

[Livonia, Livingston Co.]

from "The Story of Crockett's Corners"
by Lawrence J. Webster

The old Universalist church stood west of the hotel barn on land belonging to Timothy DeGraw, Senior, who gave to the Universalists the use of the land so long as it was used for church purposes, and when no longer so used, to revert to his estate. This church was built in 1836 but was abandoned when its successor was built at Conesus Center. The land, however, was never claimed by the heirs of the Old Squire, and now, where the church once stood, a state road was put through a few years ago which continues the Livonia Station road directly south to Conesus Center, thus avoiding the sharp turn of the olden time.

The site of the church was on the present state road where it joins the east and west road on the south. Here my father and mother and all mother's relatives attended church for many years. Father and mother were among the most active supporters, and when, as was usually the case, the Minister came from some other town, he always brought up at our home only a few rods distant, for dinner at noon, and after evening services, for the night. I believe now that there was a sort of Free-Masonry among these Ecclesiastical Ishmaelites by which due and timely notice was given, or Grand Hailing Sign passed from one to the other as to where a good meal and a comfortable bed could be found. From my early childhood until about 1876 I attended the services there with mathematical regularity. It was a matter of course. My parents expected me to attend services and Sunday School in that church as much as to attend day school during the week.

I could fill several issues of the GAZETTE with accounts of actual happenings and memories of that old church. I will never forget the Sunday School which for several years was held under the superintendency of Mrs. Lucina B. Annis. And right here I wish to pay my tribute to that quiet, neighborly, Christian woman. Her every-day life exemplified her Faith. Of her it could be well said as in the Proverb: "Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor. Yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy." She was the friend and teacher of my childhood. I have lived to see her and her husband, their daughter and son-in-law and both their granddaughters pass over into the Great Beyond. At her funeral, six of her former Sunday School pupils acted as bearers, and we all bowed our heads when the minister recited: "Servant of God, well done."

Services were held in this church at either 10:30 or 11 o'clock. Sometimes only once in two weeks. There was an evening service during the fall and winter. I remember hearing the minister announce at the morning service, "There will be services here this evening at early candlelight." This elastic hour for opening caused some worshippers to come late. The time "early candlelight" did not refer to any particular hour. As days grew shorter in the fall, candles were lighted earlier, and of course later as the days lengthened into Spring. It follows therefore that at whatever

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time the average farm home in that, or any, neighborhood was lighted by the first candles of the evening, that time was early candlelight.

There was a gallery around the interior of the entire building except the north end where the pulpit stood. This pulpit was flanked on each side by an outside door through which the people entered from the road or front yard. All pews faced the pulpit, as they also faced all late comers. The choir sat in the west end of the gallery, opposite the pulpit. In my earliest recollection there was no instrument, the *Chorister*, as the leader was called, directing and pitching the tune with a tuning fork. Mr. Henry C. Coe and Mr. O. W. Morris alternated in doing this duty. But at last the Ladies' Aid bought a small cabinet organ. This was operated by Miss Annie Coe, later Mrs. John Webster. She is still living and I think she will remember it.

Soon, however, those omni-present worshippers, the church mice, proceeded to investigate this unusual instrument, and when the young organist took her seat the next Sunday she drew no responsive sounds from within. Investigation showed that the mice had badly injured the inner harmony. It never seems to have occurred to any one to set traps to catch the mischief makers, but instead a carpenter was employed to build a box in which the organ was placed. When services were over the box was closed and the top put on. The mice, however, saw in that box a challenge and they soon penetrated the half-inch pine furnished by the carpenter and the organist was again greeted with silence. The matter now became serious and was finally settled when the neighbor across the way, Mr. Kelleman, offered to store the organ in his home between services on condition that his daughter might use it for music lessons. From that time until the church was abandoned four able-bodied men were delegated to go to the Kelleman house just before service, carry the organ across to the church and up into the choir loft, and return it across the road in the same way, promptly after the benediction.

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