

[Richfield (Richfield Springs), Otsego Co.]

RICHFIELD SPRINGS

During the past few years there have been no services held in the Universalist church here; and a call for a special meeting of the parish to be held November 24th, proximo, has been made. The question to be voted upon at that time, is whether, or not, the church property shall be deeded to the Universalist State Convention. The meeting now seems to be superfluous, as, a number of years ago, during the pastorate of the Rev. F. O. Hokerk, a similar call was issued at which time the trustees, by a decisive vote were instructed to turn over to the State Convention of the denomination, all the property of the parish. Because of the feeling of superior wisdom that sometimes afflicts a small body of men holding a trivial office, the mandate of the vote was not obeyed. Now, it appears that the Freemasons of the local lodge contemplated the purchase of the church building for the purpose of converting it into a Masonic temple. There is no doubt that the building could easily be changed to meet the needs of the Masonic body; and it is fervently hoped that in the event of an affirmative vote, the board of trustees will heed the instructions this time. In this connection a little history of this church may be interesting. The site was given to the society by Nathan Dow, who also donated the ground for the old Church street cemetery. The society was organized in the American Hotel (now Bloomfield's) kept by Cornelius M. Paul, May 23, 1833. The church edifice was erected the same year. The trustees were: George Tuckerman, Davis Brown, Moses Wheeler, Benjamin R. Elwood and James Wilson. At the dedicatory services, George Robert Twelve Fifteenth Hewes, a surviving member of the immortal Boston "Tea Party," then aged 103 years, marched up the aisle and presented to the new society a fine pulpit Bible. In 1872 the New York Convention of Universalists was held in the newly enlarged and modernized structure. The following named reverend gentlemen were the pastors: Orrin Roberts, L. C. Brown [Lewis Cresaba Browne], T. J. [Thomas Jefferson] Smith, J. S. Kibby [Kibbe], James Belden, Robert Queal, Phineas Hathaway, J. H. [James Harvey] Tuttle, D. C. [DeWitt Clinton] Tomlinson, W. E. Manley, L. C. Brown [Lewis Cresaba Browne], Samuel R. Ward, Theodore D. Cook, Samuel R. Ward, Charles Vail, Mr. Horn, Frank O. Hokerk and Lewis H. Robinson. During the years when the preaching was mostly of the militant order, when the sermons dealt largely with the texts popularly supposed to predicate hell-fire and eternal damnation, the congregations and Sunday school were the largest here. But when it began to be said that "just as good Universalist sermons could be heard in the other churches," and the fighting idea waned, then began the downfall of the Universalist church in this place. And now the property will doubtless be sold. It is worthy of note that many years ago, before the Catholic church was erected, services of that church was [sic] held in the basement of the Universalist church.

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