

Sarah Belle Latimer woman of eccentricities

Early in the 1920s, when the two Indiana University students came across the dilapidated shack east of Bloomington, they had accepted without question the word of the elderly couple who "lived" there, that they were destitute. It was only after a "care package" of food and clothing had been collected for them that the secretary of the campus YMCA checked into the Kelly couple's story.

Mrs. Kelly (nee Sarah Belle Latimer) was indeed a graduate of IU in the Class of 1874. During her undergraduate years, she was not exactly an average student in that she did not receive her degree until she was 31 years old. In those days it was possible to teach with only a year or two of university studies, and it is likely that she finished the requirements as she could between teaching years. Her brother, James, eight years younger than she, finished college the year before she did.

Apparently the Latimers belonged to the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who emigrated to Monroe County between 1850 and 1870. At that time the local Presbyterians were somewhat splintered over doctrinal differences. The Latimers were Covenanters, along with several other prominent county families. Their son, James, evidently took his Presbyterianism seriously,



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

receiving both bachelor's and master's degrees in order to prepare himself for the ministry.

It was in May 1878 that Sarah Belle Latimer married Alexander Kelly, who had literally "been through the war" in such cruel battles as Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, to mention a few. They could hardly have been called romantic teenagers, she being 32, he 38. The marriage — that of a war hero to the daughter of a pioneer family — should have been peaceful enough, but it was not.

In time, they seemed to have had "his and her" farms. According to the city directory, his property was along the old RFD 6, East Third Street Road, in Perry Township. Up to the 1920s they were listed jointly in the directory. Suddenly, in the 1922-23-24 edition, Belle was a separate item, although still in the same delivery area. It is also interesting to note the relative values of their

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