

## HISTORY OF THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST CHURCH AT ELLISBURG

To All Our Friends:

During the recent conflagration which threatened to destroy our little village, the First Universalist church of Ellisburg was burned and among the records which were fortunately preserved, we find the following interesting data:

In the interim between 1821-33 and several years prior to the erection of the church edifice, the Rev. Cornelius G. Person, assisted by such ardent believers in our faith as Isaac Mendell, Silas Emerson, John Clark and others, organized the First Universalist society, and elected the following trustees, viz: Isaac Mendell, Edmund Eldridge, Daniel Stearns, Edmund Palmer and Richard Cheever. From that ardent assembly of nineteen members originated a prosperous church and the seed of Universalism thus early and faithfully sown, sprang up and yielded an abundant harvest.

The first clergymen of our faith to visit Ellisburg were the Revs. N. [Nathaniel] Stacy and M. Winslow, 1812-1813, followed by Seth Jones, Cornelius G. Person, John French, C. B. [Charles Bingley] Brown and O.[Oliver] Wilcox; after Rev. Wilcox's death in 1845, the pulpit was supplied by C. G. Person, Jacob Saxe, Justin Averill and others until 1846, when Rev. L. [Luther] Rice became pastor, remaining until 1863. Then the Rev. A. [Alfred] Peck, Pitt Morse, J. [John] H. Stewart, E. A. Holbrook and others supplied until 1859, when L. Rice again accepted the pastorate for three years.

About that time the war of the rebellion was declared and we had only occasional religious services, interspersed with war meetings, until 1870, when Rev. W. [William] S. Goodell, who is still one among us, commenced his tireless labor which continued for eight years.

Subsequently, the pulpit was supplied by students from Canton Theological college, St. Lawrence University, until the cry, "Come over into Macedonia and help us," was answered by Rev. L. B. Fisher, D. S. Fisher, and H. P. Morrill.

The same zeal and enthusiasm which was manifested in each individual that formed the little assembly in 1821 still exists, and the potency of the "principles of Universalism" thus evolved, are becoming more and more apparent as civilization advances.

The church was built by Benjamin Bemis, architect, at a cost of \$1,500; and on Tuesday, Aug. 24, 1843, it was "dedicated to the worship of God, the Creator and Saviour of all men."

The Rev. Wilcox was installed as pastor of the church and society and was assisted in the services of the day by the Revs. Bruce, Jones, Morse and Person. For nearly seventy years the church has stood as a monument to the unselfish generosity of its contributors and the unfailing loyalty of its followers...

A beautiful concrete chapel will be erected on the old site and all voluntary contributions from our absent friends will be gratefully received. Thus may we perpetuate the memory of those earnest workers and emulate their noble deeds.

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Transcribed on 6 Nov 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY