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Livingston County Board of Child Welfare

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THE SECRETARY

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JAMES J. GILMORE, Geneseo,
S. E. HITCHCOCK, Conesus.

Conesus, N. Y., September 28-1917.

Mr. Lynn S. Randall,
Syracuse N.Y.

My dear Sir -

Some time since I sent you notice of
The opening of the Conesus Church. We are still struggling
to get a foothold and with a very energetic young minister,
we hope to succeed. Services will be continued regularly,
and we are about buying a heating plant for our church.
So we need all the help we can get, and I enclose affidavit
of our trustees, which complies with the conditions of the
Laura M. Hitchcock Trust fund. Hope we may receive
the income as soon as possible, or at least, some part
of it.

Cordially -

S. Edward Hitchcock - Trustee.

Oct 24th Print charges for \$95.75
Chym # 1054 on follow^r

Final 1915.00

\$95.75 5/10

to S. Edward Hitchcock, Trustee
Conesus N.Y.

Woodburne

Cortezus, N. Y.

January 4-1918.

Hon. L. S. Randall, Treasurer,
Syracuse, N.Y.

My dear Sir.

I am returning herewith your check
of \$95.⁷⁵ on the Laura M. Hitchcock Trust fund. (We have
had no services in our church since December 1917) So are
not entitled to receive it. (I supposed that our Secretary
notified you of the closing of our church, but evidently
she overlooked it. (It is improbable that the church will
ever be re-opened.)

With cordial regards.

I remain

S. Edward Hitchcock

OK

File with
Witchcock Paper

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING OF THE ORIGINAL
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF CONESUS

Note: Mr. S. E. Hitchcock was the author of the following article. It was prepared by him in 1924, when this church was leased to the Conesus Community Church.

The idea of building this church grew out of the death of my uncle, Gardner Arnold, in 1868 and his attempted bequest of ten acres of land including a site for a new Universalist Church, although the need for such a structure had long been evident. According to the terms of his will, the church must be built on his own land and he designated the site of the present Catholic Church. This lot was then occupied by a large hotel, owned by Mr. McVicar, the father and grandfather of our present townsmen. This hotel was burned, together with nearly all the business part of the village, on August 26, 1871, the fire originating from lightning. It was at once seen that this, rather than the other, was the proper site for a church.

The Universalist parish was organized in 1835 and a church erected at Crocketts Corners in 1836. This served as a place of worship until the one we now occupy was built, and some now living were among its Sunday School pupils, myself included.

Contract for building this church was let in the Fall of 1872 to a Mr. Wilkinson of Honeoye Falls. Work was started in the Spring of 1873 and the church was built during that summer. This basement was built from stones contributed and drawn here by the neighboring farmers, and I remember that some men with teams drew stones here during most of the winter. Not enough were secured, however, and I know with what difficulty the remaining loads were hauled here through the mud of the following spring before farmers began their season's work. I spent two Saturdays drawing stones here myself. Scott McNinch came with a load also and he and I visited so long that we only made one trip that afternoon.

Mr. Wilkinson was badly handicapped by lack of help and the failure of the railroad company to delivery his lumber, which came from Tonawanda, and it was so late when the church was completed, that its dedication was deferred until the eleventh of the following March 1874.

The Building Committee, whose members supervised the construction, consisted of John F. Clark, Chairman, George F. Coe, Patrick McNinch, Ezra W. Clark, G. W. Durkee, and my father, the latter also serving as Treasurer. The Chairman, John F. Clark, owned and operated the village mill. The others were prominent citizens and farmers whom some of you remember. My uncle, George F. Coe, drew the first load of stone and Daniel W. Trescote, the first load of lumber. The contract price was \$3,000, which did not include the cost of masonry in the basement wall.

It was understood that the basement, having been built mostly by the community, and outside the building contract, should be used for town purposes, and for several years it was so used, the caucus elections, town meetings and lawsuits being held herein. The lot on which the church stands was contributed and cost the parish nothing. The sheds in the rear were built by individuals and are owned for the most part by their decedents.

The Trustees of the parish when the church was built were Amos D. Coe, Isaac H. Thomas, Albert H. Hunt, William F. Gray, Alonson B. Annis, who was also parish clerk, and William H. Mills. I have in my possession the original subscription paper on which the money was pledged and I treasure it as an autograph record of our residents of fifty years ago, only two of whom are now living.

Until the last few years, this church was used as it was intended to be used, for proclaiming the doctrine of Universalism, the cardinal tenet of which is the universal fatherhood of God and the consequent universal brotherhood of all His children. It would seem fitting, therefore, that it might hereafter so extend that doctrine of brotherhood as to gather together this entire community and become a church house for all the people.

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New York State Convention of Universalists

TRUSTEES

ROY F. HAYES
1009 MYRTLE AVE., WATERTOWN

KENNETH DOWNEY
305 CANISTEO ST., HORNELL

GEORGE A. FRIEDRICH
62 WALL ST., NEW YORK

TRUSTEES

REV. BENJAMIN B. HERSEY, D. D.
4 WEST 76TH ST., NEW YORK

REV. ELLSWORTH C. REAMON, D. D.
677 SOUTH WARREN ST., SYRACUSE

MRS. VICTOR H. RUBBELL
603 FRENCH RD., ROCHESTER

OFFICE OF SECRETARY AND STATE SUPERINTENDENT
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

February 15/50

Dear Donald :

Conesus history

Restating what I reported at the Board meeting ---

- 1918 --- Last Universalist minister - a Mr. Hale.
No services.
- 1919-20 - Methodist church burned and Methodists used the building.
- 1921 - Meeting of Universalists authorized their three trustees to lease building to Community Church -- which was duly organized and incorporated.
- 1924 - Lease renewed by trustees - and has continued.
- 1933 - Universalist church burned --- \$2,000 insurance policy paid to Universalists
- 1934 - Building rebuilt - Universalists put the insurance money into the new building -- about \$4,000 raised in the community. Men donated labor. Community Church continued as tenant.
- 1945 - Congregational student from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School urged affiliation with Congregational denomination.
- 1945 - This was done.... Some in the Community Church did not favor this, preferring no denomination. Mr. Penning is in this group.
- 1948 - The society functioning vote^d to change the name to Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Regular meeting of Universalist society was held August 9, 1924 when trustees were elected --- and trustees were authorized to make the lease to the Community Church.

The Pilgrim Congregational Society desires to have the title established - and will pay to have it done. Mr. Penning, Universalist, reminds them that it is Universalist property. The new church was built on Universalist walls and land. Pilgrim Congregational church is now tenant. Community Church was not voted out of existence.

This is the story . FCL.

*William Robinson
Conesus - N.Y.
President of
Congregational
Society*

*Mr. J. G. Penning - Conesus -
is the Universalist holding the papers & books.*

MEETING OF THE UNIVERSALISTS

DATE: May 19, 195

TIME: 8:30 P.M.

PLACE: In Town Board Room at Conesus

PRESENT: Mrs. Glenn C. (Edith) McVinch
Mr. George Penning
Mrs. George (Sara) Penning
Mrs. Ethel Gray Pflanze
Mr. John Alger
Mrs. John (Grace) Alger
Mrs. Calia Hitchcock Willis
Mr. James Jackson. (non-voting)
Mrs. James (Laura Hitchcock) Jackson
Mr. George S. McVicar
Mr. H. K. McVicar

Note: As there are no surviving members of the Conesus Universalist Church, this group was made up of descendants of former members and others connected with the church.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. George Penning, the surviving Trustee of the Conesus Universalist Church.

By motion and vote, Mr. James Jackson was made Chairman of the meeting and Mr. H. K. McVicar Clerk.

Mr. Penning then explained in greater detail than was possible in the previously posted notices the purpose of the meeting - i.e., to decide on the transfer of the present church property, both real and personal.

At this time, the Clerk read the minutes of the last previous meeting of the Universalists in 1924, at which time it was voted to lease the church property to the Conesus Community Church for a period of five years.

As a matter of general interest, the Clerk then read a paper written by S. E. Hitchcock, which covered from the time in 1868 when the idea of building the church was conceived until its dedication in March of 1874 (copy attached).

H. K. McVicar explained suggesting for the transfer of the property made by Mr. Donald Besebe of Buffalo, an attorney representing the Universalist New York State Convention.

This was followed by considerable discussion regarding the ramifications of two plans.

At the close of this discussion, a motion was made that Mr. George Penning be authorized to deed the church property, both real and personal, to the Conesus Community Church, Inc., with a reverter clause in favor of the Universalist New York State Convention, in case the church should become inactive as such. This motion was seconded and agreed upon by unanimous vote.

A second motion was made as follows: inasmuch as the legality of such a transfer was questionable, that the Conesus Community Church, Inc., be given the alternative plan of having Mr. Penning deed the church property to the Universalist New York State Convention with a clause that the Conesus Community Church, Inc., would have sole and unrestricted use of the property as long as it was kept in reasonable repair and operated by them as an active church. This motion was made and seconded and passed by unanimous vote.

The possibility of turning in the old organ from the Universalist Church toward the new Hammond Organ just purchased by the Conesus Community Church was discussed. Motion was made, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that the old organ be used in this manner.

After a rising vote of thanks to Mr. George Penning, for the work which he had done in preparation for this meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 P.M.

H. K. MC VICAR
Clerk