

[Gloversville, Fulton Co. NY]

THE GLOVERSVILLE MOVEMENT

The effort to establish and organize a Universalist mission in Gloversville, dates back to the year 1894. The beginning was made by Rev. E. A. Perry, then of Fort Plain, who succeeded in gathering together the few and scattered Universalists residing in Gloversville, and through their aid a series of services was conducted by Mr. [?], and from the records and letters, placed at the disposal of the writer, it is evident that several years elapsed. The movement, however, did not seem to gain the desired momentum before another effort could be made.

In 1898 Rev. V. [Vincent] E. Tomlinson, of Little Falls, decided to attempt a revival of the Gloversville movement. He secured a sufficient number of hymn books to accommodate the congregation, and induced Rev. F. W. Betts, of Syracuse, to begin a regular preaching campaign in Gloversville. For nine years Mr. Betts continued his labors preaching to the Gloversville people, and such was the response that his congregation outgrew all but the largest auditoriums in the city. Of course, but few in these vast throngs were Universalists, nor, apparently, were there many who had the faintest idea of ever becoming Universalists. But Gloversville was in need of such preaching, and the impression it made is still vivid in the community. An effort was also made by Mr. Betts to induce the Gloversville people to accept a pastor who could devote more of his time and strength the Gloversville movement than Mr. Betts could possibly spare, and the Rev. L. D. Case of Albany was introduced as a candidate. But the effort proved unsuccessful. A church, consisting of some fifty members, was organized by Mr. Betts before he closed his pastorate in Gloversville.

In the summer of 1907 a call was extended to Rev. U. S. Milburn, of Oneonta, who assumed the pastorate of the Gloversville church in conjunction with the Oneonta parish. For two years Mr. Milburn continued his preaching in Gloversville, at the end of which time the disbanding of the Gloversville church had become a familiar question. There were some, to be sure, who like the Swedish Nobility, tried hard to live on memories of past glory, but such fare is rather unsubstantial, to say the least. With congregation and enthusiasm and hope nearly all gone, and with not even the shadow of a church home around which to rally the loyal Universalists, it is no great wonder if the dissolution of the Universalist movement in Gloversville seemed only a question of time.

In the meantime the writer of this article was living in blissful ignorance of anything like a "Gloversville Problem" in his beautiful summer home on Captol Island, Maine. On a fine day, however, a letter arrived from the Rev. L. B. Weeks, the N.Y. State Superintendent, inviting me to preach in Gloversville on [the] following Sunday. I did. After the sermon I requested the parish

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members to remain for a private conference. Seventeen responded. Others have told me since that they did not feel that there was anything to discuss, as the church was already dead, and needed only a decent burial.

The rest of the history of the Gloversville movement will be told briefly. It covers a period of fifteen month[s]. On the first Sunday of the second year of my pastorate here, I preached in our own little church—one of the finest auditoriums in the city. We have a well furnished parsonage. \$3,500 have been paid on the church property and nearly one thousand dollars have been expended in fitting up the auditorium. A Sunday School was organized last September, with a membership of one little boy. At present, the attendance—including the pastor's Bible class—averages about 35. However, the Sunday School will remain a problem for years to come, since the children in the parish have been anchored in the orthodox churches.

The Ladies Aid Society was organized in 1900. The ladies, however, have been at work, but without a constitutional organization, from the beginning of the movement. They have so far contributed \$1,500 towards the building fund, and they remain in some true sense the backbone of the parish. It should also be mentioned here that the State Board of Trustees have given substantial aid towards the establishment of the church in Gloversville. Pews, hymn books, and other furniture, rescued from the wrecks of Schenectady and Albany, were given to the Gloversville church, and the State Board of Trustees made us a donation of \$1,000. Some fifty odd dollars were also raised for the Gloversville mission by Rev. M. G. Folsom, of Dolgeville. It is hardly too much to say that without such generous aids the Gloversville church could not long have survived in its struggle for life.

Sacrifices have been made both by pastor and people. But in the recent dedication of our beautiful church we have a reward for what sacrifice we have made. We trust that the Gloversville movement is now firmly established; and feel in its revival the guiding hand of Him who "doeth all things well."

OLUF TANDBERG
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