

The Pullman Memorial Universalist Church

Ned Johnson, Albion Village Historian
The Albion Unitarian Universalists believe that their church began with a conversation along the following lines, held in July 1890 at Castle Rest, the summer home of Mrs. James Lewis Pullman in the Thousand Islands:

"George, when you lived in Albion it was a preaching station for the Universalists. Forty years later it still doesn't have a Universalist church. Would you be willing to contribute \$5,000 toward building a church in Albion?"
"Well, Charlie, I would be happy to contribute \$5,000 toward building a church in Albion."

The next morning at breakfast, George told Charlie, "I have decided that I will contribute all the money necessary to build a Universalist church in Albion as a memorial to my father."

This was more than Charles A. Danolds had expected. He and his wife were visiting Emily Caroline Pullman, the eighty-two year old widow of his friend Lewis Pullman, who had died thirty-six years before. Also visiting at the island was Emily's son, George M. Pullman. The four talked of old times in Albion and about Universalism.

Even though he was eighteen years younger, Charles had been thrown together with Lewis Pullman on many occasions after Lewis and Emily had come to Albion with their family in the fall of 1845. Lewis was in the house building and moving business — in fact he had invented and patented a platform on wheels that he used to move buildings quickly and safely. Charles was in the contracting business, so was intrigued by this idea. Lewis Pullman was an outspoken Universalist; Charles attended the services in the cobblestone Universalist church at Fairhaven (now Childs). Lewis was junior warden in the Masonic lodge; Charles was the treasurer. Lewis was an Albion village trustee on the Democratic ticket; Charles was an active Democrat in Eagle Harbor.



H. Boyd Photo
The house as it appears today at 228 East State St. where The Pullman Family lived during the 1840's and 1850's.

Lewis Pullman was, above all, a Universalist — he had joined the church in his former home in the Town of Portland, Chautauque County, and had led the religious service when the missionary preacher was in another part of his circuit. He brought this enthusiasm to Albion. It is recounted that when the Pullmans moved to Albion one of the "leading citizens" gave Lewis friendly advice: "I am as strong a believer in Universalism as yourself, but if you want to succeed here, join one of the popular churches and say nothing about your doctrine." However, Lewis replied, "I can succeed nowhere except as an honest man; I have the courage of my convictions."

Although there were four Universalist churches in the county, none were strong and thriving. The nearest, to which Charles Danolds belonged, was at Fairhaven. The Albion preaching station was part of the Fairhaven charge, but that did not mean much. In the late 1840s the Fairhaven church was served part-time by whatever ministers were available — there were none at all from 1848 to 1852. In 1852 Rev. William B. Cook moved to Gains — for four years he preached at Fairhaven and Clarendon until he, too, moved on. Thus Albion Universalists were in the same situation as those in Brocton — when they had a preacher they worshipped at the courthouse, otherwise Lewis led religious services in private homes. By default, Lewis served as the resident Universalist minister.

Charles Danolds knew George Pullman not only as Lewis's son, but also from those long-zone days when they were both hustling to make a living along the Erie Canal. Charles had become a wealthy man by Orleans County standards. But George had been astute enough to latch onto an opportunity that made him a rich man nationally. About 1857 Ben Field, the Republican state senator from Albion, had gotten the franchise to put sleeping cars on the two Illinois railroads. George formed a partnership with Ben Field and they were just being developed to serve passengers on the newly-formed long-distance railroad systems; there was a chance to get in on the ground floor of a new business.

George made his move to wealth and national renown when he moved to Chicago in early 1859 — he hired two mechanics and a master car builder to remodel two day coaches, Nos. 9 and 19, for the Chicago, Alton and St. Louis Railroad. The first Pullman and Field sleepers looked like other sleepers of the time — flat roofed boxes forty-four feet long, just over six feet high with cherry wood interiors divided into ten sleeping sections. The lower berths were made up of two seats. The difference was the Pullman design was in the upper bunk — Pullman had strengthened the roof with trusses and suspended the upper bunks from it. At night the bunks were let down, bedding and all, ready to use.

The sleeper business grew slowly — by 1863 Pullman and Field owned only twelve sleepers. However, George

Ben Field 1816 - 1876
of Albion was State Senator 1854 - 55 and was George Pullman's partner in the very early development of the sleeping car business.

c 1867 Photo

continued to make his sleepers larger and more luxurious, like grand hotels. By the time he constructed his thirteenth car, the Pioneer, in 1864-65, Pullman sleepers were fifty-four feet long, ten feet high. They had expensive wood-paneled interiors, exquisitely upholstered furnishings that easily converted into comfortable beds, lavish carpeting, curtains, draperies, and convenient washroom facilities. Two years later, with George working full time at publicizing their cars and contacting railroad lines, Pullman and Field owned forty-eight sleepers. At this point Ben Field sold George his interest in the partnership in order to concentrate on New York State politics. In 1867 George Pullman incorporated the Pullman Palace Car Company, which expanded to control sleeper cars throughout the United States. George was on his way to becoming a multimillionaire.

It makes sense that Charles Danolds would notice an item in the Albion Democratic newspaper in the spring of 1890. The editor printed a quote from the *New York World*, "George M. Pullman is said to give away twenty thousand dollars each year." And the editor made "A Suggestion. This is a fact that his old Albion friends will not be sorry to learn. Prosperity has smiled upon him in a lavish manner, and if he knows not how to dispose of his

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G.M.P. & Co.

This display ad for G.M. Pullman & Co. appeared in *Sketches of the Village of Albion by Arad Thomas*, which was a little booklet published in 1853.

income he might do worse than to remember the town of his earlier days."

It also makes sense that while the Danolds and the Pullmans were reminiscing about the old days and Lewis Pullman's enthusiasm for Universalism, that Charles would make bold to ask his millionaire friend for some help in establishing a viable Universalist church in Albion. George himself had experience in organizing a Universalist church — he had seen it from the inside. In the late 1830s, while the Pullman family was living in Chautauque County and practicing their own version of Universalism, they had met a real Universalist — Rev. Timothy C. Eaton, who established regular monthly meetings at Brocton. His preaching put into words what Lewis Pullman had been living — God is love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; the Son of God on Earth became the "Light of the World." There is hope for all, and universal salvation.

This message hit home to Lewis — he had left the Baptist church about 1826 because he could not envisage his new-born son going to hell. Now he had four boys — Royal Henry was 13, Albert I, George 8, and James 4 — whom he had tried to bring up as Christians. Here was an organizer of a church which offered his family security and salvation.

Rev. Eaton's preaching at Brocton met with such enthusiasm that he convened a Universalist conference meeting. Guest ministers preached and Rev. Eaton organized the First Universalist Church of Portland. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon a large number of converts received baptism by immersion.

On the evening of that eventful day in which he united with the church, Lewis gathered his family around him, read a lesson from the Scriptures, and offered prayer — a long, earnest, passionate cry for help that he might bring up his children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," and that the home might become a true Christian home. This first prayer, ending in a good night kiss for the children, established a tradition of nightly prayer at the family altar.

A Sunday School was soon organized and the religious education of the children began, with Lewis Pullman, Bible in hand, leading his sons to the "old red school house" where the services were held. When Rev. Eaton was away on his circuit Lewis Pullman led the Sunday religious services. Universalism had become the family's official religion — both Henry and James became Universalist ministers.

So George knew that a Universalist church must begin with enthusiasm — now he asked for proof that there was enough interest in Albion. Charles went home, placed an article in the Democratic newspaper that George Pullman was interested in building a \$30,000 Universalist church as a memorial to his father in the next eleven months rallying support. He was ready when, on June 15,

1891, George stopped at Albion to test the waters. Charles and the Universalists he had gathered displayed enough enthusiasm. The next step was a conference.

The Universalist conference to form a church in Albion met at the courthouse on Wednesday-Thursday, July 15-16, 1891. Ten Universalist ministers rallied to show their support for the proposed church and to organize the new congregation. The Wednesday meeting was called to order by Charles Danolds. Frank E. Kittredge, an Albion entrepreneur who at that time ran a patent medicine business, was named secretary. Rev. Thomas Borden, of Sherman, gave the keynote address. Knowing the liberal people of Albion and his long association at Fairhaven, he was firm in the belief that a strong Universalist church could be maintained in Albion if those friendly to the cause would put their shoulders to the wheel.

The conference then adjourned to the Presbyterian chapel, where the ladies of Fairhaven served dinner. In the afternoon they returned to the courthouse, where the ministers each gave a ten minute sermon. Rev. Alfred Ellsworth Wright, son of farmer Justus W. Wright of Rich's Corners, who was supplying the Fairhaven church, stated that some could only be Baptists, or Methodists, and others could only be Universalists. The Pullman offer seemed to be a providential one. Why not have it? Rev. George W. Powell, of Lockport, gave the closing sermon, saying the difference between the Universalists and other denominations was a little word of four letters — LOVE.

On Thursday morning the business committee presented a temporary organization of the Pullman Church Memorial Society of Albion. The society adopted their report and elected seven trustees (including Charles Danolds) and clerk Frank E. Kittredge. One hundred people joined the new society and pledged \$25 a week to fund weekly services at the courthouse. George Pullman was notified of the gratifying outcome of the conference, and the society got to business — Rev. A.E. Wright preached the first sermon on July 26.

The church was formally organized under New York State law at a meeting at the courthouse on Tuesday, August 18. The organizational committee presented the by-laws and a list of officers to the courthouse, where the church became the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church of Albion. The number of trustees increased to nine; Frank Kittredge remained as clerk.

Although George was giving the Albion Universalists a gift, he was still a businessman — had been a businessman since he was fourteen years old, the year he started working in his Uncle John Winton's store in Westfield. He worked there three years, then in 1848 joined his family in Albion, working as an apprentice cabinetmaker in his older brothers' shop and helping his father in the building moving business. By the time George was twenty-two he was the acting head of the family — Henry was in the military, Albert had moved to Grand Rapids, and Lewis had died. With the care of his mother and five younger siblings settled on him, George hustled for a living.

He sold the cabinetmaker's shop and concentrated on moving warehouses out of the way of the expanding Erie Canal, forming a partnership with Charles H. Moore, who



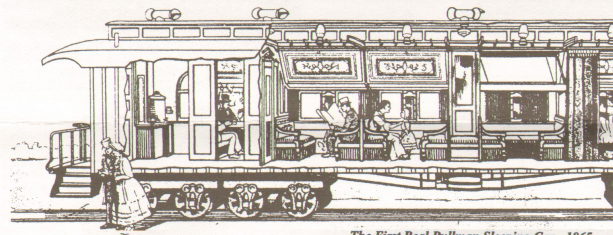
This empire style sofa which is located in a parlor at Merrill - Grinnell Funeral Home on Ingersoll St. was made around 1853 and is signed "G.M. Pullman & Co. Albion, N. Y."

H. Boyd Photo had served with his father on the village board. But he needed a steadier business — warehouse moving would stop when the Erie Canal expansion was completed — so he formed another partnership with Ben Field, Republican state senator from Albion, who had the franchise to put sleeping cars on the two Illinois railroads.

Moving to Chicago in February 1859, George juggled building-raising and sleeper cars. In July 1860 he grabbed the chance to make money in the booming Colorado gold fields. Here he formed another partnership with James E. Lyon and Charles H. Moore. The new company bought claims, did some mining, operated a freight business, kept a general store, built rental property, and dealt in gold dust. George stayed in the mining camps for a year, setting up the business, then returned to Chicago. He returned to the gold fields for four months in 1862 and four months in 1863, then sold out and took his profits back to Chicago to build more sleeper cars and became a millionaire.

So George Pullman was no simple-minded do-gooder. He knew business and had a philosophy of philanthropy — people appreciate what they work for. Since he wanted the new church to invest some sweat and money in their building, he had informed them that his gift depended on the society raising \$5,000 as a Guarantee Fund to show that they were serious about their new church and would have the money to maintain the new building when it was built. Therefore, on the motion of Charles Danolds, the moderator of the organizational meeting appointed ten church members — men and women, lawyers, well-to-do farmers, and entrepreneurs — as a soliciting committee to raise the required money.

The Guarantee Fund committee members did the best they could — they gathered subscriptions from loyal Universalists and held some socials. However the society did not have a regular minister to provide leadership — George W. Powell, who had a church at Lockport, preached for the new society when he could until, in April 1892, he left the ministry to go into public speaking. Thus, nine months after it had begun, the fund raising was bogged down, leaderless. It was during this period that Emily Caroline Pullman died, on May 21, 1892. The good cause by which she had prospered in Mount Albion Cemetery next to James Lewis Pullman. Another of the



The First Real Pullman Sleeping Car - 1865
First modern sleeper, built 1865. The Pioneer: much longer, higher, wider, than predecessors; railroad bridges and platforms were changed to permit its passage. Here first the raised upper deck and folding upper berth. Heated from hot air and floor. Ventilated through deck windows. Two compartments at each end; eight sections; roomy washroom; black woodwork, much inlay and many mirrors. Fully carpeted; French plush upholstery; good beds, ample bedding. Note the 16 wheels: an experiment tried at this period but later abandoned in favor of 12, the present standard.

Pullman family connections to Albion was gone. The Guarantee Fund languished into the fall. Then, at last, the New York Universalist Convention realized they were about to lose a great gift through lack of interest and assigned missionary Rev. Daniel Wright to the Albion church. Rev. Wright first preached at Fairhaven on September 11, then at Fairhaven and Albion on September 18. Then he really got moving, bringing in the Universalist State Superintendent of Churches to preach at Fairhaven, Albion, and the Porter School House, in the Town of Albion. These were not staid Sunday services, they were meetings to raise money and save the Pullman gift. The size of the Guarantee Fund was announced at each meeting and everyone donated.

Rev. Wright also organized the ladies of the church, on October 11 establishing a Ladies Aid with fourteen members who pledged to raise \$500 for the Guarantee Fund. Their first effort was a social at the residence of Mrs. Joseph S. Hart. Then Rev. Wright organized a day conference at the GAR Hall on Thursday-Friday, November 17-18, and invited prominent Universalist clergymen to preach. On Friday night, after the preaching, the Ladies Aid put on a reception and sociable. By the end of that meeting the Guarantee Fund stood at \$4,500 — only \$500 more to go.

Rev. Wright kept up the meetings, raising money every Sunday — on November 27, backed up by the Fairhaven "quartette," he preached on "Holy Ground," taking in \$190. The Ladies Aid put on a pie social at the GAR Hall for good entertainment and supper for 20 cents. The ladies went all out for the first annual Universalist Holiday Fair on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 20-21 — ice cream and cake the first night, hot supper the second — to raise another \$200.

This fund-raising blitz was successful — the trustees met on Christ's birthday, December 25, 1892, to announce that the \$5,000 had been pledged. Rev. Daniel Wright had accomplished his assignment, now he was ready to move on, giving his last sermon on January 8, 1893. On February 6 Rev. John A. Copeland, a native of Clarendon who had served in the Civil War, came to Albion to give a lecture, "The Battle of Bull Run," for the benefit of the Universalist church — adults 25 cents and children 15 cents. The church enjoyed his talk and asked him to take the pastorate; he accepted.

The next step in the building saga was up to George. On

January 2, 1893, he wrote that he would be in Albion soon to look at sites. George was not new to building. He had been a rich man for twenty years — he had experience in building and he had an architect. In 1879 he had decided to improve his summer cottage in Long Branch, New Jersey, a fashionable resort on the ocean thirty-five miles south of Staten Island. The landscape architect he hired recommended an architect, Solon S. Beman. Beman, who was twenty-six years old, had been apprenticed to an architect, and had been running his own firm for two years. The Pullmans liked the work on their cottage so well that they invited the team to Chicago to add a conservatory to their four-year old Second Empire mansion on fashionable Prairie Avenue.

By January 1880 the team had a contract to design and oversee the construction of Pullman, Illinois, the new industrial and residential village the Pullman Palace Car Company was planning for fourteen miles south of Chicago. The village was a self-contained working-living environment — shops for building sleeper cars, houses, stores, and other facilities for the workers. George felt that people appreciated things more if they had a financial stake in them. So workers paid rent on their houses. The Pullman Library charged a \$10 a year fee. The church was offered to any congregation who would pay the \$1500 a year rent.

Although Beman took on other clients after 1884, he still worked for the Pullman Palace Car Company designing palace cars and he probably designed Castle Rest, George's gift to his mother. And during the winter of 1892-93 he drew up plans for the new Pullman church. It seems strange that an architect would draw up plans before a site had been selected but probably the plans were to help in the site selection.

Beman envisioned a minimal church containing the bare essentials for Christian worship — a cross of red Medina sandstone in the English Gothic style with a dome over the crossing and a bell tower in one corner. The entrance was at the head of the cross — the congregation would enter at the front and proceed straight back. The pulpit was just beyond the crossing, facing the entrance, with the organ and the choir behind it. Behind the choir were the Sunday School room and the parlor, which could be opened up to provide seating for three hundred more worshippers. Now that there were actual plans to base cost estimates on, the estimated cost had risen to \$40,000.

George, his elder daughter, Florence, and S.S. Beman brought the plans to Albion on April 13, 1893, when they looked over possible church sites with the church officers. Pullman's favorite sites were the Royce Homestead at the northwest corner of Main and West Avenue (the old Bell's Plaza) and the Proctor homestead on the southwest corner of Main and West Park (now St. Joseph's rectory). The church officers liked the Sheldon Warner home at the northwest corner of Main and West Park, next to the Episcopal Church.

Pullman stated that he was ready to proceed with the church as soon as the society actually possessed the promised \$5,000. Therefore the society asked everyone to make good on his subscription by May 1 so that construction could begin. The subscribers did not meet the May 1 deadline — the last of the Guarantee Fund was taken to the Orleans County National Bank on May 28.

When the money was in the bank George bought the lot — on June 26 paying \$7,500 for a prime lot on the square that had not been previously mentioned — the home of

Mrs. C.R. Burrows on the southeast corner of South Main and East Park. George held the deed — he would turn it over to the society when the church was completed. The plan was to take over the property on August 1, have the building enclosed before snow flew, and have it fully complete and ready for occupancy in June 1894.

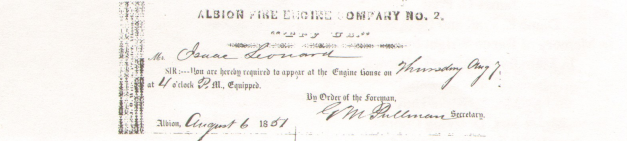
As soon as the Universalists had possession of their lot they held a social, hoping that this reunion of the liberal Christians of the community would result in a "broader Christian fellowship and a kinder feeling toward the new church." On Thursday evening, August 3, the grounds were illuminated with Chinese lanterns, the Crescent Musical Society provided music, and there was a literary entertainment. The crowd was larger than the house could comfortably handle, but the Ladies Aid added \$40 to their funds. It must have been a rowdy affair because someone lost a pair of gold-bowed glasses.

However, the church was already behind schedule — the final plans were not drawn and approved until September 27. The new plans were adjusted to the sloping lot — the church front was changed from the head, which was on Main Street, to the side, on East Park Street. The new main entrance was on East Park, in the north cross-piece; a second entrance further east on East Park opened into the Sunday School room.

On the exterior the original cross design was obscured by the additions necessary for the social use of the building — the Sunday School classrooms, the trustees room, the dining room, and the pastor's study — turning the church into a picture rescue low rambling castle. But on the interior the original cross design was still very apparent. The pulpit was now in the south cross-piece, facing the new entrance. As before, the organ and choir were behind the pulpit. The estimated cost, with furnishings, had now risen to \$60,000.

Not only were the plans late, but the stone quarries informed the society that the stone could not be ready until spring. Then the society again lost its minister — Rev. Copeland accepted a call to the LeRoy Universalist church and preached his last sermon on October 8.

Albion was feeling the effects of the Panic of 1893 — one of the requests of the church society was that there be no outside contractor to take money out of the community and that Albion's day laborers would be used for the work. But the project was bogged down — winter would soon come and the contract for the stone and foundation work had not yet been let.



Here is evidence that G.M. Pullman was an active member and officer of the local fire company. Dated Aug. 6, 1891.