

[Johnson, James Riley]

OBITUARY.

The Rev. Dr. James Riley Johnson, the oldest clergyman in Rockland county, died at his home in Nyack yesterday in his ninety-second year. He was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio, January 30, 1818, and entered the ministry of the Universalist denomination in his early years. He was pastor of several churches in the West and afterward in several cities in Massachusetts. In 1859 he received and accepted a call from the First Universal Church at Baltimore, Md., where he had a membership of nearly one thousand. When the civil war broke out his congregation split, many of his members taking the side of the Confederacy. Others remained loyal to the Union, as he did. He was persecuted for preaching strong Union doctrine and it is said that his church was stoned several times while he was preaching. When the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment was mobbed on the streets of the city, one of the soldiers was killed by a stone which struck him in the head. Dr. Johnson recognized the dead man as a former member of his church choir in Lawrence, Mass., while he preached there. This was the first Northern man to die in the war. At the close of the war Dr. Johnson came North and continued preaching. Twenty-two years ago he came to the Universalist Church of Nyack and continued as its pastor until the church organization closed some six years ago. He affiliated with all denominations and pastors of other churches were always glad to welcome him in their pulpits. He was a prominent Mason and was chaplain of Rockland Lodge up to his death. He is survived by two daughters, Alice, at home, and Mrs. Dillaby of Boston.

*The Sun*, New York NY, Sat. 20 Feb 1909

Transcribed on 5 Feb 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY