

[SAXE, ASA]

DEATH REMOVES REV. ASA SAXE, D.D.
FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS PASTOR IN ROCHESTER
LEADER AMONG THE UNIVERSALISTS
Oldest Minister of the Denomination in the State,
Closely Identified with the Growth of the City.
Death Ends Illness of Months.

Rev. Asa Saxe, D.D., for many years pastor of the First Universalist Church in this city, died at noon yesterday at his home on the Ridge Road, Irondequoit. Dr. Saxe suffered a stroke of apoplexy in August, 1906, while at his summer home at Thousand Islands, and has not been well since.

Dr. Saxe was for more than thirty-five years a conspicuous figure in Rochester. He came in the prime of his manhood, full of youthful health and vigor to the pastorate of the First Universalist Church, where he served through all the best years of his life, and laid down his work only when the weakness of age compelled the loosening of his grip upon the work which he had built up. During the years of his pastorate he was more than a clergyman. He was a man of public spirit who did his part in the community in which he lived.

Dr. Saxe came to Rochester in March, 1860, to the little congregation worshipping in a small building on the site of the First Universalist Church, in Clinton avenue south, recently razed. His pastorate was rich in all that makes a pastorate worth while to any church. The congregations increased, the membership grew, the spiritual life of the church was broadening and deepening constantly. In 1870 the membership of the church had reached such numbers that it was seen the old building was no longer sufficiently large to accommodate all who were of the church, and a new and larger building, since remodeled, was built. The growth of the church continued rapidly and the Second Church, which was for a time located in Spencer street, was the outgrowth of the continued increasing membership.

One of the interesting incidents in the life of Dr. Saxe, a life that was full of incidents relating to the city's history, was his memorable debate with Father Louis Lambert of Waterloo, now at Scottsville. The parochial school was the topic over which they split their lances, and the debate, carried on in the columns of a Rochester newspaper, continued through the greater part of the year. The debaters were well matched in eloquence of diction and faith in the side championed, and the result was an exchange of letters that attracted wider interest than is usually accorded theological disputes. Factions grew up around the points that were scored by the debaters, but Dr. Saxe and Father Lambert ever expressed for each other the warmest and truest friendship. In fact Father Lambert is one of the few

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contemporaries of Dr. Saxe now living, another being Bishop McQuaid, whom Dr. Saxe ever held as a friend.

Leader Among Universalists

Through the greater part of his ministry Dr. Saxe was held as one of the greatest men of his own denomination, and one of the guiding forces in the national and New York state organizations of the Universalist Church. He was for two years, in the early 80's, the secretary of the General Universalist Convention, and traveled all over the United States doing missionary work among the churches, and raising money for the general convention fund. Practically since the beginning of his ministry he had held office in the New York State Universalist Convention, and was at the time of his death a member of the Missionary Board. He was able through special talent to serve his church well. He was a pulpit orator of distinction, with a big musical voice that filled his church to the doors, and attracted, when he preached away from home, great crowds to hear him. He was the orator of the day on many great civic occasions, among others the laying of the corner-stone of the present City Hall.

Dr. Saxe was appreciated by his church and was the recipient of many honors and evidences of esteem from his congregation. On the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pastorate, which was observed on March 1 and 2, 1885, there was a reception and banquet in his honor, his health being proposed by the late Dr. M. B. Anderson, president of the University of Rochester, and by the late Cornelius R. Parsons, mayor of Rochester.

Preached in London

In 1890, after quite a serious illness, Dr. Saxe was sent abroad on a six months' leave of absence, and traveled all over Europe. In London he met some of the great Universalists of the city, and preached in many London churches where his sermons attracted wide attention. A gifted and scholarly man, with a command of language that could present any subject attractively, Dr. Saxe had the additional talent of a beautiful voice, the musical qualities of which he retained almost to the day of his death.

Dr. Saxe withdrew from the pastorate of the First Church in June, 1895 because of the weakness of age, but while unable to serve so large a congregation he was not yet ready to retire, believing there was more work for him to do. He took up the care of a little Universalist Church in Albany, and served two years without salary, helping to build it up, and attracting through his own vigorous spirituality the people who have since brought it from a mission church to one of assured permanence. Through all of his long life he was a constant contributor to the publications of the Universalist Church.

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In 1900, five years after his retirement from the pastorate of First Church, the congregation gave an elaborate reception and banquet in celebration of the golden anniversary of the marriage of Dr. and Mrs. Saxe, his wife having been Miss Celestine Holley, who died a few years ago [in 1903].

After leaving the little church in Albany, Dr. Saxe removed in 1898 to Holley, where he lived five years, and then returned here making his home with members of his family in Irondequoit. For more than thirty years he had spent a part of each year at his summer place, Summerland, Thousand Islands, where he was stricken with paralysis.

Of Hessian Ancestry

Dr. Saxe was born November 23, 1837, at Greenfield, Saratoga county of Hessian ancestry, his grandfather having come over to this country to help the British in the campaign against the patriots. Seeing the conditions and becoming imbued with the spirit of freedom he deserted from the British, joined the patriot army, and since that time the family has upheld the integrity of American institutions. The boy spent his earlier years in Belleville, Jefferson county where he attended the district school, getting such education as he could, and trying to satisfy his ambitions for more. He worked his way through the Union Academy, and in 1848 preached his first sermon in the Universalist Church in Aurora, Erie county. He was ordained a minister at Ellisburgh, Jefferson county, before the Black River Association of Universalists. He received the degree of D.D. from St. Lawrence University in 1860.

For his first charge Dr. Saxe was given two churches, one at Depauville, Jefferson county and one at South Rutland, where he labored two years. He was then transferred to the Universalist Church at Dexter, Jefferson county, where he remained a year, and for the next three years served the church at Madrid, St. Lawrence county. In 1856 he was called to the church at Clifton Springs, where he remained until the call was extended by the First Church of Rochester, where he came on March 1, 1860.

Dr. Saxe had one daughter who is the wife of Henry S. Hanford of this city; five grandchildren, Saxe H. Hanford, Josephine Hanford, J. Holley Hanford, William Hanford and Herbert E. Hanford; and one great-granddaughter, Emily Hanford. Dr. Saxe's brother [Jacob], the only surviving member of a family of six boys, is pastor of the Universalist Church at Fort Scott, Kansas, and is now about 90 years of age.

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