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, where

his companion took charge of a Lutheran congregation.

From this point he made two voyages to the West Indies, during the last of which he encountered a heavy storm, and came near being shipwrecked. In referring to this he made the following record in his diary: "I was so near death's door that I expected every moment would be my last, and our mate, a rough, hardened sinner, told me, as the waves broke over the vessel, 'Mr. Reichert, to-morrow we'll all be in hell.' Shortly after this the mate was washed overboard, and was the only one lost." This made such an impression on him that he resolved that if God spared him, he would devote the remainder of his life to His service.

This became the turning point in young Reichert's life. On arriving at Lunenburg, he commenced the study of theology, and began to teach school. But as the facilities for the prosecution of his studies were limited in Nova Scotia, he returned to Philadelphia Oct. 3, 1820, considerably straitened in his means. Finding no door of employment open, he traveled on foot through Chester, Berks and Lancaster counties, in search of a school; after many disappointments, he at last found one on the Columbia turnpike, three miles from Lancaster, where he taught five months, and continued his theological studies with Dr. Endress, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, in that city. In this church he preached his first sermon Oct. 15, and on June 21, 1821, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. During the succeeding year, he traveled through eastern Pennsylvania, teaching school, and preaching as opportunity offered.

In 1822 he was appointed a traveling missionary, and entered upon pioneer work in the State. The extent of his field, and the character of his labors, may be learned from his own account. "With God," says he, "I left Lancaster, July 14, 1822, visiting the counties of Lancaster, Perry, Huntingdon, Indiana, Venango and Erie, western part of New York, northern part of Pennsylvania, Tioga, Centre, Columbia and Luzerne, having preached fifty-one times, baptized sixty-one, administered the sacrament to fifty-nine, and traveling 1,320 miles, and occupying three months." His salary was \$10 a month, out of which his own expenses and those of his horse had to be deducted.

He selected as his missionary field the counties of Blair, Indiana, Crawford and Venango. He served six congregations at a

time, and it required a month to make the round of his district, where there are now from thirty to forty Lutheran congregations. In 1828 he moved to Kittanning, where he served a number of congregations until 1838, when he was called as assistant to Dr. C. R. Demme, pastor of St. Michael's and Zion's German Lutheran congregations of Philadelphia, where he labored seventeen years. He then removed to his farm near Kittanning, where he ministered to the Lutheran congregation and a few others in the vicinity, confining his labors during the last two years of his life to Kittanning, where he preached his last sermon three weeks before his death, Sept. 18, 1877, at the age of more than fourscore years.

Father Reichert was married Sept. 16, 1823, to Miss Lydia Tyson, then sixteen years old, one of his first catechumens. (She was of English Quaker descent, tall, slender and fair, with blue eyes and very heavy golden brown hair, said to have been a yard and a quarter long. Her ancestor, Renier Tyson, settled at Abington, Pa., in the year 1682. He was a Friend. His eldest son was born there in 1686. Mrs. Reichert's father was a miller in Indiana county, Pa.) Mr. and Mrs. Reichert made their wedding trip on horseback, riding forty miles to the nearest preacher.

We became acquainted with Father Reichert, as a member of the Synod of Pennsylvania, at our licensure in 1839, and met him for several years after at its annual meetings. We saw him for the last time at the dedication of Zion's new church on Franklin square in this city (Philadelphia) about twelve years ago. As we bade him a final adieu, as he stood in the chancel, he said to us with deep earnestness, "Bruder Conrad, lasset uns Gott bitten das wir alle wieder eins werden" ("Brother Conrad, let us beseech God that we may all become united again"), and to which we responded, Amen.

It afforded us special gratification to meet the widow and two of the daughters of the departed pioneer missionary and from whom we obtained the data for the sketch of his life and labors given above. They are so instructive that we present them to our readers, with the assurance that they will be read with interest, not only by his relatives and parishioners, but also by the pastor and members of the Lutheran Churches in northwestern Pennsylvania, occupying the territory over which he traveled, and where he broke the ground of the fields which they have since cultivated. "Remember the days of old."

"Other men labored, and ye have entered into their labors."

The children of Rev. G. A. Reichert were: Gabriel Adam, Louisa Caroline, Rosena, John Earnest, Theresa (died in infancy), Magdalena, Jacob Philip Blarrer and Alexandrina. Two still survive (Dec. 26, 1913): Philip, residing on the old homestead near Manorville, and Alexandrina.

Rev. G. A. Reichert was one of a family of four, three brothers and one sister: Frederica, who married Baron Philip Von Blarrer and lived on their estate on Lake Constance (they had no children); Gabriel Adam; Adam Gabriel, an official in Germany, whose wife's name was Anna Theresa (they had two daughters, Frederica and Christina); and Ernest, who also remained in Germany, a wholesale dry goods merchant, who had two children, Louisa and Alexandrina. From the time of his parents' death Gabriel Adam Reichert and his sister were reared by their grandmother Friedricha.

The Tyson family, to which Mrs. G. A. Reichert belonged, has an interesting history. Henry Tyson was so large a man—seven feet, three inches in height—that in order to make him comfortable during his last illness the footboard had to be removed from the bed and a bench placed for his feet to rest upon.