

Churches of Sherman, Continued

THE UNIVERSALIST CHURCH.

The first Universalist sermon in Chautauqua county was by Rev. Stephen R. Smith of Williamsville, N.Y. (near Buffalo), in January, 1817. On this trip of five days he held nine meetings. Among the places visited at this time, or during that year, were Fredonia, Ripley, Mayville, Chautauqua (probably Haight's Corners), Gerry, Pomfret, Portland, Ellicott and Hanover.

The first preacher of the faith in Sherman was probably Rev. Linus [Linus] Paine, and the place, the red school house on the corner of Main and Kipp streets, near where I. O. Ottoway's new house is located. There may have been services in private dwellings before this, but there is no record. How long these services in the school house continued, is not known. There is a tradition that objection was made by some who feared the effect of such "dangerous doctrines" on the community, and they were discontinued. Rev. Paine did not reside in Sherman at this time, but near Haight's Corners. Later he lived here and built a house on the site of that where W. L. Bates and family now live. It was not sided with wood, but was plastered with coarse mortar, and was a great curiosity to us youngsters in those days.

The First Universalist Church of Sherman was organized in 1842, and was admitted to the Chautauqua Association of Universalists at the annual meeting at Haight's Corners in August of the same year. The society at Haight's Corners was organized in 1833, and the church erected in 1842.

Following are the names of the original members of the church as near as can be learned: Mr. and Mrs. Lester Dewey, George Bates, Loren Park, John H. Jones, Erastus Gibbs, Mrs. Susan Paine, Elliott Smith, Mr. Hall, Mrs. Cushing. Rev. Paine was the first pastor and continued until 1846.

The Chautauqua Association met in Sherman in September 1844 at which time Rev. F. M. [Francis Milton] Alvord, father of the present pastor, was ordained to the ministry of the church. Rev. L. Paine of Sherman preached the sermon; Rev. P. P. Fowler of Brant, N.Y., gave the charge and delivery of the Scriptures, and the right hand of fellowship was given by Rev. G. [Gideon] S. Gowdy, then of Concord, Pa.

The lot upon which the first church was built (and the present one now stands) was purchased of Walter Strong for \$50, which he donated toward the building fund. The church was probably built in 1847, though whether finished that year is not known. In 1850 the association met in the new church and Rev. W. W. King was ordained. The present building was erected in 1868-9, the old one being sold to the Catholics for \$525, who moved it to Park street where it is now used as a dwelling. The contract price of the new church was \$8,000, William H. Dennis being the architect and builder. He did not complete it however and it was finished by the trustees hiring labor by the day, thus costing more than the

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expected amount. To Lester Dewey, father of L. R. Dewey of this place, must be given great credit for the erection of this building. He subscribed \$1,000 to start the fund and by the time it was completed probably added \$500 more. Charles Hall also did a large amount of work, being one of the trustees while it was being built. I think William T. Green was another trustee, but am not sure, nor do I know the third one.

Rev. Linus Paine was the first pastor after the church was organized and served three or four years. He was succeeded as follows: E. W. [Elhanan Winchester] Reynolds, 1 year; Rev. Paine (second term) 2 years; W. W. King, 6 months; Benjamin Hunt, 3 years; Joseph Kinney, 3 years; C. [Chester] C. Richardson, 6 years; G. S. Gowdy, 2 years; G. W. Powell, 1 year; J. M. Getchell, 1 year; L. L. Roripaugh, 1 year; J. M. Payson, 7 years; J. R. Lavelle, 1 year; F.[Frank] J. Chase, 4 years; R. D. Towne, 1½ years; Thomas Borden, 2 years; Thomas R. Hawks, a few months; Eleazer Hathaway, 1 year; W. W. Gleason, 1 year; W. M. Lawrence, nearly a year; H. H. Graves, nearly 3 years; O. F. Beardsley, 2 years; R. R. Hadley, 3 years; Albert R. Fiske, 2 years; O. F. [Otis Fries] Alvord, who is the 24th pastor of the church, but his is the 25th pastorate in 57 years.

Since the church was organized there has been received into it by baptism, profession of faith, or right hand of fellowship, 156 members. Of these 85 have died, withdrawn or otherwise severed their connection with it, leaving the present membership 71.

In 1906, largely through the efforts of Rev. R. R. Hadley, the pastor, the church was repaired and changed at a cost of nearly \$1,000. At this time the steeple was taken down, a parlor, dining room and kitchen formed and new furniture and furnishings added.

The Chautauqua News, Sherman NY, Tue. 5 Aug 1913

Transcribed on 7 Jun 2016 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY