

**A HISTORY OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS  
IN THE PULLMAN MEMORIAL  
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ALBION**

By Jean Brown Blotoff

The Universalist Register of the United States and Canada in 1882 lists women's Centenary Associations organized in 1869 to assist in raising money for the Murray Fund. This was a fund to aid in the education of theological students. By 1882 it had already raised over \$100,000. The Register also listed Fair Haven Church, now the Cobblestone Museum and the minister was Thomas Broder. Other churches in the area were Clarendon, Kendall, Olcott, Middleport, Lockport, Rochester, Buffalo, and Ridgeway.

The Women's Centenary Association later became the Ladies Aid Society with the purposes of raising money for their churches and missionary work. In October 11, 1892 in Albion the Ladies Aid and Missionary Society was organized with 14 Charter members. These women pledged \$500 towards the Guarantee Fund of \$5,000 raised to keep the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church in repair. The ladies sometimes met for dinner and when they did the gentlemen were always invited to join them. So their meetings were not all business but quite often more social events. By 1901 this membership had grown to 53 members.

Following is a summary of the October 6, 1901 meeting. "It was decided to have a reception for the Pastor and his wife the Rev. Arthur W. Grose, D.P. Cake and milk to be provided by the ladies, the Board of Trustees to furnish the ice cream. The tower committee for the month was Mrs. Burrows and Mrs. Flinham who offered to have charge if the ladies would contribute flowers for the



loyalty to the church and Society."

Officers of the Society in 1901 were President Mrs. Charles Burrows, Secretary, Minnie Roberts, and Treasurer, Miss Mary Billings.

A printed invitation was sent out for a birthday party on March 26, 1908. It was in the form of a poem:

This Birthday party is given for you,  
'Tis nothing novel, nor is it new  
We forward you a little sack  
Please either send it or bring it back.  
With as many cents as you are years old;  
We promise the number shall never be told  
Refreshments there will be to eat  
and friends will furnish a literary treat  
The Ladies Aid with greetings hearty  
will welcome you to your Birthday Party.

I could find no information concerning organizations of the Get-Together Club. It was first mentioned in 1905. I can only guess that it was made up of younger ladies of the church, sponsored by the Ladies Aid Society. The group was very strong during the ministry of Rev. Lewis H. Robinson who served the church from 1921 to 1944. At that time the Get-Together took over most of the activities of the Ladies Aid Society, whose members had worked long and faithfully and had witnessed the development of the church from a few members to a large congregation. The Get-Togethers had a large membership that provided most of the social life of the church. They sponsored many dinners, entertainments, family picnics at the lake (Hamlin beach, Lakeside park, Point Breeze), dances, card parties, and worked on all the activities of the church. A very active group. In 1932 officers were President, Mrs. Fred Tanner, Vice-President, Mrs. Bert Crego, Secretary and Treasurer.

Some Universalist women around 1945. Left to right: Unidentified, Ada Andrews, Addie Tanner (Mrs. Spencer Tanner) and Clara T. Luttenon (Mrs. Homer Luttenon).

Mrs. Palmer Lyon. These ladies loved to entertain in their homes and husbands and children were always included, making for a large number of people at the events. The Pullman Girls Club was mentioned in the December 27, 1908 church calendar. Officers were President, Inez Warner, Vice-President Genieve Marshall, Secretary Elsie Brown, Treasurer Velma Harding. This group was evidently made up of young girls of High School age and slightly older who remained in the club for years and were still called the Pullman Girls. They cleaned the kitchen, painted, served suppers to the Men's Club, donated to the Pension Fund, and helped serve the Annual Turkey dinner, published a cook book in 1952, pledged money to support the church yearly, and furnished for many years the calendars for weekly Sunday School Services.

On May 26, 1970 the Pullman Girls merged with the Get-Togethers Club to form the Pull-Togethers with twelve members. Officers elected were President, Jean Bistoff, Secretary-Treasurer, Betsy Hoffman, and Charlene Kyle as program chairman. Plans were made to have a bake sale and then a bazaar in October.

First public dinner put on by this group was a Chili Con Carne dinner with Rance Wright furnishing the kidney beans. He not only grew the beans on his farm but brought them in already cooked. Took in \$125.00. Group was asked to take charge of the coffee hour. This group has raised money by putting on luncheons, suppers, rummage and bake sales. Money raised has been used for paint for the parlors, carpet for the Memorial Room, toward painting the Sanctuary, curtains for the dining rooms, paid one years insurance, purchased the grand piano, prepared the table for the Good Friday Service, and most recently carpet for the Social rooms and many other items for the church.

When the Pullman Girls and the Get-Together Clubs merged, the Get-Togethers kept their money that was often referred to as the "carpet fund". Whenever the church was in financial need, help would come from the "carpet fund". This went on for many years indicating that the fund was substantial, it was a well kept secret because no one ever learned the amount of money that was in the fund.

Other women's groups that are listed in the past orders-of-services are The Clover Circle, The Jolly Girls Club, the Lydian Circle, and the Clara Barton Guild.

Women played a large part in the growth and maintenance of the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church over the last 100 years. Without their energy and persistence, we would not be celebrating our Centennial year.

**WHAT DO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS BELIEVE**

1. We believe in the freedom of religious expression. All individuals should be encouraged to develop their own personal theology, and to present openly their religious opinions without fear of censure or reprisal.
2. We believe in the toleration of religious ideas. All religions, in every age and culture, possess not only an intrinsic merit, but also a potential value for those who have learned the art of listening.
3. We believe in the authority of reason and conscience. The ultimate arbiter in religion is not a church, or a document, or an official, but the personal choice and decision of the individual.
4. We believe in the never-ending search for Truth. If the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations which appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful, and wondrously exciting.
5. We believe in the unity of experience. There is no fundamental conflict between faith and knowledge, religion and the world, the sacred and the secular, since they all have their source in the same reality.
6. We believe in the worth and dignity of each human being. All people on earth have an equal claim to life, liberty, and justice - and no idea, ideal, or philosophy is superior to a single human life.
7. We believe in the ethical application of religion. Good works are the natural product of good faith; the evidence of an inner grace that finds completion in social and community involvement.
8. We believe in the motive force of love. The governing principle in human relationships is the principle of love, which always seeks the welfare of others and never seeks to hurt or destroy.
9. We believe in the necessity of the democratic process. Records are open to scrutiny, elections are open to members, and ideas are open to criticism - so that people might govern themselves.
10. We believe in the importance of a religious community. The validation of experience requires the confirmation of people who provide a critical platform along with a network of mutual support.

-David O. Rankin

Historically Universalists took their name from the basic premise of their theology which was Universal Salvation, i.e. God is Love.



**ECUMENICITY**

This picture, taken by William Monacelli over 40 years ago suggests mutual cooperation, common congeniality and ecumenicity at its best. Around 1947 Albion clergymen and church members got together to present an Easter play which was held at the First Presbyterian Church. These three ministers each had a part in that production which was entitled "Thy Son Liveth". Shown discussing their roles in the play they are from the left: Rev. George F. Dutton, Rector of Christ Episcopal Church 1943-1948, the Rev. Donald Lawson, minister of the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church 1946-1951 and the Rev. Stanley Magill, minister of the First Free Methodist Church during the late 1940's.

**CHRONOLOGY**

- 1890 Charles A. Danolds visited George Pullman in the Thousand Islands where they conceived the idea for a Universalist Church in Albion. If the local Universalists can raise \$5,000.00, Mr. Pullman will match it with a church in memory of his parents James Lewis and Emily Caroline.
- 1891 A meeting was held on August 18 for the purpose of legally organizing and incorporating the PMUC according to the laws of the state of New York and a committee appointed to raise the \$5,000 guarantee fund.
- 1892 On December 25 the board of trustees announced that \$5,000.00 had been pledged in amounts varying from \$5 to \$600.
- 1893 George Pullman arrived in Albion to negotiate for the site at the corner of Main and East Park Streets. He pays \$7,500.00 for the lot.
- 1894 On May 19 at 2:30 p.m. Renovation Lodge F and AM with Grand Master Burnham and a host of Masonic dignitaries from all over New York laid the cornerstone on the traditional Masonic ritual.
- 1895 The PMUC is dedicated on Thursday, January 31 with Rev. Dr. Royal H. Pullman, a brother of George M. Pullman and a Universalist Minister giving the dedication sermon. Rev. Dr. Charles Fluhrer is also installed as the first minister.
- 1906 The Parsonage just south of the church was ready for occupancy. Designed by S.S. Beman the same architect who did the church, it cost the congregation around \$20,000.
- 1910 A beautiful silver communion service of individual cups was first used at the Good Friday Service. It was presented by Mrs. James G. Brown in memory of her mother Mrs. Eunice C. Rice.
- 1921 It is recorded that the church was valued at \$75,000, the parsonage \$11,000 and the church had 150 families, 350 individuals and 145 members.
- 1927 The church was rewired. Original knob and tube wiring being obsolete.
- 1928 A steam table was installed to handle the large quantity of meals served during the annual turkey dinners.
- 1931 Over 500 turkey dinners were served at \$1.75 each.
- 1937 The red fluted Spanish Tile roof was removed and replaced with patent roofing.
- 1938 The sanctuary was redecorated for the first time.
- 1939 New carpet laid in church parlors - \$500.00.
- 1940 Ladies Aid bought a brass cross in memory of Mrs. Jerome Brace.
- 1944 The church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone on May 19 with members of Renovation Lodge F and AM.
- 1948 Last brass vases given by Mrs. Pridmore in memory of Addie Bradley. Chimes to organ given in memory of Thomas Sweet by Wife Mae.
- 1950 Two new oil burners installed in church by Ralph Mosher. Exterior repointed and sanctuary redecorated for a second time.
- 1954 The congregation affiliated within the merger of church changed to November 1 (59 years).
- 1956 Two brass candle sticks were given by Grant and Mae Barber.
- 1959 The organ was rebuilt, electrified and moved from choir loft to the west transept at a cost of \$10,000.
- 1961 The congregation affiliated within the merger of the American Universalist Church and the American Unitarian Association in what became the Unitarian Universalist Association.
- 1965 A festival of Art was held in June which drew community interest. The church presented an original dramatic play entitled "The Masque of Indifference" which was presented at a summer Union Service.
- 1966 Rev. Warren Lovejoy presented a dramatic dialogue "The Bomb That Killed God, Or Did It" which was part of a summer Union Service. The Sanctuary was decorated in "warm ivory".
- 1971 The congregation pondered over ministerial concerns. Rev. Richard Hood, one of our present ministers, was asked to begin his pastorate.
- 1972 Bernard Lynch, church organist for 29 years retired.
- 1976 The church hosted a community event at Albion High School.
- 1984 The church sanctuary was redecorated with volunteers and painted "Cedar Rust" to emulate earlier color schemes. The N.Y.S. Convention of Universalists held their 156th annual meeting in Albion.
- 1985 Through subscriptions, the congregation raised enough money to purchase new carpet for the sanctuary. The sanctuary was rededicated because of its refurbishing.
- 1987 Corrugated fiber glass roofing was placed over the dining room between the social room and east transept to correct deterioration of the light well.
- 1992 North windows in the dining room were restored using original sash after being boarded up since 1957.
- 1993 East wall and front vestibule were repointed.
- 1994 The organ console was restored to the choir loft. Side lights were restored to the walls of the sanctuary.

"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" - Micah

**THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH**

- Rev. Charles L. Fluhrer, D.D. 1895-1900
- Rev. Arthur W. Grose, D.D. 1901-1905
- Rev. Charles H. Vail, D.D. 1906-1915
- Rev. Edwin P. Wood 1915-1922
- Rev. Lewis H. Robinson 1921-1941
- Rev. Edgar Walker 1941-1942
- Rev. J. Murray Gay 1943-1946
- Rev. Donald W. Lawson 1946-1951

**LETTERS**

**Our Memories of Albion**

By Rev. Don & Betty Lawson

Don was minister of the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church from Oct. 1946 to April 1951. During this period he started a Sunday School, organized a Men's Club, initiated the Christmas Eve Service of Carols and Candles, and brought a displaced person's family from the Ukraine which was sponsored by the church. He was very active in the Albion Minister's Association and also preached at Clarendon and Childs. Don has been back to Albion several times. The last visit was in 1986 while attending the General Assembly in Rochester.

Our fondest memories include the births of our two sons: Richard in Dec. 1946 and Scott in March 1949. We remember the beautiful parsonage with ponies in the back yard. The 5 bedrooms on the second floor were often filled with visiting dignitaries, who came for special events. The bay window in the dining room was the favorite spot for Richard to watch for his Dad to come home. In winter I remember the snowdrifts in front of the house, higher than the top of the Greyhound Bus which came down Main St. Don remembers picking cherries and cabbages on Rance Wright's farm and I remember canning bushels of fruits and vegetables during the harvest.

We remember with great fondness the following people who were very active in the church while we were there: Jack and Elizabeth Dutcher, whom we saw until their deaths, the Sturgis, and Dave and Nancy, Luttenons, Tanners, Mae Sweet, Ada Andrews, Bertha Cowell, the baby sat for us, The Browns, Heys, Trussells, Heislens, June Humphrey's beautiful voice, and Bernard Lynch, the best organist we ever had in any church...we send our love and congratulations to you all, and will be with you in spirit for your 100th anniversary.

Note: From Albion the Lawsons went to the Universalist Church in Waltham, Mass. In 1953 Don became a Chaplain in the Air Force and in 1958 accepted a position in a State school for the mentally retarded in N.C. He later implemented a mental retardation program for the District of Columbia. In 1980 he became minister of the Greater Naples U.U. congregation and then a part-time minister at Port Charlotte in Florida. He is now suffering from Alzheimer's Disease but has many happy memories of Albion.

One hundred years ago George Pullman gave to Albion a unique and cherished gift - a church in memory of his parents, who lived and worked in our community. Pullman's gift is truly the gift that has kept on giving.

For the community Pullman commissioned an architectural landmark. The church's facade has anchored our historic courthouse square for a full century. And over the years how many have past the Tiffany window on Main Street and have been inspired by the outstretched hands of Jesus?

For the congregation of the Pullman Memorial Church and its succeeding generations, George Pullman created a house of worship and fellowship that has stood the test of time. We worship in the sanctuary each Sunday Morning at 11:00. The exquisite windows, the fine organ, the impressive woodwork all add to our sense of wonder and awe.

But Pullman gave far more than just a building. Through his impetus the message of the Loving God has been alive in Albion for 100 years. This message, the heart of the Universalist faith, states that God's Love pervades all our lives and that we each are free to discover that love for ourselves. To that end we look for religious truth from a wide variety of sources.

It has been my honor to serve this congregation for almost a quarter of its history. We invite everyone to come to hear a message very different from what many are preaching today - a message of love, of tolerance, and of freedom.

We hope George Pullman would be happy that the teachings he wanted preserved are alive and well.

Rev. Richard E. Hood

On the commemoration of the Centennial of the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church, I write this as an uncommonly fortunate man. For in the seventeen years of these hundred years I have been privileged to serve, in some small measure, a church that has been since its inception by its builder George Pullman, a solid rock to this community of Albion.

Though over these hundred years it has undergone a progressive modification in its theology, it has remained steadfast in its faith, its quest for truth.

And though it often has changed in its number of congregants, it retains among them an honest and full resolve for the equality and the betterment of humanity. There remains something very sure and secure in this church in its Centennial year, something very certain - and that is its faith, its search for unfolding truth, its unquenchable desire and freedom to pursue that truth. This most honest of human virtues continues to be the richness of my ministry here.

It is fitting that on this unique anniversary, we remember with heartfelt gratefulness the founders of this congregation, whose work and efforts and sacrifices have brought us to this day.

And so may we remember that our loyalty and our commitment become a banner for those who, sharing our vision, come after us as the future becomes revealed.

Rev. Donald Reiddell

Rev. Lewis H. Robinson 1877-1953 is fondly remembered for saying: "Come to the Universalist Church - Cushioned seats and no Hell!"

**EXTENDED MINISTRY**

On Sept. 1, 1921 Rev. Lewis Robinson began his pastorate in the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church of Albion. It was here that he preached until March 1, 1941 when he resigned on account of ill health. "He was considered an outstanding figure in the community, a worker in every cause for righteousness, and with all, one of the most popular preachers Albion has ever had. The people of the church exceedingly regret that his health has failed to the point where he is forced to resign, and his resignation was accepted with deep regret."

Rev. Robinson was a member and Past Master of Renovation Lodge No. 97, Orleans Chapter R.A.M. and the IOOF Lodge. He was also a member of the Lions Club, served as chairman of the Albion Red Cross and was secretary of the Orleans County Fair Association.

Rev. Robinson actually served three Universalist Societies in Orleans County. Before coming to Albion and occasionally preaching at Childs he had served the Universalist Church at Clarendon.