

The History of Fifty Years

Rise and Progress of Universalism in Fulton and Vicinity

Fulton, May 12.—In connection with the semi-centennial celebration of the organization of the Universalist church in Fulton, a brief synopsis of the rise and progress of Universalism in this section will perhaps be of interest to the many readers of your valuable paper.

Universalism was first publicly promulgated by judge Mooney of Granby, who, although not an ordained clergyman, was a very talented man and liberal thinker. He preached occasionally and usually at his own house, from about 1812 to 1818. The first Universalist sermon by a regularly ordained clergyman was preached by the celebrated Stephen R. Smith of Clinton in the school house near the old fort at the lower landing in June, 1829. In the fall or early winter of 1831, Rev. Walter Bullard delivered an evening sermon in the Methodist Church. During the winter of 1831-32 Rev. Dolphus Skinner of Utica, at that time editor and proprietor of the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate, gave an evening lecture at the same church. In May, 1832 a society was formed and Rev. Walter Bullard of Sherburne was engaged as the first pastor. His engagement was an experimental one and was for three months. The first trustees were John [Cue?], Robert C. Kenyon and John Warlock. In 1833 Rev. Obed Whiston of Boston was employed for one year, preaching half the time here in the school house at the upper landing and the other half in Oswego. After that there was occasional preaching by Revs. John French of Pulaski, Chas. B. Brown of Mexico and Jesse Babcock, who came to the society from the Baptists. In 1835 Rev. Thomas C. Eaton, then preaching at Wolcott, came and preached in the old red school house, corner of Second and Cayuga streets, with great acceptance and was regularly engaged during 1835-36. The old brown church was built during his pastorate. It was the first Universalist church in Fulton, built in 1836 and dedicated in the spring of 1837. During 1837 Rev. Alfred Peck was engaged and preached one year. After that there was occasional preaching by Rev. Mr. Davis of Baldwinsville with great acceptance for three months. He was succeeded by Rev. R[ufus] O. Williams of Baldwinsville, who was followed by Rev. L. M. Hawes who remained two years and organized the first Sunday school. There were but twelve members, officers and all. He was succeeded by Rev. Wm. Sias of Mexico and Rev. Jesse Babcock occasionally until 1848, when the church was repaired, improved and re-dedicated by Rev. J[ohn] M. Austin of Auburn.

In 1849 Rev. J. H. Tuttle, then a young man of twenty-three years, came here on a tour, soliciting aid for Clinton Liberal Institute. He was engaged as regular pastor, remained five years and was very popular. He formed the first regular church organization and restored the Sunday school. The church was highly prosperous under his administration, ably aided by the

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efforts of his most excellent wife. He was succeeded by Rev. George Skinner, who preached six months and was followed by Rev. J[ames] W. Bailey, who remained five years. In 1859 Rev. R[oyall] H. Pullman was employed and remained eight years, under whose administration the church greatly prospered, and the Sunday school increased and numbered over four hundred pupils. The congregation became too large for the little brown church, and the present beautiful edifice, corner of 1st and Rochester streets, was erected. The cornerstone was laid in September, 1863, address by Rev. Dr. E[bridge] G. Brooks of New York. The dedication took place in January, 1864. In 186[6?] Mr. Pullman resigned and was succeeded by Rev. C. B. Lombard. He was followed by Rev. E. R. Sanborn and he by Rev. Luther Rice, who preached acceptably for two years. R. O. Crosby succeeded him and remained two years, followed by Rev. Elmer Jacobs, who remained one year. Then there was occasional preaching for a year or two, when the Rev. A. B. Folsom was engaged and remained six months. Occasional preaching from that time until 1879, and the church was very much discouraged and hampered by debt, when Rev. A. U. Hutchins, then state missionary, at the suggestion of Rev. Richmond Fiske of Syracuse, came and supplied occasionally, as he could in connection with his duties as state missionary, and by his efforts reduced the debt more than half, when the Rev. B. Brunning was engaged for one year. At the expiration of his pastorate, Rev. A. U. Hutchins, state missionary, was engaged as a supply until January 1, 1882, when he was re-engaged as pastor for one year, and the church is prospering finely under his administration.

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Transcribed on 14 Feb 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY