

[Middleport, Niagara Co. NY]

Middleport Universalist Church Observes Its 114th Anniversary

MIDDLEPORT, May 27—Homecoming Day, marking the 114th anniversary of the building of the Middleport Universalist Church, was observed here with special services.

The Rev. Charles Wood, pastor, told the young people the story of the building of the church, how the stones were procured from the shores of Lake Ontario and hauled to the site by ox teams.

Alden Stuart, now superintendent of schools of Wellsville, gave a short talk, reminiscing on his boyhood in Middleport and spoke of how the school today looks to the church to provide the moral and spiritual values in the lives of today's children, which the school does not and cannot provide.

Continues Education

Homer McOmber, now a teacher at Corning, told how the influence of the pastor of the church and of his teachers had prevailed upon him, then a boy of 14 wishing to quit school, to continue through high school and the university.

Letters were read from many members who were unable to attend. Mrs. Margaret Arnold Hatch, Marion Buckner Pond, Ethel Freeman Nickolsen, Kathleen Owen, Calvin Smith and Rev. Wells Behee.

The history of the church was given by Mrs. Octavia Thaxter. Mrs. Thaxter stated that she had focused her attention on events leading up to the building of the church.

Around 1830, coincident with the building of the Erie Canal, settlers began arriving here in increasing numbers. A settlement sprang up along the route of the canal which became known as the Village of Middleport.

Meet in 1830

About 1830 a number of families of the Universalist faith began holding religious meetings in various homes, in school houses, even in barns.

At first only the men dared to attend meetings, as they were often broken up by barrages of sticks and stones by members of other denominations. Even at the meeting of April 6, 1841, which was held in the schoolhouse in the village, only men seem to have attended. The constitution was signed by 39 men. In fact no woman's name appears on the record until 1854, she said.

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Transcribed on 3 Jan 2016 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY