

Author's great-grandson gives book to U-U Church

by Irene C. Tallman

A book written by a man born in Cayuga County and published by an Auburnian has been presented to [the] Unitarian-Universalist Church by a great-grandson of the author.

The book, written more than a century ago, is "Summerfield."

The writer was Day Kellogg Lee, who was pastor of the Auburn Universalist Church from 1857 to 1865. His great-grandson who presented the book on May 14 and scrapbooks about early generations of the Lee family, was Frederick H. Lee of 1 Rowley St., Rochester.

The author was born on a farm in Sempronius in 1816 and rode horseback from Kelloggsville to Ann Arbor, Mich., when he was 20 years old. He returned later to study at the Auburn Academy, instructed by the Rev. Mr. Montgomery, Universalist minister.

After preaching in various pastorates, Lee spent eight years as pastor of the Auburn Universalist Church. (This church, built in 1847, was on the corner of Lincoln and South Streets and was razed in 1965.)

Lee was an innovator, holding the first Children's Day, perhaps the very first in the country, but certainly first in this area. He called it Rose Sunday. He also organized a Samaritan Society in his Auburn parish which collected money and materials and sent them to the Civil War battlefields. A Thanksgiving collection in 1863 for this purpose was \$100.

The scene of this book, "Summerfield," is laid in this lake country, now called the Finger Lakes. Its characters migrate westward from the Hudson to settle in the wilderness of Cayuga Lake. In it, the author writes of "that beautiful sisterhood of little inland seas lying in parallel lines with 10 and a dozen miles of lovely woodland waving between and varying in length from 10 to 40 miles; they discharge their waters through the Oswego River into Lake Ontario. Their names are Otisco, Skaneateles, Owasco, Cayuga, Seneca, Wawumkee and Canandaigua."

When Day K. Lee began to preach he was diffident and confined closely to his notes, the records say. He is said to have written and delivered 300 or more sermons before venturing to deliver one extemporaneously. By a long, tedious course of training he developed this ability and became known as "an impressive impassioned speaker, full of fire, impulse and enthusiasm, logical in thought and mellow but strong of voice."

He received frequent attention from New York newspapers during his pastorate at Bleecker Street Third Universalist Church in New York City where he went from his Auburn charge in 1869. He died there a few years later.

Lee married Sophia Hershey of Williamsville, N.Y., while he was pastor at Newark, N.Y. Their sons were Charles Follen Lee, who became a Universalist

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minister and later an Episcopal priest, and Frederick Harvey Lee, who became a dentist and practiced at 30 William Street, Auburn.

One of Day Kellogg Lee's noteworthy sermons, "The World Harp: A Thanksgiving Sermon," given in the Universalist Church Aug. 17, 1866, when Queen Victoria's message had been received by the Atlantic Telegraph. In it he said, "Have we just heard a message that may have been on Victoria's lips an hour ago? We call it a telegraph, but we have made a Harp of the Globe, we have stretched her strings beneath the sea. The east and west are married by the Atlantic cable as by a bridal ring. So let the nations be married and love and serve each other; so let the sects be married... Our religion is one of unity, binding all humanity together, and breathing peace on the world. Today our religion has confirmation greater than it has received before in a thousand years."

This was from Mr. Lee's sermon occasioned by the first use of the Atlantic Cable Telegraph. The sermon was, by popular demand, printed in an attractive 16-page booklet by William J. Moses, an Auburn printer.

The versatile Mr. Lee did not confine his considerable talent to sermons, but wrote poetry, essays for magazines, and other books besides the "Summerfield" referred to above.

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Transcribed on 4 Jul 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY