

[Kendall, Orleans Co.]

KENDALL CHRONICLES
Chronicle No. 5
KENDALL UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

In the Christian Leader of October 22, 1891, is a very brief article entitled "A Case of Carelessness." The pith to this article is, that the Universalists of Kendall should have given their church building to the state convention, then neither the German Lutherans nor any other denomination nor any thing else could have taken it from them. Of course not! If the Kendall Universalists had given away their property it would not have been theirs any more than it would have been had the German Lutherans succeeded in filching it.

But it still belongs to the Universalists, thank God! And though our numbers are few and our forces are scattered, we purpose to "Hold the Fort."

Somebody made a mistake. The Congregational church is *not* the *Universalist* church. The Universalist church was built *by* the Universalists, *for* the Universalists, is owned by Universalists, and until leased by the German Lutherans was solely occupied by Universalists, although any and all denominations were freely privileged to use it when not occupied by its rightful owners. It was erected in 1855, the site being given by Alanson Whitney, who died before the building was completed.

On the tenth day of September, 1856, the widow and heirs of Alanson Whitney deeded to the trustees of the Universalist society the lot on which the church edifice now stands, "to their only benefit and behoof forever." This deed was recorded on the second day of April, 1859, in the Book of Deeds 53 at page 189. The original deed is now in the hands of Mrs. Alanson Soule. There has never been a time since the society was formed that there have not been legally elected trustees with whom outsiders could transact business. The German Lutherans found the trustees readily enough when they first wished to occupy the house. It was only when they thought they could hold it in spite of the Universalists that they thought they had discovered the trustees were not legally elected.

Perhaps it would be interesting to know *why* the church was built and *why* it stands in solemn, silent, mocking emptiness.

The Baptist church was built long years ago, all denominations uniting in defraying the expenses, with the understanding that they should [would] have the privilege of using it when not occupied by Baptists. The lurid pictures of a vengeful and angry deity consigning his creatures to an eternity of fire and woe, which were so common in the so-called orthodox preaching of that period, were peculiarly repellent and distasteful to Universalists, who had been taught to look upon their God as a loving and merciful Father. When utterly tired of such preaching they would send for a Universalist minister to come and preach them a "love" sermon. But even six such sermons in a year were too many for the Baptist brethren, who, therefore, issued the following document:

THE KENDALL BAPTIST CHURCH

To all whom it may concern:

Whereas it is understood that the Universalists wish to occupy our house of worship as heretofore, and whereas the church deem it inadmissible to grant said use of their house,

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Resolved, 1st, That we are unwilling that our house of worship be any longer occupied the Universalists except it should be wanted for funerals.

Resolved, 2d, That the *true reason* of this action is the utterly religious character of Universalism in the estimation of the church. She does not admit Universalists to be a religious denomination at all. She admits the right of men to hold the most infidel opinions, but *not the claim*, that she shall admit and respect those opinions as religious. She regards Universalism in all its distinctive sentiments and practical actions as going most directly to counteract the cause of truth and piety and *salvation*, for which alone she built her house of worship.

Resolved, 3d, That the church feels it her duty to object to the said use of her house as a formal and solemn expression of her *utter disapprobation of Universalism*; and not with any wish to give unnecessary offense to any parties whatever sentiments they may hold, and if offense is taken at the aforesaid action she will be obliged to feel that offense was necessary and that she could not consistently do otherwise.

By Order of the Church

Kendall, July 3, 1852

There could be but one outcome to so arbitrary and bigoted a course. The Kendall Universalists who previous to this action had been satisfied with five or six sermons a year, now concluded they must have more. Grieved, indignant and outraged they retired from the edifice their own money had helped to build. They sought and obtained the services of a Universalist minister, engaged the dancing hall at the hotel for want of a better place, and there where erst was heard the sound of tripping feet and merry music now echoed the solemn anthem and the voice of prayer.

Meetings were held here for a time and then we removed to the East Kendall church there to remain till our own home here at Kendall Corners was dedicated in 1855. There never was a more prosperous country church. We had the best congregation, the best Sunday school, and the best bible class north of the Ridge. There were no bickering, no jealousies, no sitting in judgment on the private opinions of each other. If one believed in the sleep of the dead, and another that we flew away to glory as soon as our bodies were cold; or if one believed we got every iota of our punishment here, and another that we were finished up hereafter, we never quarreled about it. There was one thing we every one believed: that at the final consummation of all things we should [would] *all* be gathered together in God's grand cathedral, "where the tears should [would] be wiped from off all faces, and there should [would] be no more sorrow nor crying." Our faith made us happy and we worked on prosperously.

Then came the thunder blast of war, and he who had been ordained to preach only the Father's love and the Son's great sacrifices, forgot his pledges and hurled forth weekly from the desk that had been dedicated to the gospel of peace, the bitterest hatred, out-Heroding Herod himself in his fierce maledictions. After wrangling for six days in the week his congregation felt that they needed rest from strife and something of the old time love on the day devoted to God's praise. But they did not get it, and one by one they were dropping out of the sanctuary. The pastor foresaw that if he continued he would soon be left to preach to naked walls. He therefore withdrew, since which

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time the church has stood silent and solemn, a quiet monument erected to God's love, but desecrated to Man's Hate.

It is deserted now, but may the time be not far distant when we shall hear again its pealing bell calling Universalists together as in times gone by. May its walls again echo to the sounds of love, and the happy voices of children in their innocent mirth be heard beneath its roof, inviting all to come and bask forever in the never dying love of the Father and the Son.

Come to the fount of love!

Come while youth's sun the sky of life is flushing,
Come while the thoughts of thy young heart are pure,
Come while the roses in thy path are blushing.
Come to the fount whose waters e'er endure.
Come while affection's waves are sweetly flowing,
Come ere thy sun is glimmering in the west,
Come with thy young soul in deep ardor glowing,
Come to thy Saviour, he will give thee rest—

Come to the fount of love!

Come to the fount of love!

Leave the wan flowers that deck the fields of passion,
Leave the false hopes that glitter to betray,
Leave the vain arts that guide the world of fashion,
Leave all that makes thee linger on thy way,
Leave the cold doubts that breathe of skeptic weakness,
Leave the fanatic in his wild career,
Leave all, and bow thy spirit in meekness,
Leave all, and taste of life the waters clear—

Come to the fount of love!

Come to the fount of love!

Kneel where the gem of faith is ever gleaming,
Kneel where the pearl of hope is always bright,
Kneel where the eye of charity is beaming,
Kneel, gentle pilgrim, and receive thy sight,
Kneel and thy soul shall prove a well of gladness,
Kneel and eternal life will soon be thine,
Kneel and forget in joy thy spirit's sadness,
Kneel and thy heart shall never more repine,

Come to the fount of love!

CAROLINE B. TOWNSEND

Holley Standard, Holley NY, Thu. 26 Nov 1891

Transcribed on 29 Jul 2012 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY