

From Early Days in Fairport

The Universalist society organized in 1833; they built a house in 1834 on a lot given them by Oliver Tomlinson, from his property on East Church Street. It was on the site of the present Episcopal church, but, except for a brief period of prosperity in 1865 and a few succeeding years, there had been no good years since those of 1845. No services were being held by 1877, when the McIntosh history was published. An old book has turned up recently in the Rochester Public Library, the *Memoirs of Rev. James M. Cook*, by his brother, Theodore Cook, published in Boston in 1854. Mr. Cook was pastor of the Universalist church here from 1841 until October, 1845—a brilliant forceful preacher who did much for the village intellectually, besides increasing his own congregation to well over one hundred persons. It was one of the largest societies in western New York.

The *Memoirs* give an interesting sidelight on village life in that period when theological discussions were tea-table topics and feeling ran high among the more orthodox groups over the claims of the Universalist brethren for final salvation for all. Fairport is pictured as having “a very neat and tidy appearance—with the quiet charms of a surrounding country” accented by “the white steeple of the Universalist Church pointing heavenward.”

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Transcribed on 23 Mar 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY