

[Victor, Ontario Co.]

UNIVERSALIST ANNIVERSARY.
An Occasion Full of Joy and Inspiration.
CHURCH HARMONY IS EXEMPLIFIED.

—Stirring Addresses Made by Visiting and Local Clergymen—
Historical Paper Prepared and Read by Bolivar Ellis
Excites Great Interest—Attendance Large at All Sessions

Fine programs, large attendance and abundant enthusiasm marked the meetings held in St. Paul's Universalist church, last week, in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the preaching of Universalism in this vicinity and the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the present edifice. The meetings were opened, Thursday evening, with an address of welcome by the pastor and short addresses of greeting by the pastors of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Rev. L.D. Boynton, pastor of the Universalist church, of Bristol, delivered the address of the evening, setting forth the new spirit that permeates Christianity and the difference between the church of fifty years ago and the church of today. Miss Gertrude Crocker sang "Shall I be Forgotten" in her usual pleasing manner and Edward J. Ryan sang "The Holy City" to the great delight of all.

A large number gathered Friday morning at 9:30 o'clock, for the song service, which was followed by the very able historical address prepared and read by Bolivar Ellis. Mr. Ellis' paper covers the entire history of the church, from the earliest days of the nineteenth century to the present time. The audience listened with great interest and at the close money was subscribed to insure the publication of the paper in pamphlet form. Rev. W.H. Skeels, the pastor of the church, read letters from old pastors and friends of the society, after which luncheon was served by the ladies.

Rev. L.B. Week, state superintendent of Universalist churches, addressed the gathering at 2:30 o'clock in the afternoon. At four, eighty friends and members of the society sat down to a banquet prepared by Caterer Higinbotham, music being furnished by Palmatier's orchestra, of Newark, and Homer Bickford, of Adrian, Mich., responded to toasts.

At 7 o'clock, the Palmatier orchestra gave a sacred concert, which was one of the finest things of its kind ever given in this village. Rev. F. [Frederick] W. Betts, D.D., of Syracuse, delivered the address of the evening and presented a strong argument for the continuity of life.

Sunday morning, Rev. I. [Isaac] M. Atwood, D.D., general secretary of the Universalist church, preached to an appreciative gathering and the evening was given up to a union service which was addressed by Rev. Arthur W. Grose, pastor of the Universalist church, of Rochester. This service, at which every seat in the church was taken, was a fitting conclusion to the celebration and showed that, through the years that have passed, harmony has been the word prevailing in church circles in Victor, and that in the future the churches can work side by side, shoulder to shoulder, to the great cause of bringing in the kingdom of our Lord and Master.

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A HISTORY OF UNIVERSALISM IN VICTOR AND VICINITY

By MR. BOLIVAR ELLIS

We have no record of the date, or name of the preacher, of the first Universalist sermon in this town, but we may reasonably infer that the date was some time in the early years of the nineteenth century, and that Rev. Thomas Billinghamurst was the preacher.

¹Local history informs us that Mr. Billinghamurst was born in England; that he was ordained as a clergyman in the Arminian Baptist Church at the age of seventeen years; that he emigrated to this country in the year 1795; that he became a Universalist and settled in the town of Boyle, now Pittsford, in the year 1800; that he was a man of great enterprise and public spirit; that having considerable means, he would never take pay for preaching, but talked and preached in private houses, barns, and school houses; that he was the first preacher who lived in town; that he was active in the erection of the first frame school house in town, with a stipulation that the building should never be refused for religious meetings of any sect, and that he organized the First Universalist Society in Western New York [in Vernon, Ontario Co., which is now Benton, Yates Co.].

A record of the consummation of that organization is found at page 106, Book "B" of Miscellaneous Records in Ontario County Clerk's Office, and reads as follows, viz:

This certificate may certify that at a meeting held at Elisha Cole's, according to the act passed in this state, for the purpose of choosing trustees for the First Universalist Society in this county; at same time it was unanimously agreed to choose nine trustees to take the charge, care, custody and possession of all the temporalities belonging to the said society, according to law agreeable to the constitution of the State of New York.

TRUSTEES.

Levi Benton, Esq., Vernon. (Now Benton.) [Yates Co.]
Joshua Van Fleet, Farmington
Captain Seldon Williams, of Augusta. (Now Middlesex.) [Yates Co.]
Jonas Sayens [Sawens], Northfield. (Now Pittsford. [Monroe Co.]
George Hosmer, Hartford. (Now Avon.) [Livingston Co.]
Captain Martin Dudley, Canandaigua.
Lemuel Gould, Canandaigua, No. 9.
Lemuel Babcock, of Gorham,
Aaron Guage [Gauge], of Vernon.

THOMAS BILLINGHURST
HENRY BADGER } Committee

By order of the Committee.

EDWARD BEERS, Clerk

STATE OF NEW YORK
ONTARIO COUNTY

¹ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Monroe County, N.Y., Page 234.
Universalism in America, by Richard Eddy, D.D., Vol. 2, Page 147.

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Be it remembered that, on the fifteenth day of June, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, before me, Moses Atwater, one of the Judges in the Court of Common Pleas in and for said county, came Edward Beers and made oath he was Thomas Billinghamst and Henry Badger execute the above instrument as and for their free act and deed for the uses and purposes therein expressed. I do allow it recorded as such.

MOSES ATWATER

A true copy of the original. Received for record 13th June, 1808, at 8 o'clock A.M. Recorded and examined.

JAMES B. MOWER, Clerk.

²The County of Ontario, as constituted at the date of the foregoing organization was bounded substantially as follows, viz: East by Seneca county or the Pre-Emption Line; south by Steuben county; west by Genesee river, and north by Lake Ontario; and the present towns of Mendon, Victor, East Bloomfield and West Bloomfield were grouped under the name of Bloomfield.

³Henry Badger, whose name appears in the foregoing certificate, was, perhaps, better known throughout the county as Elder Badger, who had come into the county from Massachusetts, where he had been preaching under the fellowship of the Congregationalist denomination. He had been converted to Universalism and was doing excellent work in that cause in Ontario county. He was greatly beloved by the people.

⁴At that time there were probably but four Universalist preachers residing in Ontario county. They were Mr. Billinghamst, Elder Badger, Mr. Moore and Mr. Ross. "Messrs. Ross and Moore made little or no proficiency in the Ministry." They seem to have been merely nominal preachers.

⁵On June 6th, 1806, at Columbus, Otsego county, was organized "The Western Association of Universalists in the State of New York."

⁶In October, 1811, Rev. Nathaniel Stacey [Stacy; the original spelling of Stacey will be used without further correction] then located and preaching in Hamilton, Madison county, came on a pioneer tour into Ontario county. The annual meeting of the First Universalist Society of Ontario County was held in October of the same year in that part of the town of Gorham which now constitutes the town of Hopewell. Mr. Stacey attended that meeting and preached two sermons to very large congregations. At the conclusion of the second of those sermons, Rev. James Parker, a Free Will Baptist minister, who was in attendance, announced his full conversion to the Universalist belief and at the business meeting on the next day he was granted letters of fellowship. Here Mr. Stacey met Mr. Billinghamst for the first time, and, at his earnest solicitation, accompanied him to his home in Pittsford. "He spent seventeen days in the County of Ontario, and in the course of that time delivered twenty-one discourses in eleven townships, as follows:—Benton, Gorham, Boyle, Perrinton, Penfield, Weston, Bloomfield, Seneca, Middlesex, Canandaigua and Phelps. And by their earnest solicitation he made them another visit of two weeks the winter following, and delivered sixteen discourses, preaching in most of the places where he had held meetings on his former tour, and extended his ride this time as far as Hemlock lake."

² J. H. French's Gazetteer of the State of New York, Page 491

³ Universalism in America, by Richard Eddy, D.D., Vol. 2, Page 149

⁴ Universalism in America. By Richard Eddy, D.D. Vol. 2, Page 146.

⁵ Rev. N [Nathaniel] Stacey's Memoirs, Page 169.

⁶ Rev. N Stacey's Memoirs, Page 238

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⁷The Western Association met in annual session in 1812, in the town of Duanesburg. At that meeting Mr. Stacey first met Liscomb Knapp, and as that meeting proved to be an important point in the flood tide of Universalism in Western New York, I will let Mr. Stacey give his own account of that meeting and of its final outcome: "Liscomb Knapp *** was a young man; he came from Vermont, had preached some in that state, and received a letter from the 'Northern Association,' and after Mr. [Paul] Dean's removal to New Hartford, he came to that place for the purpose of studying with him. This was the first time he met with our Association, and he was a valuable acquisition to our little band. He was a man of very good talents, of becoming zeal, and his daily life and conversation were a practical comment upon the superior excellency of the doctrine he inculcated. He cheerfully devoted his life of more than ordinary to its service, through many trials and severe labors, without faltering, and died rejoicing in the faith. *** In the forepart of this season, soon after the meeting of the Association, Mr. Knapp made me a visit. And knowing the extreme solicitation of the brethren in Ontario county to have an active and efficient preacher of Universalism settle among them (for they had most earnestly urged me to do so, and once addressed a very pathetic letter to the society in Hamilton requesting them to assent to it), I proposed to Mr. Knapp to take a tour through that country, to see if he would not like the location, and find an encouraging field of labor. To facilitate this object, I offered, on condition that he would supply my place in Hamilton and vicinity, to take a tour as a pioneer, and leave appointments for him—a schedule of which I would hand him on my return. On mature reflection he consented to do so. I immediately wrote to friends through all that region of country and made arrangements for a more extensive tour than I had hitherto taken. In this way I made appointments in all the principal places I had heretofore visited, leaving intervals, however, to be filled up casually on my way, made my calculations for the length of time I should [would] be absent, told my family the day they might look for my return, Providence permitting, and on the last day of July I left home on my devious journey. On this tour, I pursued a different route from what I had formerly pursued, traveling through Homer, Virgil and Dryden to the residence of Dr. Beers, in Spencer (Danby), where I remained one day to talk to the people. From thence I journeyed to Ithaca, at the head of Cayuga lake; Catherines, at the head of Seneca, to the town of Benton, where I again made a stop for a single day. From thence, passing through Gorham, Manchester and Victor, I arrived at Boyle (Pittsford), where I made another short pause. From Pittsford, I returned through Canandaigua to Benton, where Elder Parker joined me, and accompanied me up to Crooked lake and through Bath to the residence of Mr. Upson, in the town of Canisteo. *** At Canisteo, Elder P. left me, and returned back, and I had to perform the remainder of my journey alone. I remained a few days with Mr. Upson, and delivered several discourses in different parts of the town of Canisteo, when I resumed my tour. Crossing the Allegany ridge, I struck the headwaters of a creek called, I believe, Cohocton, and followed its course reaching Dansville, thence north to Geneseo, thence down the Genesee river to Avon, thence crossed the river, and continued my travels west as far as Batavia, stopping at LeRoy. Mr. Billinghurst had written to a friend in LeRoy, notifying him of my intended visit and the time I might be expected there. I called at Garson's tavern, and on entering the house and inquiring for Mr. Garson, an old gentleman, sitting alone in the bar-room, looked at me and said: 'If you are the man I expect you are, I was once acquainted with your father.' I replied: 'My name is Stacey.' 'Ah,' said he, 'the very same,' and he caught me in his arms and hugged me as he would a baby. He was a native of New Salem, Massachusetts, and in his younger days

⁷ Rev. N Stacey's Memoirs, Page 246

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well acquainted with my father's family. I preached in LeRoy one Sabbath and delivered several lectures, and was accompanied to Batavia by a number of friends in that place, where I delivered one discourse in the court house. On my return, I delivered another discourse in LeRoy and solemnized a marriage, and then returned through Avon, Bloomfield and Mendon to Pittsford, where I again tarried a few days and delivered several discourses. *** Discourses were delivered on this tour in most places I had previously visited in the western country, besides the additional places I have enumerated, and in most of them I left appointments for Mr. Knapp. The last meeting was holden in the court house in Canandaigua, which left me but two days to ride one hundred and ten miles [on horseback] and reach home on the appointed day. *** And before I slept (on the second day), *** through the mercy of God, I entered my own rustic dwelling. I had been from home between five and six weeks, and in my tour—my zig-zag wanderings through the country—I had traveled not much short of six hundred miles, had delivered twenty-five or thirty discourses and returned to my family on the day I appointed when I left them. Heaven blessed me with good health, with fine weather, and pleasant traveling, and amply rewarded me for my toil in a consciousness of having, according to the best of my ability, discharged an important duty. I gave Mr. Knapp a schedule of appointments I had made for him on the circuit and he immediately went to fulfill them; and from that time he made his residence in that country.”

⁸In compliance with the request of the clergy and laity of the First Universalist Society of Ontario County, as presented by Liscomb Knapp and James Parker, their representatives to The Western Association of Universalists in the State of New York, in annual session assembled in New Hartford, in June, 1813, the Ontario County Society was received into membership of the Western Association.

⁹In compliance with the request of the clergy and laity of the First Universalist Society of Ontario county and vicinity, as presented by Liscomb Knapp, their delegate to the Western Association of Universalists in the State of New York, in annual session assembled in the Village of Sherburne, Chenango County, New York, on the first Wednesday and Thursday of June in the year 1814, the request of the petitioners asking for “the organization of a branch in Western New York,” was after due consideration granted and Brothers N. Stacey, S. [Seth] Jones, A. Green, C. [Calvin] Morton, and S. [Stephen] Miles were appointed a committee to attend the organization on the fourth Wednesday and Thursday in August, 1814, in the town of Pittsford, County of Ontario, for the purpose of carrying such resolution into effect, which was done as above provided when the “Genesee Branch of the Western Association” was duly organized. Our Universalist Church Fathers have left but little in writing regarding their sayings and doings during the early years of the history of this town. Much, however, upon that subject, may be read between the lines of the brief certificate of the organization of Ontario County Universalists into one society, hereinafter quoted. From that instrument we learn that Universalism had not only been preached throughout the county, but that preaching stations had been established in Benton, Gorham, Hopewell, Farmington, Middlesex, Canandaigua, Avon and Pittsford, and it is not to be supposed that our missionary, Mr. Billinghamurst, who lived in Pittsford, would give Victor, which had a church and school house both available for religious services, the *go by* and preach in Farmington, Canandaigua and other far away places; and in fact we are quite sure that Rev. Mr. Stacey preached in this town on each of his several visits to Ontario County. After the

⁸ Rev. N Stacey's Memoirs, Page 254

⁹ Journal of Minutes of Genesee Branch of the Western Association, Page 1.

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coming of Liscomb Knapp, in 1812, we have written evidence that the doctrine was frequently promulgated in this town by Mr. Knapp and by various other preachers who came, delivered their message and went on their way.

¹⁰At the first annual session of the Genesee Branch Association, assembled at the house of Brother T. Sprague, in Benton, County of Ontario, on the 23d day of August, 1835, according to the adjournment at the last session "it was ascertained that in Ontario County there was one society of Universalists, with branches in the towns of Benton, Phelps, Gorham, Middlesex, Victor, Pittsford, Farmington and Canandaigua; Genesee County—LeRoy, Riga [in Churchville], Alexander and Pembroke." The foregoing is an extract from the minutes of the meeting and has reference to the organization known as "The First Universalist Society in the County of Ontario" as shown by the certificate of organization hereinbefore quoted from the records in the Ontario County Clerk's Office, thus clearly showing Victor to have been one of the earliest of Mr. Billingham's missionary posts, and showing that the doctrine was promulgated by Mr. Billingham in our town as early as 1802, and perhaps at an earlier date.

¹¹Liscomb Knapp "published a Universalist paper in Pittsford Village in 1815 and 1816. The printing was all done at his residence by himself and wife, he mainly setting the type. It was a folio sheet and published once a week under the name of the 'Gospel Herald.' This was the first paper published in the County of Monroe, antedating the Rochester Gazette several months."

This item is a verbatim extract from "The History of Monroe County," by Everetts, Ensign & Everetts, and I thought it worth a passing notice here in connection with the fact that Mr. Billingham first introduced religious worship into Pittsford, and was largely instrumental in the erection of the first frame school house in the same town, as heretofore stated, upon the same authority. The Pulpit, the School House and the Printing Press—three forces which make for righteousness—were by these two men, Thomas Billingham and Liscomb Knapp, first invoked and utilized in the interest of the community in which they lived.

In the year 1835, a young man named Alfred Constantine Barrey entered the Universalist ministry from the town of Victor. At the close of a long and successful clerical career, which embraced a number of important pastorates in several states, and an honorable war record, he located in Lodi, Wisconsin, where he died in 1889, full of years and honors. In a letter which I received from him a short time previous to his death, he gave me names of Revs. Liscomb Knapp, Isaac Whitnal [Whitnall], Henry Roberts, William I. Reese, O. [Orestes] A. Brownson, Nathaniel Stacey, David Biddlecomb, Daniel R. Biddlecomb, S. [Savillion] W. Fuller, Dolphus Skinner, L.L. Saddler, Judah Babcock, Stephen R. Smith, Jacob Chase and George W. Montgomery as early itinerant preachers in Victor. In that letter, Dr. Barrey also informed me that in the fall of 1822 a session of the Genesee Association was held in Victor in the church on the hill. The following is an extract from the minutes of the Genesee Branch ¹² Association for that year: "The Genesee Branch of the Western Association met agreeably to adjournment in the town of Gorham, Ontario County, on the first Wednesday in October, 1822, but for want of a commodious house to meet in concluded to remove to the town of Phelps, Ontario county, where the council was organized in due season." Here seems to be a contradiction, but I presume Dr. Barrey may be right. It was a practice with the association in those days to appoint three or four special meetings to be holden at different points within their jurisdiction during the year. Those

¹⁰ Journal of Minutes of Genesee Branch of the Western Association, Page 3.

¹¹ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Monroe County, Page 238.

¹² Journal of Minutes of Genesee Branch of the Western Association, Page 25

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were called "Conference Meetings," and were for religious and social services only. Of course, the regular annual session was held in Phelps as appears by the minutes in 1822, and a conference was probably held in the same season in Victor. In that letter, Dr. Barrey also stated that "the first society organization was held in 1826, of which my father was clerk. Oliver Ackley, of Geneva, was ¹³for two or three years its stated supply." In confirmation of this statement by Dr. Barrey, I find that at the annual session of the Genesee Association which was holden in the town of Benton, September 26, 1827, Orrin Miller and J. M. Beaver were delegates from Victor, and also that the societies in Rochester, York, Victor and Benton were admitted to fellowship in the association. I presume the above was a temporary organization, which was superseded by the later and more complete organization in 1834, which continues in an amended form to the present time.

¹⁴The Genesee Association met in annual session in the "Church on the Hill," in the Village of Victor, in 1828. This was a memorable and historical session. There was a proposition looking to the endorsement of the organization of the state convention being brought before the several associations throughout the state. It came up at this session, produced considerable unpleasant discussion and was not adopted.

The Rev. Orestes A. Brownson, to whose career the American Encyclopedia devotes a full column, was present at this meeting as a clerical delegate, and preached a sermon from the text, Psalms 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God." He achieved fame, became a Roman Catholic, and was invited by Dr. John H. Newman and others to accept a chair in the new university in Dublin, but declined this invitation.

There was also in attendance at that meeting another minister whose name and memory will long be cherished as that of a faithful follower, and true exponent of the teachings of his Divine Master. That was Rev. William I. Reese. The record of the minutes of the session are in his handwriting, and in an added foot note to those minutes, under date of August 1st, 1829, Mr. Reese "Remarks: As will be seen by reference to the minutes of last year, this session was adjourned to meet at York Center, but as the only convenient house in the place belongs to a society who would not allow it to be occupied by the Universalists on any conditions, it was removed to Victor. The society at Victor was taken into fellowship last year (1827), having been formed but a little before. It comprises many of the most wealthy, respectable, talented and influential men of the town. The house which was erected in Victor about 20 years ago, being so managed as to be the property of the builders without respect to any particular society, belongs, in part, to the Universalist society by right of property, and has been occupied by them one-fourth of the Sabbaths for two years past. The society has flourished from its commencement and is now in an increasing state. I commenced preaching with the Victor Society in September, 1826, and have continued ever since and now (1829) they are not surpassed, if they are equalled, by any other society in the town."

From the foregoing extract it appears that Rev. William I. Reese, residing in East Bloomfield, was pastor of the Victor Society; Rev. O. [Oliver] Ackley, residing at Geneva, being, according to Dr. Barrey's statement, stated supply.

William I. Reese afterwards located in Buffalo. During the scourge of Asiatic cholera, which visited that city in the summer and autumn of 1834, Mr. Reese, one Catholic priest and one Baptist minister was the only clergymen remaining in the city. All others left the city. Mr.

¹³ Journal of Minutes of Genesee Branch of the Western Association, Page 53

¹⁴ Journal of Minutes of Genesee Branch of the Western Association, Page 57

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Reese visited the sick, comforted the dying and buried the dead. At last he, too, fell a victim to the disease and died on Sept. 6, 1834. William I. Reese was a noble man, a true Christian and follower of his Divine Master.

In the year 1826 there were nearly twenty preaching points or missionary stations within the territory embraced in the organization of "The First Universalist Society in the County of Ontario," to each and every one of which, from time to time, during the years that were past, our faithful and consecrated itinerating Universalist ministers had come, delivered their message and gone their way. At that date, so far as I have been able to ascertain, Victor was the only one of all those stations that furnished to those missionaries the right to speak from a pulpit and beneath a church steeple. It was a partnership right in the ¹⁵"Proprietors' Church," otherwise known as ¹⁶The Victor Meeting House."

¹⁷In 1827 North Bloomfield built their first church. Perry followed in 1831, Fairport in 1833, Geneva in 1834, Conesus and Newark in 1835, Bristol in 1836, others followed later.

On January 1st, 1834, at an adjourned meeting regularly called and organized in the Victor Meeting House, "The First United Universalist Society of Victor" was organized and a compact of constitution adopted and signed by members present.

As the first half of the Book of Minutes containing the record of the proceedings of that meeting is destroyed, I here insert them for preservation:

"The following is the record of the meeting of the Universalist Society in the town of Victor, January 1st, 1834:

"Rev. Stephen Miles was called to the chair; Azel Barray was appointed secretary; Ezra Wilmarth, Samuel Rawson, Jeremiah Richardson, Derias I. Lewis and Thomas Wright were elected trustees, it being previously voted that there be five trustees.

"Voted there be two more trustees added—Orrin Miller and William C. Dryer were elected said trustees. Voted that the annual meeting of this society be held on the last Monday in December annually. Voted that the manner of giving notice of the extra meeting shall be to post up in three of the most public places in town written notices at least fifteen days previous to said meeting, and the said trustees balloted for their term of service. William C. Dryer and Orrin Miller drew No. 1, Ezra Wilmarth and Jeremiah Richardson drew No. 2, Samuel Rawson, Derlas I. Lewis and Thomas Wright drew No. 3."

Monday December 29, 1834. Compact adopted at the foregoing meeting:—

"We, whose names are hereto signed, believing in the universal love of God to man, as manifested through the mediation of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and believing that Christ hath tasted death for all, and hath thereby made sufficient atonement for the sin of all mortal fallen beings, and that He will finally reconcile the whole Adamic family to God, deliver them from sin and mortal defilement, and bring them into a state of perfect holiness and consequent happiness; and feeling desirous of coming into society and relationship for the edification and growth of each other in love, and for the more convenient support of the preaching of the gospel, do therefore unite and form ourselves into a religious society by the name of the 'First United Universalist Society of Victor,' and hold ourselves under obligations to observe the rules of said society.

"Stephen Miles, Ezra Wilmarth, Azel Barray, Samuel Rawson, Seth Washburn, John Kronkhite Jr., Elisha Peck, Henry Brown, Sellick Richardson, Mary Wilmarth, Betsey Lewis,

¹⁵ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts, History of Ontario County, Page 202.

¹⁶ Book 1, Records of Town of Victor, 7 times in Minutes of Town Meeting and 17 times in Records of Roads. (The book is not paged.)

¹⁷ Minutes of Genesee Association page 40.

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Caroline M. Dryer, Orrin Miller, Darius I. Lewis, Sylvester Lewis, W.C. Dryer, John Powell, Samuel Gillis, Dinah E. Berray, Naomi Gillis, Sophronia Caldwell, Jonathan West, Eli K. Frost, John Brace, Truman Dryer, Calvin Brookins, William Seavey, Jr., Lydia Rawson, Polly Miles, John Ladd, Holon Miles, George McLean, Thomas Wright, Kneeland Townsend, Huldah Guyant, Cornelia Rowe and Maria Rawson.”

The foregoing organization, in an amended form, is the same under which we, as members of the “First Universalist Parish of Victor,” are now working.

The Rev. Stephen Miles, whose name appears as chairman of the above meeting, had come into Victor from Skaneateles the previous year, having relatives in town, and was not here as pastor, but probably did occasionally supply at Victor. At the annual session of Genesee Association held at Kennedyville, Steuben County, Oct. 8, 1834, the name “Genesee” was dropped and the territory divided into two associations, one on the south to be styled “Steuben Associaton” and the one on the north, “Ontario Association.”

Kneeland Townsend was ordained in 1833 and became settled pastor over the Victor Society some time during the latter part of the year 1834, and so continued during the years 1835, 1836, 1837, and into 1838. In the year 1834 the society obtained our present church bell from L. Aspinwall, of Albany, N.Y. ¹⁸The negotiations for it were conducted by Hon. John M. Hughes, who was in the forwarding business at Albany, and had a line of boats on the [Erie] canal. The bell came to Bushnell’s basin and was brought to Victor on wheels, but when tested was found to be cracked. It was reshipped to the maker, recast and returned in due season and hung in the tower of the “Old Church on the Hill,” and there continued to call the congregations to worship until it was removed in 1856 and placed in the tower of our present church, where it has since hung. This was the first and for many years the only church bell in town.

There was a special session of the Genesee Association held in Victor in the year 1834. Present: Revs. S. Miles, O. Ackley, W. [William] Queal, K. Townsend, E. [Elijah] Smith, Wm. I. Reese, R. [Russell] Tomlinson, and E.D. Kennicott.

The Ontario Association met in annual session in the “Old Church on the Hill” in Victor on Sept. 13th and 14th, 1837. Ministers present: Rev. O. Ackley, Wm. Queal, Geo. Sanderson, J. [Jacob] Chase, K. Townsend, T. [Theodore] D. Cook, A.C. Barray, Wm. E. Manley, Job Potter, T. [Townsend] P. Abell, Daniel R. Biddlecomb, L. L. Spaulding, ___ Sanford, ___ [prob. Judah] Babcock.

Kneeland Townsend removed from Victor to Newark, N.Y., thence to Troy and finally to Milan, Ohio, where, I think, he died [in 1876].

Rev. Thomas J. Whitcomb came to Victor from Schenectady and became pastor in 1838, and remained through 1839 and into 1840. ¹⁹He removed from Victor to Cortland, N.Y. He was born in Hanover, Mass., June 4, 1801 and died at Canisteo, N.Y., Feb. 9, 1877. He attended the academy near Hingham, Mass., and studied for the ministry with Rev. Paul Dean, in Boston. He was licensed as a preacher at Washington, N.H., in 1823, and ordained at the same place in June, 1827.

Rev. Dr. [Clement] LeFevre, who knew him well, says, “Brother Whitcomb was not what is termed a sensational preacher, nor did he possess rhetorical powers, but he was a good preacher and left on his hearers the conviction of his earnestness and devotedness. As the disciple of the

¹⁸ Mrs. L. [Luman] P. Miller

¹⁹ Denominational Year Book

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good Master, he followed His direction: 'Go preach the Gospel.' That was the sum and substance of his message. In his pastoral relations he was very efficient."

Rev. Thomas S. Bartholomew received his theological training at Clinton Liberal Institute [Universalist], Rev. Stephen R. Smith being his tutor. He was installed as pastor of the Victor society on the first Sunday in May, 1840.

At the annual session of Ontario Association, which convened at Fairport on June 9, 1841, the committee on Fellowship and Ordination reported, "that on the 30th of September, 1840, Brother T. S. Bartholomew, of Victor, was solemnly set apart to the work of an evangelist."

Mrs. Luman P. Miller informs me that it was during the pastorate of Mr. Bartholomew that the old pipe organ was purchased by our people and duly installed in the "Old Church on the Hill," and continued to serve its purpose well until removed in 1856 to our present house of worship. Here again it served us well for thirteen years longer, when in 1869 it gave way to our present instrument. The case of the old instrument now graces the culinary department of our church. Long may it remain there as a reminder of "Auld Lang Syne." The old organ was, and continued to be, the first pipe organ in town until replaced by our present instrument, which was second.

I had my first experience in church attendance during the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Bartholomew. It was on a pleasant Sunday morning in the winter of 1840-1841, that I accompanied my father to church, and then and there saw for the first time the inner sanctuary of the "Old Church on the Hill" in its primitive crudeness. Floor rough, hard and bare, innocent of rugs, matting or carpets; great square pews or pews, with board seats, straight high backs, innocent of paint, cushions or comfort; one third of the occupants facing the minister, one third siding to him, and one third backing to him; heavy, wide galleries, extending along the south side, the west end and along the north side of the audience room, on either side; upstairs and downstairs a row of windows, bleak, bare and bald, innocent of shades, screens or shutters. In the extreme west end of the gallery stood the organ, Father [Azariah] Bickford's daughter, Amelia, presiding; the choir behind her, Colonel Seavey their leader. On the main floor, the women seated by themselves, on the south side of the church; the men seated by themselves on the north side; the minister, a healthy specimen of stub and twist vigorous manhood of a sanguine bilious temperament, perched in a pulpit high up against the east end of the room,—the pulpit floor almost five feet above the main floor, reached from either side by stairs of about eight steps,—behind him a twelve legged, block seated spindle and slat backed settee, innocent of cover or cushion, of the identical pattern then in use in the bar room at the village hotel; in front of him a strong fortification covering him well above midships, the main bastion projecting well beyond the main platform and supported at the two outer angles by two neatly turned wood pillars or columns resting on the main floor, the whole colored by a sort of primitive graining intended to represent mahogany, excepting that the front panel about two feet square bore a gray background, across which in large, clear, gilt letters ran the legend, "God is Love."

The minister opened the Book and began to read. Old Sol, from his lofty perch away out in the center of the universe, straight as an arrow sent whizzing across that immense space a bundle of sunbeams directly through one of those bleak upper windows and landed them slantwise across the minister's face, lighting up his whole countenance. I was but a mere lad then and my vocabulary was quite circumscribed. For want of a better word I said to myself: "He is handsome." I could do better now. I say it in deep reverence. When I read the account of the transfiguration, memory spins back over those sixty-five years and that picture is before me fresh

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as on that winter day long ago, and I wonder if when I pass upward and inward through the pearly gates I shall have that picture for identification.

In 1848 Mr. Bartholomew removed to Wisconsin, then a territory, and was prominent as a missionary for several years in that territory. He helped to organize the state convention. I have been unable to learn much of him during the later years of his life, except that he is buried in Belvidere, Illinois.

Early in the spring of 1848, Rev. James M. Cook, then residing with his family in Rochester and preaching on alternate Sundays in Churchville and Fairport, accepted a call from the society in Victor to exchange Churchville for Victor. He accordingly resigned his charge in Churchville, removed his family to Fairport and began his labors on alternate Sabbaths in Victor in April or May of that year.

Mr. Cook's soul was on fire with enthusiasm for his calling. He was a somniloquist, and at times when worn and weary from overwork and sleep had closed his eyes for a night's rest, he would unconsciously to himself preach one of his grandest sermons.

He was profound in his convictions, charitable, sincere and earnest in his speech, and prompt, judicious and decisive in action. He was always pleased and ready to deliver his message, and never, save for the best of reasons, declined an invitation to preach, either in school house, hall or church.

Under his leadership the Victor Society soon began to prosper. The old square pews gave place to the more modern straight slips, all facing the minister. Other improvements upon the interior of the church were made. He organized the Sunday School, with Augustus T. Hopkins as superintendent. He organized the church, with a membership of thirty-seven, which was increased by several more during his pastorate. Under the auspices of the society, inspired by his leadership, the national birthday was observed in the old fashioned way. Rev. J.M. Cook delivered the oration. Augustus T. Hopkins read the Declaration of Independence. Col. William Seavey was marshal of the day. Old Glory floated from mast head on the Liberty Pole near the southeast corner of the plateau on top of the hill near the church. The cannon, a six pounder, called "Seavey's Gun," was stationed near. A banquet was served, at which the business men and the sturdy yeomanry of the town drank toasts in lemonade and responded to the sentiments, assisted by the great gun on the given signal. The attendance was large and the interest widespread.

In September, 1845, Mr. Cook received a call from The Second Society in Providence, R.I., to become their pastor. He accepted the call and in the latter part of October, 1845, he preached his last sermon in Victor, closing by administration of the Communion. He removed to Baltimore in in October, 1849, where he died on August 14, 1850, not yet 32 years old.

²⁰Rev. Otis A. Skinner wrote of Mr. Cook, as follows: "There was something vitalizing in his voice. He spoke with a nervous energy that arrested and fixed the attention; his words were thrown forth like arrows from a bow,—instead of gliding from his lips as the gentle stream glides along the valley, they were shot out, and came like successive volleys; but this was not all—his words were full of warmth, they came heated and glowing, so that with their force were connected ardor and love and life. He preached like a man whose soul was on fire, who was full of enthusiasm and whose energies were all quickened into vigorous action. He belied all he said; he felt all he said; and he seemed to be animated and strengthened and encouraged by the assurance that he could inspire others, and give them his faith and his hope and his love. And

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here was the chief source of his power in the pulpit. He took entire possession of his hearers and swayed them as he pleased.”

Ontario Association met in Victor, June 11 and 12, 1845. Ministers present: Revs. O. Ackley, M. [Moses] B. Smith, W. [William] Sias, C. [Charles] Hammond, T.J. Smith, D. Biddlecom, O.S. Fowler, U. [Uriah] Clark, W. Queal, J. M. Cook, E. W. Locke.

Rev. James Riley Johnson came next in order, after Rev. James M. Cook, as pastor of the Victor Society and church. He preached his first sermon on June 14, 1846. He was a young man and Victor was his first settled pastorate. He was well aware of the fact that as successor to Mr. Cook in Victor he had a large place to fill. That he was entirely successful is attested by the fact that his pastorate here was about one year and a half longer than that of Mr. Cook, and was finally terminated, not from any incompatibility of feeling between pastor and people, but solely to accept a very flattering call from a large and important city church.

During his pastorate the society celebrated the Christmas Eve anniversary with appropriate services. The church was elaborately trimmed with evergreen and a candle was put at each pane of glass ready for lighting at the appointed time, which was just as the minister pronounced the word “Light” as he read from the first chapter of Genesis; “And God said let there be *light*, and there was light;” then one person at each window ran a torch along the several rows of tapers and in less than two minutes time the old church was transformed from a dungeon to a palace.

Mr. Johnson was optimistic in his outlook upon life. To the marriage feast, the sickroom and to the deathbed he took and left sunlight, hope and consolation. He preached his last sermon in Victor on April 14, 1850 and went to Lynn, Mass., and began what proved to be a successful pastorate. I met him a few years ago at state convention in Auburn. His hair was silvery white and he was an old man, but his eye was undimmed and his natural strength unabated. He was in charge of a parish doing active work. He still lives, but in retirement at Nyack on the Hudson.

The Ontario Association met in annual session in Victor on June 13 and 14, 1849. Ministers present: Revs. L.L. Spalding, D. [DeWitt] C. Tomlinson, G. [George] W. Montgomery, J.J. Austin, H. [Henry] L. Haywood [Hayward], C. [Charles] A. Dutton, M.B. Smith, J.R. Johnson, Abraham Norwood.

At the annual session of the state convention, adjournment was taken to Victor for May 29, 1850. When that adjournment was taken, Victor had as resident pastor, Rev. J.R. Johnson. When the convention met, the society was pastorless. The convention was largely attended and well entertained. Ministers present: Revs. A. [Alanson] Kelsey, O. [should be I.: Ichabod] B. Sharp, Allegany Association; Revs. J.H. [James Harvey] Tuttle and L. [Luther] Rice, Black River Association; Rev. J.B. Saxe, Buffalo Association; Revs. H. [Harvey] Boughton and Rev. J.M. [John Mather] Austin, Cayuga Association; Revs. T.J. [Thomas Jefferson] Sawyer and E. [Eben] Francis, Central Association; Rev. W.W. King, Chautauqua Association; Revs. A. [Albert] W. Bruce and J.S. Palmer, Chenango Association; Revs. J. [John] S. Brown and U.M. Fisk, Genesee Association; Revs. G. Collins and W. [William] H. Waggoner, Hudson River Association; Revs. Dolphus Skinner and J. [Jacob] H. Harter, Mohawk River Association; Revs. W. [William] S. Balch and H. [Henry] Lyon, New York Association; Revs. W. [William] B. Cook and H. VanCampen, Niagara Association; Revs. G.W. [George Washington] Montgomery and D.C. [DeWitt Clinton] Tomlinson, Ontario Association; Revs. T. J. [should be J.T.: John T.] Goodrich and S. [should be L. M.] Hawes, St. Lawrence Association. Rev. Edwin H. Chapin was also present.

In a letter received by me from Rev. Charles A. Skinner, he informed me that while living at Fairport and serving as pastor to Fairport and Webster parishes, and preaching on alternate

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Sundays to those parishes, he received an invitation from the parish in Victor to substitute Victor for Webster. He accepted the call, removed his family to Victor and preached for the Victor parish one half of the time for one year, beginning June 22, 1851. Although he says he preached for one year, beginning June 22, 1851, I am inclined to believe that he preached for the Victor parish during the winter and spring previous to June 22, 1851, and while still living in Fairport. He loved the Victor people and the Victor people loved him. He was young in years and in the ministry. Victor was probably his second settlement. He was poor, and his first child was born here. The increased expenses of his growing family made the generous increase of salary, which the Newark parish offered him, a legitimate explanation for his short pastorate in Victor. He became eminent in his profession and was held in high esteem by the church. He died at North Cambridge, Mass., April 22, 1906, aged 82 years.

Here follows a somewhat protracted period of supplies. On Dec. 31, 1855, the trustees were directed, in annual meeting, to "obtain the services of Rev. J.M. [John Mather] Austin for the next six months." Nothing further appears of record as to obtaining the services of Mr. Austin, but his services *were* obtained and he continued to serve in the capacity of preacher and pastor much beyond the six months designated. At that meeting it was also resolved "that the society build a new church on the ground now occupied by the society at a cost not to exceed four thousand dollars."

As the outcome of several parish meetings, numerous resolutions, much diplomacy and much financiering during the winter and spring following, our present church lot was furnished of Melancthon Lewis at the price of one thousand dollars. A plan for the church was obtained from Merwin Austin, architect, of Rochester, and a contract for the building was entered into with a Mr. [J.M. and Wm.] Lauer, contractor, of Rochester, the entire cost to be six thousand dollars. The work was pushed rapidly forward and the house was completed and dedicated on January 28th, 1857. Rev. John M. Austin preached the dedicatory sermon. Rev. O. Ackley offered the dedicatory prayer. Rev. E. W. [Elhanan Winchester] Reynolds preached in the afternoon and Rev. G.W. Montgomery preached in the evening. Rev. Mr. Austin continued to labor with this society one half the time, until the year 1860, the Rev. G.W. Montgomery preaching on the alternate Sabbaths until Dec. 1859. On June 8th and 9th, 1859, this society entertained the Ontario Association in annual session, sixteen ministers being present.

This paper would be incomplete did it not contain an account of the "Old Church" and its relation to the several religious organizations in town, as well as to the general public.

Township number eleven in the fourth range, originally a part of the town of Bloomfield, now known as Victor, was settled by white people in 1789. ²¹In 1798, September 13, Rev. Reuben Parmelee organized "The North-East Congregational Society in the Town of Bloomfield." Occasional religious services had been previously conducted by Jabez Moorehouse and by Mr. Steel.

About 1801 or 1802, as heretofore shown, Rev. Thomas Billingshurst began his missionary labors in Ontario county preparatory to the organization in 1808, of "The First Universalist Society in Ontario County."

²²"The Methodist church first found an expounder of its doctrines in Victor in the year 1805, in the person of Rev. Joseph Jewel. The first permanent organization was effected in 1807 by

²¹ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Ontario County, Page 203.

²² Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Ontario County, Page 203.

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Revs. Samuel Talbot and Joseph Scull, who were the regular appointments for that year. Seven persons composed the class, and Nathan Loughborough was appointed leader.”

Early in the century all began to recognize the desirability of having a meeting house. Individuals were poor, those organizations were poor, and the community was poor. Money was scarce and not easily obtained; trade was conducted largely in barter. By way of emphasizing this statement of that condition of things, the old people had a pleasant habit of quoting cooper’s skins at 25 cents, and whiskey at 12½ cents per gallon as legal tender in payment of debts.²³ In 1804 a subscription paper was drafted and circulated among the town’s inhabitants to raise money for the erection of a house of worship. It was signed by eighty persons, all but one of whom were residents of Victor, as at present constituted. The house was erected in 1805-6, and known as the “Proprietors Church.” It was used by all denominations. The land for the site was bought of Thomas Hawley and deeded to the several subscribers, and was the same now occupied by the residence of Mr. and Mrs. William May and by the Truman Dryer homestead, now owned by James Houston. The house was also used for secular purposes. The first town meeting was held in this house on April 6, 1813, and the wheels of the town government were there set in motion, and for many years, town meetings, elections and political meetings were held there.²⁴ In 1820 the Methodists decided to have a church of their own. The present lot was obtained and a suitable church was erected thereon, which was dedicated on Aug. 19, 1821.

Failing to convince the Universalists, many of whom were grantees or descendants of deceased grantees named in the deed from Thomas Hawley, that the Universalists ought to vacate entirely in their favor, the Congregationalists purchased their present lot about 1832 or 1833, built them a church on it and left the Universalists as sole occupants of the old church.

The townspeople soon learned that in the large hall and the reading and sitting rooms at the village hotel better and more convenient accommodations were to be had for all secular purposes and they left off going to the church for such purposes.

The Universalists continued to occupy the church and to keep it in repair until at the annual meeting Dec. 31, 1855, when they decided to build for themselves a new church. Then the question of their rights came up and at that meeting the trustees were directed to obtain “counsel in regard to the title to the Old Meeting House Grounds.” At an adjourned meeting, held Jan. 12th, 1856, “Col. Seavey read the opinion of Smith & Lapham, of Canandaigua, in regard to the title of this society to the meeting house and grounds.²⁵ Messrs. Smith and Lapham’s opinion was that the title of the society was good.” At the same meeting the trustees were “authorized to procure quit claims of the original proprietors of the land now occupied by the Universalist Society of Victor.” A goodly number of such quit claims were obtained and entered of record, the property was sold by the trustees and conveyed to David E. Sizer and Sylvester Howe, who were satisfied with the title, paid therefor five hundred dollars, demolished the old church, divided the lot into two equal parts by a line from north to south, Mr. Sizer taking the east half and Mr. Howe the west half, and each erected a dwelling thereon.

Rev. J.M. Austin wrote, “My last sermon in the Old Church on the Hill was delivered on Sunday, 10th of August, 1856. There was a large congregation present in the afternoon.”

²⁶Rev. John Mather Austin was a descendant of the distinguished family of which cotton Mather is best known in history. He was one of the ablest of our denominational preachers. His

²³ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Ontario County, Page 202.

²⁴ Everetts, Ensign and Everetts History of Ontario County, Page 203.

²⁵ Appendix A.

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home was for many years in Auburn, where he lived at the time he was ministering to our people. He was also editor of the Christian Ambassador, which was our denominational paper. He and William H. Seward were fast personal friends, from whom, as secretary of state in President Lincoln's cabinet, Mr. Austin received on separate occasions appointments to two important consulships, both of which he declined, desiring rather to continue his religious labors. Finally, in 1863, a commission was sent to him signed by Secretary of War Stanton, by which he was appointed paymaster in the army, with the rank of major. He reluctantly accepted this appointment [because the Christian Ambassador was being relocated to New York City, and he did not wish to move there], entered upon the discharge of his duties, remaining in the service until 1866, when he was mustered out, and resumed his labors in the ministry [on a part-time basis]. He died Dec. 20th, 1880, aged 75 years.

Rev. W.W. Dean came to this pastorate from South Boston and preached his first sermon on March first, 1860, and his last in March, 1862. He had enjoyed a wide ministerial experience in the South, West and East. He was a graduate from Union College, was a fine scholar and was gifted with rare powers of argument and illustration. His sermons were always fresh and stimulating. At the end of the first year of his Victor pastorate, the Civil War broke out. Then all roads led to the front. His work in Victor was of a high order and was well received. Soon after he closed his labors in Victor, took a clerkship in the treasury department at Washington, in which he remained during the rest of his life, a period stretching through fourteen successive administrations, becoming the oldest employe[e] in his department, and probably of the entire governmental force.

²⁷Says his pastor: "As recently as April, 1905, he conducted our quarterly communion. With a pathos, moving to all, he recalled the past, the many he knew who had gone on, the fact that he was an old man, expecting soon to go hence; and his unfaltering confidence in the Heavenly Father, the Divine Christ, the Bible—the infallible oracles of God—and the immortal life promised." He celebrated his ninety-third birthday anniversary April 10th, 1905, by working as usual all day at his desk. He died June 19th, 1905, literally in harness.

On May 15, 1864, Rev. George W. Montgomery began preaching to this society again every other Sabbath, and so continued until March 31, 1867, thus piloting them over the stormy war period. On June 14th and 15th, 1865, this society entertained the Ontario Association in annual session, eleven ministers being present. Also under the auspices of this society, the anniversary of our national independence was again, on July 4th, 1865, observed in gratitude for the return of peace. Hundreds of people from the country round about congregated in the village and marched in procession to the Covill grove, where from a platform erected for the purpose the Declaration of Independence was read by our gifted young artist, Lafayette W. Seavey. A stirring oration was delivered by Rev. Asa Saxe [pastor of the Universalist church in Rochester] and patriotic music was rendered. Dr. Montgomery died April 17, 1898, aged 88 years.

²⁸Dr. I.M. Atwood said of Dr. Montgomery, "I have always regarded Dr. Montgomery as a typical fruit of the Universalist faith. If ever a man lived whose religion had mastered him, he was that man. Strong and persistent were his inherited traits, the thing you felt when you came to know him intimately was that his religion saturated him and ruled his life. His little book, 'The Law of Kindness,' which had so unexpected a popularity and was translated into other tongues, was but one among many illustrations of the fact that his religion was to him a practical

²⁷ Denominational Year Book

²⁸ Denominational Year Book.

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guide in conduct. He talked it as well as preached it, he practised it as well as prayed it, showing us again that

‘He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.’

“In the symmetry of his character, in the beauty of his daily living, in the spirit of his aims and acts, and in the ideal measure in which he filled the office of the Christian preacher and pastor, Dr. Montgomery stands out as a Doric pillar in the temple of organized Universalism. I was about to add that his faith exactly matched his life; but it is truer to say that his faith made his life. To him the blessed Gospel of his risen Lord was a real as tomorrow’s sunrise; and he fell asleep as trustingly as a babe in his mother’s arms.”

The Rev. Charles Fluhrer was our next pastor. He came to us from Newark, N.Y., and preached his first sermon here on April 7th, 1867, and his last on Nov. 28th, 1869. This was his second settlement. He was young and unmarried. A parish debt of \$1,500, which had been hanging over since the building of the church, had been paid off in anticipation of his coming and he began with a clean balance sheet. In June he brought home a wife [Julia Almira Bishop, of East Providence, R.I.]. The parish had no parsonage. The house and lot now owned by Mr. and Mrs. William May was purchased, \$3,000 being paid therefor, and there the young people began their housekeeping. An era of prosperity seemed to dawn upon our parish. Pastor and wife and people frequently met informally in social gatherings and the utmost good feeling prevailed. The Ontario Association met in annual session in Victor on June 9th and 10th, 1869, twelve ministers being present. This session was largely attended and Rev. J.G. Bartholomew preached to a crowded house one of the most powerful sermons ever preached in the present church. The year 1869 was the centennial year of Universalism in America and there was a general revival throughout the churches. Mr. Fluhrer prevailed upon the Victor people to replace the old organ with a new one as a centenary offering, and the present instrument was obtained at a cost of \$1,800, and installed just previous to his leaving. He was loyal to his church and he went from Victor because the convention asked it of him, and not because he desired to do so, for he did not. His strong right hand and manly voice gave me welcome to the church militant, for which fact I have always been peculiarly thankful. Some one has said,²⁹“Those who knew Dr. Fluhrer were especially impressed with the fact of his genuineness. This was stamped upon every gesture, feature, word, act. There was no sham about him. From the foundation he was solid and of the best material; it was utterly impossible for him to speak a word he did not believe, or act even the shadow of a falsehood. This was preeminently the character of his friendships. They were genuine and they were forever.”

“O Charles Fluhrer! the man—the brother!
And art thou gone, and gone forever?
And hast thou crossed the unknown river—
Life’s dreary bound?
Like thee where shall we find another
the world around?
“Go to you sculptered tombs, ye great,

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In all the tinsel trash of state:
But by thy honest turf I'll wait,
Thou man of worth,
And weep as true a pastor's fate
As lived on earth."

Our next pastor was Rev. Simon Goodenough. He came to us from Canton, N.Y., and went to Bangor, Maine. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on April 3rd, 1870, and his last on Nov. 10th, 1872. The Macedon church movement which Brother Fluhrer inaugurated during his Victor pastorate was carried to completion during the last year of Brother Goodenough's pastorate and the church was dedicated. Brother Goodenough wrote, "I remember with gratitude how cordially I was welcomed to the most desirable charge of my ministry of nearly forty years; that was followed by equally cordial co-operation by the members of the parish and church to the end of my brief term of service in Victor; my principal regret is that I did not remain for a longer period. I recall the remarks of Brother James Walling in presenting the beautiful and reliable gold watch which I still carry with undiminished satisfaction." 'Accept this as a token of loving regard from your Victor friends; and if you will recall your resignation and remain with us, we will give you another.' I have never found out why I did not do so. *** The happiest period of my life was while my home was in Victor." He is in retirement on the Pacific coast.

Our next pastor was Rev. Thomas Borden. He came to us from Manchester, New Hampshire, and went to Albion, New York. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on Jan. 5th, 1873, and his last on Dec. 26th, 1880. He came to us at the zenith of his manhood's powers, with a rich and varied experience, gathered from a wide acquaintance with people in many walks of life. He was an ideal country pastor and his was the longest pastorate in the history of this parish by several years. His was a highly sympathetic nature, but he enjoyed innocent mirth and so taught his people. He went into their homes and soothed them in their sorrows and brightened their smiles. During the summer of 1878 the audience room of the church was thoroughly renovated and redecorated. The pews were re-upholstered, the floor was covered with a new carpet, a new chandelier and lamps were inaugurated, and the present pulpit, chairs and communion table were a gift from the pastor, Brother Thomas Borden. On April 14th, 1879, the parish was regularly and legally incorporated under the statutes of this state by the name and style of "The First Universalist Parish of Victor, N.Y." At the time of re-consecrating the church, after its renovation in 1878, Brother Borden gave an address, at the close of which he christened our church organization as "St. Paul's Universalist Church of Victor, N.Y.," which name it has since borne by universal consent. On June 2d and 3d, 1879, the Ontario Association met in annual session with the Victor church. Brother Borden was frequently called upon to officiate at weddings and funerals outside of his church and he had many warm friends among such people. His was an eminently successful pastorate. He is spending the evening of his long and useful life in the quiet retreat of the Odd Fellows' Home at Concord, New Hampshire.

Our next pastor was Rev. Ellery E. Peck. He was a graduate from Tuft's Divinity School, and Victor was his third settlement. He came to us from Cooperstown, N.Y., and went to Bangor, Maine. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on April 3d, 1881, and his last on March 25th, 1883. During the first year of his pastorate, extensive repairs on the parsonage and an arrearage, amounting in all to \$1,800, was fully paid, besides all current expenses. His

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audiences continued to increase to the extent that the audience room was often taxed to its utmost for seating capacity at evening services. "In his public ministrations he spoke his carefully prepared discourses with a force and an unction which insured large and ever-increasing audiences, and carried the truths enunciated home to the minds and hearts of the attentive hearers. There was magnetism in the person and voice of the sincere and energetic preacher which caused the sentiments uttered to be deeply impressed upon the minds of the listeners. At the same time their moral and spiritual natures were moved to respond to the stirring tones and impassioned appeals. *** He was ever ready to do what he could do to promote temperance and other worthy reforms. Reverent, manly, courteous and genial, he made and held friends wherever he lived, and by these noble qualities he not only secured for himself the esteem of all who knew him, but he won for his church and cause the respect of those in other sects." It was a severe trial to the Victor people to have him go from them so soon. ³⁰He died at Bangor, Maine, Sept. 10th, 1889, aged 40 years.

Our next pastor was Rev. Stephen H. Robling. He was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School, in the class of 1882, and Victor was his second settlement. He came to us from Genoa, N.Y., and went to Bay City, Michigan. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on June 3d, 1883, and his last on Jan. 25th, 1885. His was a short pastorate, but he was ready, off hand speaker and from the first took front rank among resident clergymen. He was called from Bay City to Columbus Avenue Church, Boston, his present pastorate.

Our next pastor was Mosby Lee Hewett. He came to us from McConnellsville, Ohio, and went to Belpre, Ohio. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on May 3d, 1885, and his last on March 6th, 1887. He was an able sermonizer and an earnest, fluent speaker. He knew the doctrine thoroughly, he believed it sincerely and he preached the genuine article during his short pastorate in Victor. He was born at Baltimore, Md., Dec. 31, 1848, and died ³¹at Linesville, Pa., Jan. 12, 1895.

Rev. John Franklin Leland came to us from Branchport, N.Y., and went to Augusta, Maine. He preached his first sermon as our pastor July 3d, 1887, and his last on February 8th, 1891. He was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School and Victor was his second pastorate.

He was unmarried when he came to us, and in October of the same year he brought home a wife, who proved herself to be a truly royal and loyal helpmeet to her husband. During that same autumn, Rev. L. [Lewis] B. Fisher, then with the Spencer Street [Second Universalist] Church in Rochester, organized in that church the first Young People's Society in our denomination, and immediately thereafter Brother Leland, assisted by a few of our leading church workers, organized the second society in our Victor church, and from these initial movements the work has spread and developed into the Young People's Christian Union of today with unions in every part of the United States. In the spring of 1888, the first union meeting of Young People's Organizations in the Universalist denomination was held in Dr. Saxe's church [First Universalist] in Rochester, the Victor organization sending the largest delegation. In the fall of 1887 Brother Fisher had started the publication of "The Universalist Union" as a weekly paper in the interest of the Young People's organizations, but in January, 1888, he was called to Bridgeport, Connecticut, when he turned the paper over to Brother Leland, who published it at Victor and bought the Victor Herald plant for that purpose, and continued to edit and publish both papers from the same office. In the summer of 1889 Brother Leland turned over the paper

³⁰ Denominational Year Book

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to Brother James Tillinghast, of Buffalo, who made the paper the organ of the National Union. Its name has since been changed to "Onward."

On June 13 and 14, 1888, the Ontario Association met in annual session in Victor; also the Young People's Christian Union of Western New York. The occasional sermon was preached by Rev. Charles Parmeteer on the subject "Building Up and Not Tearing Down." "It was a rousing good meeting all the way through, the able sermon from Dr. Saxe, the earnest words of Bartholomew and others, with the saintly Montgomery officiating at the communion, all closing with an eloquent sermon from Rev. J.K. Mason, who had come down from Buffalo to help us. Those were stirring and enthusiastic times for old and young in Western New York in our churches ***. The Young People of Victor were leaders in Western New York at that time. In all conventions, Sunday School Institutes and Association gatherings the Young People of Victor were at the front."

On July 4th, 1889, under the auspices of this church, the centennial of the settlement of Victor was duly observed. The day was fine and the weather all that could be required. For the amusement of the populace, a boomerang procession paraded the streets during the morning hour, later at the church appropriate religious services were observed and four very able papers were read by each of the following well known gentleman:

"The Glacial Era," or the Victor Hills and How They were Made," Charles R. Dryer, M.D., Fort Wayne, Ind.; "The Aboriginal Era," George H. Harris, Indianologist, Rochester, N.Y.; "The White Man's Era," George Simonds, Victor, N.Y.; "Victor's Second Century—a Prophecy," John Colmey, Esq.

Games and sports occupied the attention of the people outside the church. It was estimated that three thousand people were in attendance. It was a truly memorable occasion. Brother Leland is at present in Los Angeles, California.

Rev. Charles Legal was our next pastor. He was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School and Victor was his first pastorate. He preached his first sermon as our pastor on July 5th, 1891, and his last on Feb. 25th, 1894, when he went to Lansing, Michigan. He, too, like Brother Leland, was unmarried when he came, but soon after brought home a wife [née Harriett Lasell of Canton, NY]. He was young and inexperienced when he came, but he was enthusiastic in his work, the people were kind to him and the work prospered in his hands. He is at present at Calais, Maine.

Rev. H. Burt Bard came next as our pastor. He, too, was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School. Victor was his first settlement and he, too, was unmarried. He preached his first sermon as our pastor on Sept. 10th, 1894, and his last on Jan. 10th, 1897. He was courteous and dignified in his bearing. Nature had blessed him with a good physique, he was a fine sermonizer and soon became popular with all. He married one of our bright young church workers and went to Lansing, Michigan, where he has made a large place for himself and is now serving his sixth year as president of the Michigan State Convention. He has recently been called to the church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and has accepted the call.

On June 10th and 11th, 1896, during Brother Bard's pastorate, the Victor parish entertained the Ontario Association in annual session. Rev. L. [Lyman] H. Squires [of Rochester] preached the occasional sermon from the text, I Corinthians, 9th chapter, 19 verse.

Next came Rev. L. Ward Brigham. He had a classical, medical and theological education and Victor was his second pastorate. He graduated from St. Lawrence Divinity School and came to Victor from Natural Bridge, N.Y., and went to Rochester, Minnesota. He preached his first sermon as pastor in Victor on March 7, 1897, and his last on February 13, 1898. This was the

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shortest pastorate in the history of our church, but it was excellent while it lasted. There was an irresistible fascination about a strong, thriving parish in a growing western city and he went. He is at present ministering to All Souls church, in Brooklyn.

Next came Chester Gore Miller. He came to us from Tuft's Divinity School, but not as a graduate. He was a young man having fine natural abilities, and he soon became convinced that he left school too soon. He preached his first sermon as our pastor on June 19th, 1898, and his last on June 11th, 1899, and took charge of the parish at Jamaica Plain, near Boston, and Tuft's College, his Alma Mater. He is at present teaching at Portland, Maine.

Samuel Gilbert Ayres was our next pastor. He was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School and Victor was his second settlement. He came to us from Dexter, N.Y., and went to Cincinnati, Ohio. He preached his first sermon as our pastor on May 6, 1900, and his last on August 31, 1902. He was a strong man in many ways. He made friends outside as well as in his church, and the work prospered in his hands. Some of our Methodist friends said he preached good enough Methodism for them, and some of our good Presbyterian brethren thought he would finally bring up in the Presbyterian church. This was all because they liked the man and not on account of any theological wobbling on his part, for no man ever stood in our pulpit who preached straighter grained Universalism than Samuel Gilbert Ayres. He is a coming man in our denomination. He is still at Cincinnati, Ohio.

Margaret A. Brennan came to us next. She came *out* of retirement induced by overwork, and for the same reason she went *into* retirement. The work and anxiety incident to a pastoral charge were too much for her slender physique. She preached her first sermon as our pastor on Dec. 7th, 1902 and her last on Oct. 29th, 1905. She knew the doctrine and she preached it and it was hardly possible for one to listen long to her preaching and remain in ignorance of the basic teachings of the Universalist Church. She left many admirers outside as well as inside the church. On June 14th and 15th, 1905, the Victor parish entertained the Ontario Association in annual session. Rev. B.B. Fairchild preached the occasional sermon from I Cor. 12th chap., 26th and 27th verses.

Wines Harris Skeels, our present pastor, came to us from Santa Paula, California. He was a graduate from St. Lawrence Divinity School, and Victor is his third pastorate. He preached his first sermon as our pastor on Nov. 5th, 1905: "We know not what the future hath, of marvel or surprise," but I am sure that I voice the desire of every member of our parish when I say we hope *his* may be the longest pastorate in the history of the church. *So mote it be.*

The task which I set for myself was to present an outline sketch of the history of Universalism in Ontario county and vicinity, with Victor as the central point. My task is finished and this is the result.

In conclusion, I deem it just to say of those God-loving men, from Thomas Billingshurst in 1801 to Wines Skeels Harris in 1907, who through ostracism and much opposition have preached and taught of a man-loving God, whose principal requirement of his children is to deal justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with their God, that in so doing they have been very potent factors in creating that condition of brotherly love and charity which has made Victor what one of her own gifted sons has sung of her:

"The best loves spot =
The bright, the beautiful, the unforgot."

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APPENDIX A.

The question presented to us by Col. Seavey arising upon the deed of Thomas Hawley to the 81 proprietors of the Meeting House in the hill, in Victor, is one of some difficulty.

By the law, as it existed in 1818, when the deed was given, is vested in the grantees an estate in tenancy in common so that the descendants of the deceased proprietors retain an estate in common unless the title is defeated as hereafter stated.

In 1834 a Religious Corporation was formed which went into the immediate occupation of this lot and has continued to occupy and improve it ever since. Those of the original proprietors who were living assented to this occupancy and many of them attached themselves to the corporation this formed.

This occupancy of the lot, if it has been under an actual claim of title on the part of the corporation, has been continued for such a period as to afford a conclusive presumption of a grant from the proprietors and constitutes a complete bar to the claim of title in the proprietors or their descendants. The occupancy has not been under color of title, for no deed was ever given to the Society. They have taken and treated it as their own and there having been no hostile claim we think the corporation may now be permitted to say that their possession has been under claim of title within the rule of law applicable to the subject.

We would, however, advise that a release of as many of the original proprietors and the descendants of those departed, as can be conveniently procured, be obtained, to the corporation by name and thus lay the foundation for a future adverse possession under color of title, which when continued for the period provided by law will put an end to all doubt on the subject.

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APPENDIX B.

The town of Victor was organized on April 6th, 1813, and the following is a list of the names of the men who have served the town as Supervisors, showing dates of election and periods of service. It is given here for the purpose of showing that the Universalist Church of Victor must have been a potent factor in the formation of the moral and social condition of society in the town.

The names of those who attended on or gave preference to public worship in that church [are] being printed in **heavy faced** type.

1813, Apr. 6,	Jacob Lobdell		
1814, Apr. 5,	Jacob Lobdell		
1815, Apr. 4,	Andrew Colton		
1816, Apr. 2,	Jacob Lobdell		
1817, Apr. 1,	Jacob Lobdell		
1818, Apr. 7,	Jacob Lobdell		
1819, Apr. 6,	Jared Boughton		
1820, Apr. 4,	Jared Boughton		
1821, Apr. 3,	Jacob Lobdell	1865, Apr. 4,	Lanson Dewey
1822, Apr. 2,	Eleazer Boughton	1866, Mar. 6,	Lanson Dewey
1823, Apr. 1,	Eleazer Boughton	1867, Mar. 5,	Lanson Dewey

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1824, Apr. 6,	Samuel Rawson	1868, Mar. 3,	William C. Dryer
1825, Apr. 5,	Jacob Lobdell	1869, Mar. 2,	James Walling
1826, Apr. 4,	Samuel Rawson	1870, Mar. 1,	James Walling
1827, Apr. 3,	Samuel Rawson	1871, Mar. 7,	James Walling
1828, Apr. 1,	Samuel Rawson	1872, Mar. 5,	William Peck
1829, Apr. 7,	Nathan Jenks	1873, Mar. 4,	James Walling
1830, Apr. 7,	Orin Miller	1874, Mar. 3,	James Walling
1831, Apr. 5,	Orin Miller	1875, Mar. 2,	James Walling
1832, Apr. 3,	Orin Miller	1876, Mar. 7,	James Walling
1833, Apr. 2,	Henry Pardee	1877, Mar. 6,	James Walling
1834, Apr. 1,	Henry Pardee	1878, Mar. 5,	Gilbert Turner
1835, Apr. 7,	Henry Pardee	1879, Mar. 4,	Gilbert Turner
1836, Apr. 5,	Samuel Rawson	1880, Mar. 2,	Bolivar Ellis
1837, Apr. 4,	Jacob Lobdell	1881, Mar. 1,	Bolivar Ellis
1838, Apr. 3,	Samuel Rawson	1882, Mar. 7,	Bolivar Ellis
1839, Apr. 2,	Azariah Bickford	1883, Mar. 6,	A. Marvin Wilbur
1840, Apr. 7,	Henry Pardee	1884, Mar. 4,	Marvin A. Wilbur
1841, Apr. 6,	Joseph Rawson	1885, Mar. 3,	Marvin A. Wilburn
1842, Apr. 5,	Thomas Embry	1886, Mar. 2,	Marvin A. Wilbur
1843, Apr. 4,	Henry Pardee	1887, Mar. 1,	Stephen Van Voorhis
1844, Apr. 2,	Thomas Embry	1888, Mar. 6,	John Colmey
1845, Apr. 5,	Lanson Dewey	1889, Mar. 5,	John Colmey
1846, Apr. 7,	William C. Dryer	1890, Mar. 4,	Wm. B. Osborne
1847, Apr. 6,	William C. Dryer	1891, Mar. 3,	Wm. B. Osborne
1848, Apr. 4,	William C. Dryer	1892, Mar. 1,	Willis D. Newton
1849, Apr. 3,	Peter S. Bonesteel	1893, Mar. 7,	Willis D. Newton
1850, Apr. 2,	William Ball	1894, Mar. 6,	James Houston
1851, Apr. 1,	Lanson Dewey		2 years
1852, Apr. 6,	Levi B. Lobdell	1896, Mar. 3,	Marvin A. Wilburn
1853, Apr. 5,	Levi B. Lobdell		2 years
1854, Apr. 4,	William S. Clark	1898, Mar. 1,	Willis D. Newton
1855, Apr. 3,	William S. Clark	1899, Mar. 7,	Willis D. Newton
1856, Apr. 1,	William S. Clark		2 years
1857, Apr. 7,	Josiah Upton	1901, Mar. 5,	George Van Voorhis
1858, Apr. 6,	Josiah Upton		to Nov. 3, 1903
1859, Apr. 5,	Lanson Dewey	1903, Nov. 3,	George Van Voorhis
1860, Apr. 3,	Lanson Dewey		2 years
1861, Apr. 2,	Lanson Dewey	1905, Nov. 7,	William B. Clapper
1862, Apr. 1,	Lanson Dewey		2 years, to Nov. 1907
1863, Apr. 7,	Lanson Dewey		
1864, Apr. 5,	Lanson Dewey		

Transcribed on 1 Dec 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY