

[Hudson, Columbia Co.]

UNIVERSALISTS CELEBRATE
Ninety Years Ago Their First Church Was Built in This City.
SPECIAL SERVICES BEING HELD

REV. DR. VINCENT E. TOMLINSON, A FORMER PASTOR, WILL BE THE SPEAKER—
OTHER NOTABLE DIVINES WILL BE HEARD ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY EVENINGS—
A PARISH BANQUET TOMORROW NIGHT WILL BE A FEATURE OF THE CELEBRATION.

The First Universalist church of this city, of which Rev. George Delbert [Walker] is the pastor, is holding special services during this week.

These services take the form of an anniversary celebration, it being ninety years ago since the church was established in Hudson. The present edifice was dedicated forty years ago. To fittingly commemorate the event the pastor has arranged to have several notable clergymen present from away. Among them is Rev. Dr. Vincent E. Tomlinson, of Worcester, Mass., a former pastor of the church, who spoke Thursday evening. His ability is well known. Rev. V. S. Milburn, of Albany will preach Saturday evening. [On] Friday evening, at eight o'clock there will be a parish banquet. On Sunday morning members will be received and the holy communion will be administered. The occasion promises to be a notable one for the church and the special services will no doubt be largely attended

History of the Church.

"The First Universalist Society and church of the city of Hudson" (such is its incorporate name) was organized [on] March 17, 1817, at which time or shortly afterwards 79 persons signed the compact and declaration of faith.

The first pastor was Rev. Joshua Flagg, and Gayer Gardner, Hezekiah Dayton, Miron Acly, Joseph Watson, William R. Macy, Peter Taylor and William Bates were the first trustees. The deed of the original church lot, situated at the southwest corner of Third and Allen streets, bore date May 28, 1817, and was a gift from Capt. John Hathaway. He died in the following March, and the discourse delivered over his remains was the first funeral sermon preached in the house of worship. The building cost \$3,000.

Previous to its erection, the Universalists held religious services in the Court House. A document still preserved leaves little doubt that Rev. Abner Kneeland was regularly employed during a part of that time, but whether any other it is impossible now to determine. Rev. Joshua Flagg closed his pastorate in October, 1817, shortly after the consecration of the church edifice, and was succeeded by Rev. David Pickering, then in his prime, whose services, extending through nearly six years, were eminently conducive to the prosperity of the church. He was followed in 1823 by Rev. Thomas F. King, father of the distinguished Thomas Starr King, who about a year later was succeeded by Rev. Richard Carrique, whose pastorate of a single year gave place to civic honors which he continued to enjoy in the city to the close of his life.

[Hudson, Columbia Co.]

Early in 1825, Rev. Mr. King returned to his charge, and during nearly three and a half years more he performed its duties. Another former pastor—Rev. Joshua King—then returned, and at the expiration of a year he gave place to Rev. T. J. [Thomas Jefferson] Whitcomb. Under Mr. Whitcomb, in August, 1830, the Sabbath school was organized, with the pastor as superintendent. Rev. William Whittaker succeeded in September, 1832, without any interval, and continued in charge six years.

The Rev. Dr. Acly became the pastor, and after a brief term of eighteen months, the parish was served by Rev. Clement F. LeFevre, who remained the pastor four years. Another term of eighteen months was then filled by Rev. B. B. Bunker, when Rev. Gamaliel Collins gave six years of most efficient service, retiring to accept a charge in Philadelphia. Under him the Sabbath school attained to large numbers and usefulness. Revs. L. C. [Lewis Cresaba] Browne, Thomas Borden, A. R. Abbott and Nelson Snell followed in the order named. Rev. Charles W. Tomlinson then became the pastor and continued in charge twelve years. The pastors who followed him in regular order will be remembered by many of our citizens; they are Rev. Arthur G. Rogers, Rev. A. E. Perry, Rev. Vincent E. Tomlinson, Rev. J. D. Corby, Rev. A. [Arthur] A. Blair, Rev. L. L. Green and the present pastor, Rev. George Delbert Walker.

In February, 1869, the present house of worship was dedicated, the sermon upon that occasion being preached by the Rev. Charles W. Tomlinson. The corner-stone had been laid in October, 1867. The edifice is in the Romanesque style with spacious auditorium, fine organ and well appointed lecture and class rooms. Its cost was nearly \$40,000, and it was entirely freed from debt the year following its completion. The parish also owns the fine brick parsonage adjoining the church, which together with extensive improvements upon it and a fund for its preservation, was the generous gift of Miss Sarah A. Gage, who will be remembered by many of our older citizens. Hon. Robert McKinstry, long one of Hudson's most honored business men, and for more than fifty years a trustee of the parish, bequeathed to the church, subject to certain life claims, a residuary sum of \$20,000.

The organization of the church was largely due to the energy and liberality of Captain John Hathaway, of whom mention has been heretofore made. It was he who requested the Rev. Abner Kneeland to visit Hudson, and preach, made the necessary arrangements for the meeting and bore all the expenses attending it. This meeting resulted in its immediate organization and steps were taken erect the first church edifice [on] the lot at the corner of Third and Allen streets, where St. Mary's Academy now stands, being given for the purpose by Capt. Hathaway, who contributed liberally toward the erection of the building.

[Hudson, Columbia Co.]

The present deacons of the church are Richard Macy and William Heth. [During] the past summer the interior of the edifice was newly decorated and other notable improvements made at a large outlay, and at the same time general repairs were made throughout, nothing that needed attention being neglected.

The church has a splendid choir, and for many years past it has enjoyed the reputation of being ranked with the very best. There are several societies connected with the church and all are flourishing. They are the Willing Workers, the Young People's Christian Union, the Young People's Christian Union, Jr., and the Dramatic Club.

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