

[Syracuse, Onondaga Co.]

FIRST UNIVERSALIST CORNER STONE IS DISCOVERED
Block, Sought for Many Years, Found by Laborers Working at Garage
[abridged]

Laborers working in the garage of the Mutual Motor Car Company in West Genesee street uncovered the old corner stone of the First Universalist Church at [?] o'clock yesterday afternoon. The building was erected upon this site in 1870, and members of the church have searched for years for the corner stone. The church building is now located at East Adams and South Warren streets.

The tin box sealed inside the stone was badly ripped and torn by the picks of the laborers. In it were found old papers published in Syracuse as far back as 1830. No documents of personal interest to the church were discovered.

Alterations upon the dance hall above the garage included the building of a wide stairway in West Willow street. To permit of this, the rear wall of the garage was demolished and set back four feet nearer the street. The workmen were tearing down this wall when one huge stone was uncovered. Under a steady fall of blows from the picks of the laborers the stone broke. Inside was a moulded [sic] and corroded tin box. The foreigners continued their work of excavating until they had torn it from the stone.

Copies of the old Syracuse Standard, Syracuse Journal and Courier and a city directory were among the papers.

A copy of the charter of the city and the city ordinances were also found.

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It was at first thought that the stone belonged to some other building than the First Universalist Church, because the church faced in West Genesee street and the stone was uncovered near West Willow street. Early church history in the city, however, bears out the claim that it was part of this church.

As early as 1822, Stephen R. Smith held Universalist meetings in Syracuse. The congregation then moved to a hall in the Granger building. In June, 1830, the parish was admitted to fellowship by the Cayuga Association [of Universalists]. Harry Gifford and Nelson Ritter were the delegates from this city. The lot where the Technical High School now stands was purchased in 1862-1863 and a church and parsonage were erected upon it. This was sold to the Board of Education in 1868, and in 1869 a movement for a new church was begun. This was dedicated in 1870. The present pastor, Rev. F. [Frederick] W. Betts, took charge of the parish November 1, 1889.

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