

HISTORIC SPOT CHANGES HANDS

OLIVE BRANCH LODGE BUYS UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

The Site of the Famous "Old Round House" Again
Passes Into the Hands of the Masonic Fraternity.

[abridged]

The site of the historic Old Round House and the building which now occupies it, the Universalist church, on West Main street, came into the possession of the Le Roy Masonic order last week, when it was purchased from the New York State Convention of Universalists by Olive Branch Lodge No. 39 of Le Roy. The interesting feature of the transfer of the property is that the Masonic order built the first building on this site, which was afterwards torn down to make way for the Universalist church, part of which is built of bricks from the Round-House. The sale could never have been consummated but for the liberality of Mrs. H. R. L. Bissell, of Le Roy, and Miss Emma Cook, of Pavilion. Both held covenants on the property and they kindly surrendered their interests to the Masonic order. Mrs. Bissell's covenant was handed down from John H. Lent and Miss Cook's covenant was handed down from her grandfather, John G. Barbor. When these covenants were taken by Mr. Lent and Mr. Barbor, the property was deeded in such a way to the Universalist society that it could never be sold for any other purpose than a place for religious worship or a dwelling. The only way that the property then could be sold, otherwise than stipulated, was for the heirs who held the covenants to deed them over to Olive Branch Lodge.

John P. Samson deserves a great deal of credit for the transfer of the property, for it was he who originally conceived the idea of it being purchased by Olive Branch Lodge. He personally investigated the matter and after learning that a clear title could be secured, he submitted the proposition to the lodge with the result that it was voted to buy. The deed to the property was made to Mr. Samson personally and it will now be necessary for the lodge to name three trustees to whom the deed will be transferred by Mr. Samson. Walter H. Smith assisted Mr. Samson in the legal work of securing the property.

The interior of the building will be improved and fitted up for lodge rooms by the Masonic order. Just how extensive the repairs will be cannot as yet be ascertained. The work will be commenced in the near future.

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The Round-House derived its name from being of circular formation. It was 40 feet in diameter and built of brick. The ceiling on the first floor was 16 feet in height; the second one was not so high but of the same circular form. The ceremonies were conducted in an upper room, called the "sounding room," from the echoes that followed any sound in it. A square tower in the front also had three stories and above them a belfry of 20 or 24 feet, and the whole height of the imposing Masonic pantheon was 70 feet. But its use for the purpose for which it was constructed was limited on account of the Morgan excitement which sprung up shortly after its erection.

The Round-House became conspicuous later as an educational institution. The building was never entirely finished for the original purpose for which it was built. The lower room was used for religious purposes by the Congregational church, and for public meetings and lectures. The second story was finished off for a school room in 1828, and occupied as a select school until its demolition in 1859 and the erection of the Universalist church on its site. It was rented to a Mr. Hatch and afterwards to a Mr. Bradley for school purposes and in 1834 it came into the hands of

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William Le Roy Annin, brother of James Annin. Mr. Annin was a graduate from Harvard College and upon the completion of his course he opened a classical school which was a success. Afterwards Messrs. Daniels and Olmsted had a flourishing school in the building, and still later Joel Whiting, Messrs. Brooks, Reed, McCall, Beckley and others.

The corner stone of the Round-House was laid on June 26, 1825...

The trustees into whose hands the Round-Hose fell were John Lent, L. M. Murphy, Israel Rathbone, William Sheldon, John Jackson, John Clifford, Marshall Smead, James Garson, Ezekiel Hall and Johnson Barron, all of the Masonic order. It was disposed of by them to J. G. Barbor, who held it until the time of its sale to the Universalist society, when it was demolished.

The Universalist society was organized in 1831. They held meetings in the Round House. The first service preached by any clergyman of this denomination was by Rev. Nathaniel Stacy in 1832. Among the early ministers after the formation of the society were [Russel] Tomlinson, [Liscomb] Knapp, [Alanson] Kelsey, [Alfred] Peck, [Jay] Brayton, and others. It was in 1858, when Rev. Charles Cravens was pastor of the society, that the old Round House was purchased and the church erected on its site at a cost of \$8,000. Mrs. Olive Haaze, who died in 1881, left a legacy of \$6,700 to the church, on condition that services be held regularly for 10 years from the time of her death. The membership of the society commenced to fall off on account of deaths, removals and other causes and about eight years ago it was decided to discontinue services, the church being unused since that time. In March, 1905, the property was deeded over to the Convention, from which it was purchased by the Masons. Rev. Cravens was succeeded by Rev. F. M. Gibbs and he was followed by Revs. C. [Charles] H. Dutton, G. [George] W. Powell, E. W. [Winchester] Fuller, M. L. Hewitt, H. B. Howell, J. [John] F. Gates, De W. [DeWitt] Lamphere, M. D. Shumway and C. L. Haskel. The last pastor of the church was Rev. E. L. Conklin.

[The final paragraph about souvenir medals is omitted.]

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Transcribed on 3 Jan 2018 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY