

Village Blacksmith Is "Pooh-Bah" of North Pelham

"Jim" Reilly, Who Defeated the Republican and Democratic Tickets in Village Presidential Election, Is Now Mayor, Fire Commissioner, Chief of Police, and Practical Horseshoer.

THE biggest shock North Pelham, N. Y., ever received was last Tuesday, when North Pelham elected as President of the village "Jim" Reilly, the village blacksmith.

Not that North Pelham had any right to be surprised at its own act, but—well, North Pelham, N. Y., had been straight Republican for twelve years. The retiring President was a Republican, the Village Trustees were Republicans, and the Constables were Republicans. And now, not only was Jim Reilly not a Republican, but in winning the village Presidency he had pulled through his whole ticket, which, worse than not being Republican, was a Social Labor Party, headed by the village blacksmith.

When Pelham, N. Y., awoke to the fact that it was awake it just drew a long breath and gasped in unison from North Pelham, through Pelham, to Pelham Manor:

"By—gum!"
 "I told you so," said "Old Man" Barrie.
 "You did nothing o' the sort," said "Old Man" Gleason. "I'm a Democrat, and I'm ding sorry, but it's some consolation to see the Republican vehicle w' the wheels busted."

"Talk all ye like and 'told-ye-so' till you've got colic," said Mr. Marks of Fifth Avenue, North Pelham, "but it's you and your Democratic Party that's responsible t' the people for this. The split among the Democrats did it, ding 'em!"

"M-well," drawled Ezra Daggett, wiping the ale froth off the counter of the village oasis, "I'll up an' say right here that I'm blame glad to see Jim Reilly boss man o' this rising burg. He's a man. The peepul seen their duty an' they done it, an' that's all there is to 't."

It is said that the true reason for Reilly's victory is that the Social Labor Party cornered all the rigs and gave everybody the choice of trudging through the snow to the polls or riding in state to vote for the blacksmith. Nevertheless, for the rest of the week there was only one topic in North Pelham, N. Y. Probably they're at it yet. James Reilly, blacksmith and practical horseshoer, had beaten Jacob Wirth, (Rep.) manager of the Methodist Book Concern and a city-bred politician, who, as the local press said, had "figured prominently in the Seth Low campaign." And Jim had also beaten A. Wilbur Crane, (Dem.) artist by profession, large property owner, and also a New Yorker. As for Jim, the village blacksmith, he is a rare type of Irishman, with a wife and five children, the family living over the smithy. But "the smith, a mighty man is he"—in Pelham, N. Y.

An interviewer for THE SUNDAY NEW YORK TIMES visited the battlefield the day after the dead had been removed. The village was still. A mantle of snow lay upon the landscape, which consisted of woods, white meadows, a few streets, a man, a boy with a sled, a trolley car, and a wagon on the far horizon. Another passenger getting off the train at Pelham hailed the trolley car, which was 200 yards away. It continued on its way. The passenger made a megaphone of his hands.

"All right, Mr. Blank," cried the conductor. Then the trolley backed 200 yards to take on Mr. Blank. North Pelham, N. Y., is about thirty-five minutes from the Grand Central Station.

The interviewer walked down Fifth Avenue, the main street, keeping a sharp look-out for a spreading chestnut tree. It did not turn up, but the village smithy was where its spreading branches should have been. The sign read, "Jas. Reilly, Practical Horseshoer." President Reilly was not in, but an assistant was quite sure he would come back. It was then 2:30 P. M.

"He sleeps here every night," said the assistant. "Where is he now?"
 "He might be some're talkin' to the boys." A long silence. "He'll be back here, though."

"Much excitement here yesterday?" asked the interviewer.

"M-yes," said the assistant horseshoer, after long reflection. "There was quite a piece."

Fifth Avenue stretched away in desolation. A cannon ball fired along it would have damaged nothing but the railway viaduct a mile away. South, two points east, the boy was sliding down a hillside on the sled.

"Quite a piece," echoed the assistant blacksmith. "You don't know where Mr. Reilly might possibly be at this moment?"

"M-well." The assistant thought hard. You wouldn't put it in the paper would you?"

"What? Of course not!"

"You see, Jim's the President now—the Mayor, you might say—also the Fire Commish'ner, an' the Chief of Police, an' a lot o' other things; an' it might—well, you go over to Ezra Daggett's, crost the way. Mebbe he's there—on—business—with the boys."

The interviewer crossed to Ezra's oasis. There was a sudden stillness as he entered the bar, where a number of men sat. Some were astride chairs; some had their feet on the stove; one, wearing rubber boots, a black flannel shirt, and an antediluvian derby hat, had his feet on the table and his hands in his pockets. Ezra wiped the ale froth away and



Mayor Elect "Jim" Reilly in his Blacksmith Shop

"Will the Trustees agree?"
 "Not likely—as things are. One's a Democrat; the new man's one of my ticket."
 "Then you're Pooh-Bah?"

The village blacksmith looked steadily at the interviewer. His face lighted up with a gleam of interest.

"What's that?"
 The character of Gilbert's Pooh-Bah was explained.

"Thanks," said the village blacksmith. "I'm President. I'm Chief of Police because I'm President. I happen to be Fire Commissioner also."

"What will your policy be?"
 "Haven't outlined it yet."
 "Most candidates outline it before they're elected. They explain their stand on the paramount issue."

"There isn't any—issue in North Pel'm. I'll do my best for the taxpayers."

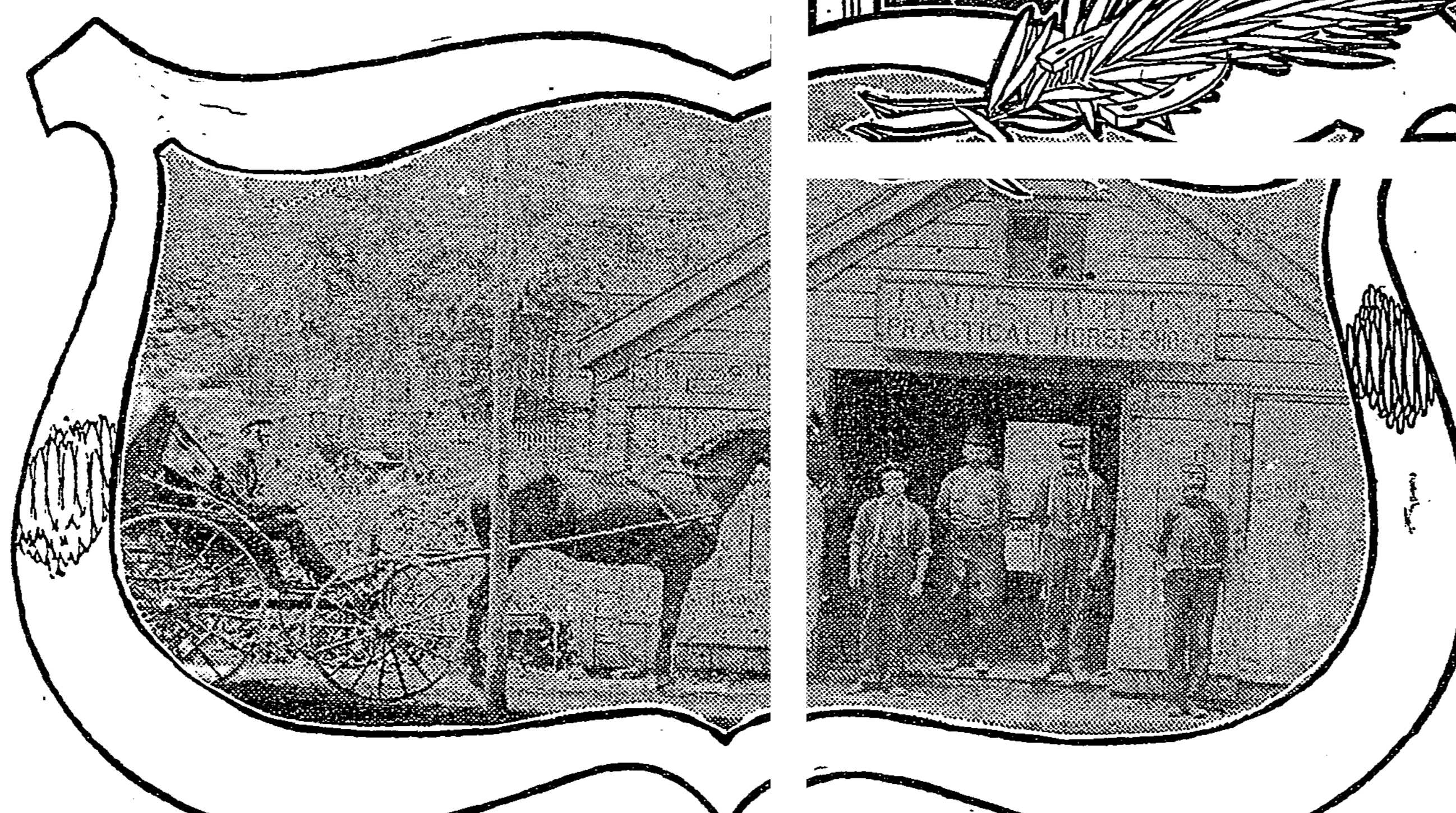
"Will there be any changes among the appointed officials?"

The village blacksmith gazed long at the interviewer. Slowly his face became diffused by a smile. "There will be."

It was difficult to keep up an animated conversation with this remarkable Irishman. Unlike others of his race, he was close-mouthed and deliberate in all he did say. When asked by the interviewer if there was anything else that might be of interest to the public he replied:

"Ask me questions."

That his monosyllabic manner, however, was not reserved for strangers to North Pelham was evident when "Old Man" Gleason came in. While this well-known local character talked about the election the blacksmith, comparatively silent, but fully appreciative, sat on the anvil, leaning on a steel jigger used for lifting the horseshoes from the pegs on the roof joists. The interviewer looked around the smithy for evidence of the true inwardness of its owner. By the window was the blacksmith's desk. A cat sat purring on it beside a red book, entitled "Leaders of



Mr. Reilly "Smithy"

leaned on his inturned wrists on the bar.

"Is Mr. Reilly here?" he was asked.

The silence deepened. The feet were gently removed from the stove. Ezra jerked his chin in the direction of the rubber boots on the table. The man behind them looked up. His face was fair and smooth, except for a heavy brown mustache and deep crow's feet sweeping into wide, brown eyes.

"Mr. President?"

He bowed slightly. The interviewer explained his mission. The man bowed again. There was an awkward pause. The men around the stove and Ezra looked on. They knew their man; the interviewer did not. He explained precisely to the blacksmith-President that he would like to talk with him. The blacksmith took his booted legs off the table, and, walking out of the saloon, crossed the street to the smithy. He was a big man and covered the space with a few slow strides. The interviewer, a minute later, found him sitting on the anvil.

"I understand you've been made President of Pelham village?" began the interviewer.

"North Pel'm," the blacksmith corrected. "There's three villages—Pel'm, North Pel'm, Pel'm Manor. I'm President of North Pel'm." He spoke with a slight brogue.

"On the independent ticket?"

"Social Labor."

"Strong Social Labor organization here?"

"There isn't any."

"Yet you have a whole ticket elected under the Social Labor Party?"

"There'll be one after this."

"What will be your duties as President?"

"Look after the village. Once a month there'll be a meeting of the board. The board is composed of two Trustees—and me. The Trustees appoint a Road Superintendent, constables, and other things—if they agree about the appointment."

"And if not?"

"I appoint with a casting vote."

American History." On the smoky wooden walls were pinned pictures of President Roosevelt, Vice President Fairbanks, and other celebrities. Various other things suggested that the village blacksmith was a man of ambition. The cat and two dogs, which sat at the booted man's feet, and a brood of pups yelping behind the furnace bespoke a man of heart. Over the roof there was a sound of some one sweeping a floor and a patter of little feet. The back door opened. A boy of 10 came in and stood beside his father.

"I hear old man Barrie went strong for you," said Gleason. "And Eddie, too, his son. Eddie's growin' some."

"Eddie's a fine boy," said the village blacksmith. "I guess you cleaned up Fifth Avenue, except, mebbe, for old man Marks and Long Mike. Hey?"

"Mebbe."

"You must ha' got a chunk of votes from the split Democrats."

"I did," said the blacksmith, "and about twenty Republican votes."

"I suppose the village is so small you can almost name every man who voted for you," put in the interviewer.

"I can name about 80. I got 90 votes against 64 Republican and 37 Democratic."

When the interviewer asked how many people were in the village the blacksmith President evinced that zeal for accuracy and decision which marked him. He said he did not know and frowned as he said it. Gleason allowed it was about 400.

"The vote's 200," said the village blacksmith.

"But the population's twice that," declared Gleason.

"Wait a minute," said the blacksmith. Ten big strides and he was across Fifth Avenue in a grocery store. In a minute he was back. The grocer had declared for nearly 900 inhabitants. The blacksmith seemed more annoyed that such a detail should have missed his own observation.

"John," he said to the boy, "go to Mr. Case and ask him what the population of North Pelham is."

Who was Mr. Case? It may seem incredible, but the thorough blacksmith had sent to the taker of the last census. Which reminded the interviewer of some questions, which were promptly answered.

James Reilly, blacksmith, is 38 years old. He was born in County Meath, Ireland. He came to the United States in 1882; learned his trade at Dubuque, Iowa; settled at North Pelham in 1890; ran for Justice of the Peace in 1902, and was defeated. He was appointed Fire Chief in 1904; elected Fire Commissioner January, 1906, and elected President of the village two months later.

As the interviewer left the smithy his impression of James Reilly was that here was a man of tremendous menace or promise to the village of North Pelham and the country at large. The sense of menace arose mainly from the impenetrable silence of the man, but that this was not due to ignorance or what the Scots call "dourness" was clear from a review of the man's career and of the recent interview.

He appears to be simply a man of few words; one who is too busy learning to flaunt what he has already learned. Asked if he drank he said, "Sometimes—not now." Asked if he would smoke a cigar, he said he preferred a pipe.

The interviewer was asked in the oasis by Ezra Daggett if he had learned anything from Jim Reilly. Upon the interviewer replying, "What I wanted and no more," Ezra said:

"That's like him. There's a man it'll take some folks a long time to know. But he'll make a good President."

As the reporter walked toward the station a small boy tapped him on the arm and said:

"Mr. Case was out, Sir; but father says there a/e 160 houses in the village and over 600 people."