

JONATHAN NORCROSS

ONE OF ATLANTA'S OLDEST CITIZENS.

IS QUITE ILL IN THOMASVILLE.

A Sketch of the Life of a Pioneer Who Settled Here When Atlanta Was Known as Marthasville—An Interesting Narrative.

Special Telegram to The Evening Journal.

THOMASVILLE, Ga., February 16.—Hon. Jonathan Norcross and wife have been here for a month. Mr. Norcross has been troubled with a bronchial affection for a number of years. Tuesday he grew worse and his son, Rev. Virgil C. Norcross, was telegraphed to come. His condition to-day, while critical, is not productive of serious alarm. His splendid vitality will carry him through many months yet. Your reporter found him enjoying a comfortable arm chair, before a blazing fire. His mind wandered a little at times, but he still preserves the strong individuality that made the pioneer of Atlanta and architect of his own fortune.

Mr. Norcross is now 80 years old and has been in feeble health for some time.

Mr. Jonathan Norcross was born near Bangor, Maine, in 1808. His father was a Baptist minister. He left his home at the age of twenty, and went to Philadelphia, from where he went to Cuba for the pur-



HON. JONATHAN NORCROSS.

pose of building some steam mills, but stayed there only a short time, after which he went to North Carolina and stayed a short time in Lincoln, where he taught school. From there he went to Augusta, Ga., in the early forties, and taught school for some time, after which he went to Putnam county, where he built a steam saw mill that was afterwards burnt down.

Early in 1845 he came to Atlanta, then Marthasville, and entered into a contract for laying string timber on the Macon and Western railroad, as it was then called. At that time railroads were built by placing flat bars on string timbers, and in order to fulfil his contract he built a horse power saw mill which was erected near the spot where the Atlanta and West Point railroad depot now is.

In that year he married the widow of the Rev. E. J. Montgomery, son of Major Montgomery, who lived on the Chatahoochee river, about seven miles from the city. Mr. Norcross built a house near his mill and lives there. From the slabs turned out of his mill quite a number of small houses were built in that neighborhood, and it was called "Slab Town."

During that year he bought the lot now on the corner of Marietta and Peachtree streets, fronting 105 feet on Peachtree and 210 on Marietta, afterwards and now called the Norcross corner, paying therefor the sum of \$300.

He has since sold all of the lot except 54 feet front on Marietta street running back 105 feet on Peachtree street, which he still owns. He was very much ridiculed for paying \$300 for the lot which would be worth to-day without the improvements on it at least three hundred thousand dollars.

He established a store on this corner and did business there for a number of years.

In 1846 his only son and child, Rev. Virgil C. Norcross, was born in this city.

About this time Atlanta was headquarters for all the roughs of the surrounding country. In January, 1851, he was elected mayor of Atlanta. At that time he did more to preserve the law and order in the then disorderly little village than any other citizen.

The incidents of his term of office were thrilling. At one time the roughs planted a cannon in front of his store and threatened to batter it down, but he stood by it manfully, and with the aid of the good citizens succeeded in establishing order upon a firm basis.

During the war he engaged in blockade running and was captured and put in Fort Warren, New York. After being released he went to Canada, and settled on a small farm near Cincinnati.

After the war he returned to Atlanta, bought the place where he now resides in West End, and has lived there since.

About twelve years ago his wife died, and a few years afterward he married Miss Mary A. Hill, a sister of Hon. Pike Hill, and a most accomplished and amiable lady with whom he has spent his declining years.

Mr. Norcross has always been opposed to the democratic party, having been a whig, an American and a republican. He wrote a book on democracy which was extensively used as a campaign document by the republicans.

When Colquitt first ran for governor Mr. Norcross opposed him, but was defeated by a large majority.

Notwithstanding his republican ideas he has ever loved Atlanta and the south, and when the news reached him in Ohio that Lee had surrendered, he cried like a child, although he believed it was for the best. Yet he could not help sympathizing with his many friends in the south in their great mortification at their defeat.

Atlanta has never had a citizen more devoted to her interests than Mr. Norcross, who has spent a large part of his time in efforts for the advancement of the city.

Shortly before the war he projected the building of the Air-Line railroad from Atlanta to Charlotte, North Carolina, and was the first president of the road.

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He is one of the kindest and most charitable of men, and his hand and heart are ever open to the cry of the poor and needy. Not long since he gave 19 acres of land in the outskirts of the city for the purpose of building an orphan asylum, which will probably soon be built. No one but himself and the All-seeing Eye know the large number of private charitable goods he has

He is very fond of the newspapers and has written a great deal for them, especially upon all questions in which Atlanta is in-