

Minden (Fords Bush), Montgomery Co. NY

“Song of Tristesse”  
Inez K. Waterman

Memories are hauntingly sad, tender and beautiful at the time of Palm Sunday for the people and former residents of the picturesque community of Fords Bush. The story centers around a quaint wooden church for which the congregation had a great affection. The quaint and charming edifice was the Universalist Church of Fords Bush. It was erected in 1874 and is no longer in existence. Its people speak of it quietly and with love. Mrs. Grace Smith, Fort Plain, now 78, was a member of the church for about 70 years. She recalls that the 1-story country church had stained glass windows. Inside there were two stairways that led to a balcony in the back. Eagerly did the congregation respond to attend the services when the bell on the tall steeple rang out in exquisite tones. For the Palm Sunday service, Grace, then only about seven or eight years old, recalls wearing a pretty red dress and a flowered hat. Standing out in her mind was a beloved member of the church, the late Mrs. Ida Keller of Fords Bush. Mrs. Keller, Grace recalled, would bring in beautiful plants for the altar. She also was instrumental in forming the Young People’s Christian Union and they met at her home every Saturday afternoon. Those who are still living and were members of the church recall Mrs. Keller with great pride. On Palm Sunday the large congregation would attend the church arriving with horse and wagons. The horses were tied in a little shed outside the church. The women were finely attired in long sweeping dresses. So great was the love for this church, that people attended from other sections including the Dutchtown area (Route 5s).

In thinking back to that long ago Palm Sunday, Grace spoke in gentle tones about the choir. The organ was played by various people, one of whom was the minister’s wife, the late Mrs. De Witt Lamphere [Emma J. Hollister Lamphear]. No longer living, the choir [e.g. quartet] members were composed of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cronkhite, Mrs. Alice Sanders and Irving Devendorf. Their songs are still remembered for their beauty. Their voices were of rare sweetness. On Palm Sunday, they sang the beautiful song—“The Palms.” Echoes of that music and memories of that long ago service, bring a tender sadness to those who loved so dearly, the little country church of Freysbush.

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Transcribed on 6 May 2005 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY