History of the
First Unitarian Church of Rochester
1829-2024

By Bill Fugate

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Founded in 1829

The seed for the First Unitarian Church of Rochester was planted by Rev. William Ware, a minister from New York City, who preached in the village of Rochester every Sunday in December of 1828 and posted this notice in a local newspaper:

> Such persons as want a
> Unitarian Church in Rochester
> are requested to meet
> at the Clinton Hotel.[1]

Rev. Ware was scouting for good places to create new congregations for the American Unitarian Association, which had been established three years earlier by members of the Congregational Church who rejected the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (the belief that God is three persons: Jehovah, Jesus and the Holy Spirit) and who believed the significance of Jesus lay more in his teachings than in his crucifixion. The encouraging response that Rev. Ware received induced Rev. James D. Green of Massachusetts to travel to Rochester for several more weeks of preaching and organizing. With his help, the First Unitarian Society of Rochester was formally established on March 16, 1829. The congregation invited Rev. Green to stay in Rochester and become its minister, but he declined.[2]

The new congregation held services in the courthouse at first. It then purchased St. Luke's Episcopal Church's original building, a small structure they had outgrown, and moved it to the north side of what is now Main Street just west of Plymouth Avenue. First Unitarian's situation was not stable, however. Having no minister and unable to pay its debts, it was forced to sell its building in less than two years. Afterwards, it held services in rental spaces and members' homes.

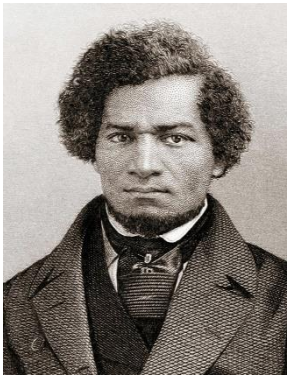
Part of the problem was the transient nature of Rochester's population after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. Rochester City Historian Blake McKelvey noted that an astonishing 70% of the people listed in the 1827 Rochester City Directory were missing from the 1834 Directory, most of them having joined the flood of people moving farther west.[3] Another issue was the Finney revival movement, which

generated such intense religious enthusiasm in western New York that the area became known as the "Burned-over District." Rochester was the center of this movement, which peaked in the early 1830s. Although this turmoil must have interfered with the life of the young Unitarian congregation, it seems also to have attracted to it at least some people who wanted a church home that wasn't based on hellfire-and-brimstone sermons.


Myron Holley

The small congregation benefited enormously from the arrival of Myron Holley, a leading abolitionist who moved to Rochester in 1837. Earlier, he had been the treasurer for the construction of the Erie Canal, living on horseback for much of that eight-year project as he oversaw a multitude of local contracts scattered along its 350-mile length. He was also the main force behind the creation of the abolitionist Liberty Party in 1840, a small third party that was created to force the two major parties to address the issue of slavery. This new party had to overcome resistance from the American Anti-Slavery Society, which rejected politics as a means of abolishing slavery and instead encouraged the use of "moral suasion" to convince those who enslaved others that what they were doing was wrong.

Frederick Douglass, an African American abolitionist leader who had escaped from enslavement, moved to Rochester in 1847 to publish a newspaper called *The North Star*. Four years later, he too challenged the policies of the American Anti-Slavery Society by abandoning the strategy of moral suasion and turning to political action. Douglass acknowledged Holley's work in his autobiography, saying, "The ground had been measurably prepared for me by the labor of others – notably Hon. Myron Holley."[4]


Frederick Douglass

Like his brother Horace, a Unitarian minister in Boston, Myron Holley was a committed Unitarian. A talented public speaker, Holley attracted newcomers to First Unitarian through his sermons, which he ably delivered even though he had no training as a minister and was not ordained. Rev. Newton Mann, author of the church's first history, said that Holley was the person, "to whom, by common consent of the generation now passing away, more than to any other the actual establishment of our cause in Rochester is due."[5]

Revitalized in 1841

Holley died in 1841. The congregation had grown and strengthened under his unofficial leadership, but it was still small and not properly organized. The Watts and Briggs families, Unitarians related by marriage who had moved to Rochester from the anti-slavery stronghold of New Bedford, Massachusetts, were especially active in resolving this issue. James and Martha Delano Watts[6] arranged for Rev. Storer of the Syracuse Unitarian Church to come to Rochester for several Sundays in 1841 to preach and help create a proper church organization. Congregational leaders created a board of trustees and signed legal papers to establish First Unitarian as a religious corporation.[7] James Watts was one of two signers of the legal papers, and John Briggs was a member of the new board of trustees. Both families provided much-needed financial support to the church. James and Martha Watts hosted the first meeting of the reorganized congregation in their home.[8]

In 1842, twenty-two-year-old Rufus Ellis agreed to come to Rochester from Massachusetts to be First Unitarian's minister for a one-year period. He led the campaign to raise $6000 for a new church building, which was constructed the following year on North Fitzhugh Street in a lot adjacent to today's Downtown United Presbyterian Church.

Buildings on North Fitzhugh Street in Rochester in the early 1850s, looking east
The Genesee River flows under the Main Street bridge at top right and disappears from view at the Upper Falls at top left. The Presbyterian Church occupied part of the site of today's much larger Downtown United Presbyterian Church (DUPC). The Quaker Meeting House (not labeled) was on the far side of Fitzhugh Street between the Presbyterian and Unitarian Churches. The Unitarian Church was the site of the world's second Women's Rights Convention in 1848 (see below).[9]

Rev. Ellis lodged at the home of Dr. Matthew Brown, the president of the congregation. Rev. Ellis spoke highly of Brown in his *Memoir*, saying that he was, "a man of large mind and large heart, and of most unstinted hospitality. The house was not many-storied, and what stories there were were very low; but it covered a large piece of ground, and took in a multitude, the Doctor's own household and strangers too; and it was a charming home for all of us, the Doctor's wife and her sister the ruling and regulating powers."[10]

Brown was the first chairman of the Monroe County Board of Town Supervisors.[11] He and his brother Francis developed Brown's Race, the canal that delivered waterpower to factories and mills near the waterfall in Rochester's downtown. Brown was a vigorous and effective opponent of slavery. On the day in 1827 when enslaved people in New York State were emancipated by law, a delegation of local African Americans visited Brown to thank him for his work in securing that legislation.[12] It isn't clear why Brown, who was originally a Presbyterian, decided to join the Unitarians. Perhaps he was uncomfortable with the intense religiosity generated by the Finney revival movement.[13]

Frederick W. Holland, who became First Unitarian's minister in 1843, further stabilized the congregation and increased its membership. He left after five years to assume leadership of the American Unitarian Association.[14]

Influx of Progressive Quakers

Dissention within the Hicksite branch of the Quakers had a major impact on First Unitarian during this period. Increasing numbers of Quakers were becoming active in abolitionist organizations despite the objections of many of their co-religionists who believed they should not mix with non-Quakers any more than necessary. In 1848, tension reached a breaking point at a regional meeting of Quakers in what is

now the 1816 Quaker Meetinghouse Museum, about 15 miles north of Canandaigua. About two hundred Quakers (officially known as the Religious Society of Friends) left their congregations in western New York to form an organization called the Friends of Human Progress. The new organization declared its membership to be open, in its words, to "Christians, Jews, Mahammedans, and Pagans." (The American Unitarian Association adopted a similar non-creedal policy after much controversy some four decades later.) Among its early members were several non-Quakers, including Frederick Douglass; Samuel May, the minister of the Unitarian Church in Syracuse;[15] and a young advocate of women's rights from Seneca Falls named Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Several of these progressive Quakers eventually became part of First Unitarian, including the Anthony family and the now-famous Susan B. Anthony. An earlier history of the First Unitarian says, "Our church was probably by strong majority abolitionist, an earnest group of Hicksite Quakers having attached themselves to the church ... the Anthonys, Hallowells, Willises, Posts, Fishes, etc."[16] The church was fairly small at the time, so their presence made a big difference. The incoming Quakers probably were attracted to First Unitarian partly because they were already working in the abolitionist movement with some of its members, including Maria Porter, who operated a boarding house that was a key station on the Underground Railroad in Rochester. They were also attracted by Unitarianism's support for freedom of thought and by its lack of rigid doctrine, practices that allowed them to retain much of their Quaker identity and beliefs if they chose to do so.

The congregation included several people who were familiar with Unitarian churches in other cities that had experienced a similar influx of Quakers. The Unitarian Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, with which the Watts and Briggs families had associated before moving to Rochester, had welcomed a group of liberal Quakers in the 1820s. The Unitarian Church in Philadelphia, to which Maria Porter and other members of her family had belonged before moving to Rochester,[17] had experienced much the same thing a few years later. The outcome in both cases was encouraging, so the Rochester Unitarians were well prepared to welcome the newcomers into their congregation.

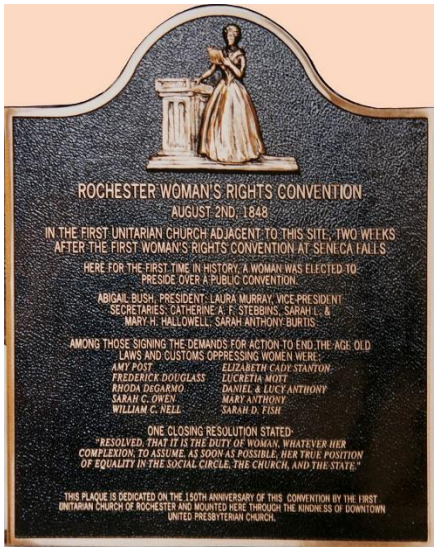
Some of these new members, including at least one non-Quaker, had been part of a commune (they called it a phalanx) at Sodus Bay, about 40 miles east of Rochester. After the commune disbanded, its leader, Benjamin Fish, returned to Rochester with his family and joined First Unitarian along with several other members of the commune.[18]

Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian

Only a month after the Friends of Human Progress was formed by progressive Quakers, three women from that group joined forces with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott to organize the world's first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, the reverberations of which are still being felt today. Frederick Douglass played a major role in this convention by vigorously supporting Stanton's call for women's right to vote, the most contentious issue at the convention.

Two weeks later, on August 2, 1848, another historic event occurred, this time at the Unitarian Church in Rochester where a follow-up women's rights convention was organized by women from this same group who had begun attending services there. Frederick Douglass, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton participated in this convention also. Its organizers nominated a woman to chair the convention, something the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention had felt was too daring for a gathering that included both men and women. The Women's Rights Convention at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester was the first convention of both women and men in U.S. history to elect a woman as its chair.

A plaque commemorating this event is attached to the wall of today's Downtown United Presbyterian Church near the site of First Unitarian's old church building. It was placed there on the 150th anniversary of the convention through the efforts of Colleen Hurst, First Unitarian's historian.



Plaque at the site of the Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian

Women at that time were expected to let men speak for them. A few years earlier, when the Female Moral Reform Society of Philadelphia asked for permission to hold their annual conference in a church there, they were told that they must bring in one man to preside over the conference and another to read the reports that the women had prepared.[19] The idea of a woman chairing a public meeting (and even potentially ruling a man out of order!) would have been considered outrageous by most people at the time. Years later, Susan B. Anthony observed, "No advanced step taken by women has been so bitterly contested as that of speaking in public. For nothing which they have attempted, not even to secure the suffrage, have they been so abused, condemned and antagonized."[20]

Susan B. and Mary Anthony

Susan B. Anthony and her sister Mary Stafford Anthony were raised as Quakers, but their religious roots were mixed. Their father was a radical Quaker who repeatedly found himself at odds with his strict congregation and who eventually decided to leave. Their mother had been a Baptist before marriage, and her father was a Universalist.

Mary Anthony and her parents attended the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian. Susan was teaching school at the time in Canajoharie, a small town in central New York, and missed both of these conventions. She ended her teaching career not long afterwards and returned to her parents' farm just outside Rochester, embedding herself in a community that was a hotbed of social reform activity. She eventually began working full-time for progressive causes, first becoming the New York state agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society and later the most prominent leader of the women's suffrage movement.


Susan B. Anthony about 1855

Neither of the Anthony sisters ever married. Whatever their reasons, their status as unmarried women gave them legal advantages that most women did not have. According to *Blackstone's Commentaries*, on which much of the American legal system of that time was based, "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage." If Susan B. Anthony had married, she would not have been allowed, for example, to sign legal contracts for lecture halls during her speaking tours; her husband's signature would have been required instead.

Mary Anthony strongly supported her sister's career of social activism. She maintained a home in Rochester where Susan could rest during pauses in her busy traveling schedule, and she assisted her sister's reform projects. A teacher in Rochester's public school system, Mary was eventually promoted to principal. She demanded and received the same pay as a man in that position, an unusual achievement for the time.[21] She was also a busy presence at First Unitarian. Susan B. Anthony's authorized biography says of Mary that, "Every line of the varied activities of the Unitarian Church received her assistance."[22] The house where Susan B. and Mary Anthony lived is now the centerpiece of the National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House.


Mary Anthony

Susan B. Anthony, likewise a member of First Unitarian, expressed religious views that would not be out of place in the congregation today. In a newspaper interview, she said, "Work and worship are one with me. I cannot imagine a God of the universe made happy by my getting down on my knees and calling him 'great.'"[23] An agnostic,[24] Anthony said that when her dying sister, Hannah, asked her to talk about the afterlife, "I could not dash her faith with my doubts, nor could I pretend a faith I had not; so I was silent in the dread presence of death."[25]

Frederick Douglass and First Unitarian

When Frederick Douglass chose Rochester as the city where he would publish *The North Star*, his abolitionist newspaper, he did so largely because he had dependable allies there. Rochester's African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church supported his work: Douglass printed the early issues of his newspaper in its basement. He also had supporters in the Bethel Free Church, which was founded primarily by anti-slavery Presbyterians who had withdrawn from existing congregations.

Another congregation that Douglass could always go to for support was the First Unitarian Church, which had several members who campaigned alongside him for the rights of African Americans and women. Some of them, including Susan B. Anthony, played major roles in these struggles. Others helped in smaller ways. Catherine Fish Stebbins, for example, was the first manager of the abolitionist reading room above the office of Douglass's newspaper, a room that provided tracts and other reading material for the public as well as a meeting place for activists.

When Douglass encountered racial barriers while trying to buy a house in Rochester, John and Lemira Kedzie, members of First Unitarian, agreed to sell him their home on Alexander Street. It had abolitionists as neighbors on both sides, providing a degree of protection to the Douglass family from the threat of racist attacks.[26]

In addition to being his allies in the struggle for social justice, several members of First Unitarian were Douglass's personal friends, especially the progressive Quakers who had begun to associate with the church. Douglass and his family often joined their Sunday afternoon gatherings at the Anthony farm, which was located about a mile west of today's University of Rochester campus, near the intersection of what is now Brooks Avenue and Genesee Park Boulevard.[27]

It seems likely that Douglass was already acquainted with the members of First Unitarian who came to Rochester from New Bedford, Massachusetts, including John and Sophia Kempton Briggs, and Sophia's sister Deborah Kempton Watts. New Bedford was the abolitionist stronghold where Douglass had first

settled after he escaped from enslavement in the south and where he had gained fame as a speaker against slavery. Douglass must have been delighted to share stories with them about friends they all knew there.

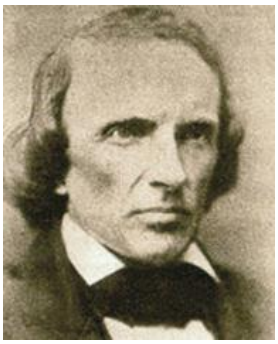
Frank and Sarah Colman Blackall, members of First Unitarian, were close friends of Douglass, who in his autobiography described Frank as "a friend and frequent visitor at my house."[28] Frank kept the books for Douglass's rental properties in Rochester after Douglass moved to Washington following the Civil War. When Douglass published his autobiography, he gave Sarah the gold pen he wrote it with.[29]

First Unitarian and the Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad was in full operation at the time, assisting self-emancipated African Americans on their dangerous journey from southern states to freedom in Canada. Some Underground Railroad networks operated entirely within the black community, but there was a strong multi-racial network in the Rochester area under the leadership of Frederick Douglass.

The Underground Railroad was illegal, of course, which is why it was "underground." Not everyone at First Unitarian supported it, but at least eight of its families are known to have been active in it.[30] The Anthony farm was a stop on the Underground Railroad. One entry in Susan B. Anthony's diary simply says, "Fitted out a fugitive slave for Canada with the help of Harriet Tubman."

Rev. William Henry Channing


William H. Channing

William Henry Channing was First Unitarian's minister from 1852 to 1854, with a salary of $1200 per year. He stayed at church member Maria Porter's boarding house, the one that also quietly served as a station on the Underground Railroad for African Americans who were on their way to freedom in Canada.

The Anthonys were especially fond of Rev. Channing. Mary Anthony said, "The liberal preaching of William Henry Channing in 1852 proved so satisfactory that it was not long before this was our accepted church home."[31] Susan B. Anthony's close friend and co-worker, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, said that Anthony "first found words to express her convictions in listening to Rev. William Henry Channing, whose teaching had a lasting spiritual influence upon her."[32]

Channing once summarized his philosophy of life in words that were posted on parlor walls in many homes and sewn into needlework samplers. Known as "Channing's Symphony," it reads:

> To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to listen to stars and birds, babes and sages, with open heart; to study hard; to think quietly, act frankly, talk gently, await occasions, hurry never; in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common – this is my symphony.[33]

Channing strongly supported the fight against slavery. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass recalled, "One of the few it was my privilege to call upon, and to call upon often, was Rev. W. H. Channing. His

congregation was small, and his salary not large, but he gave like a prince."[34] Also a supporter of women's rights, Channing was elected as one of two vice presidents of the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850, and he was a member of the committee that organized other national women's rights conventions in the following years. In 1853, Channing helped Susan B. Anthony organize a local Women's Rights Convention in Rochester, one of her earliest actions for women's rights. Before moving to Rochester, Channing had been a leader of the Boston Union of Associationists, which supported communes like the one at Sodus Bay. In later years, he became Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Tumultuous 1850s

Rev. Channing, unfortunately, left after only two years at First Unitarian, disheartened by conflicts within the congregation. Rev. Newton Mann's history of the church says that at that time, "There were persons of extreme and pronounced opinions, sharply opposed to each other on political and social questions," and that "the frequent Society-meetings continued tempestuous, and seem to have been held chiefly to give the factions a chance at each other."

There were several sources of conflict. As in other Unitarian congregations, there would have been disagreements over theological issues. Did the Bible contain mistakes, as some scholars were beginning to say? Were miracles real?

Spiritualism was another source of contention. This widespread movement began near Rochester in 1848 when two young sisters claimed they could communicate with the dead by interpreting mysterious tapping sounds. (Years later, one of them admitted it was a hoax.) Several members of the church considered spiritualism to be a scientific breakthrough much like telegraphy, the newly developed method of communicating over long distances by tapping messages in Morse code. Most members, however, were not interested, and some denounced spiritualism as a mixture of fraud and self-delusion.

The most disruptive causes of conflict, however, were disagreements over social and political issues, such as women's rights and especially slavery. It is possible that not all members of the congregation opposed slavery. Even those who abhorred it held sharply different opinions about what should be done. Some would have been satisfied simply with blocking attempts to expand slavery into other parts of the country. Others hoped to eliminate slavery entirely, but only through "moral suasion," not by outlawing it. The "radicals" wanted to make slavery illegal throughout the nation, which created anxiety among those who thought that attempting to do so would lead to a disastrous conflict.

Some of the more radical abolitionists, including Susan B. Anthony, thought that the northern states might need to separate from the southern states to protect themselves from the growing power of those states within the national government. Early in 1861, just weeks before the southern states began to secede from the union, she and others organized public meetings throughout New York state under banners that read "No Compromise with Slaveholders - Immediate and Unconditional Emancipation" and "No Union with Slaveholders." Mobs shut down their meetings in every town from Buffalo to Albany, and the police in Rochester had to escort Anthony and other speakers from the assembly hall for their own safety.

It is remarkable that so many members of First Unitarian proudly described themselves as abolitionists, an unpopular label at the time. Writing in the 1930s, Dexter Perkins, the Rochester City Historian, said,

"One has only to read the newspapers of that day to realize that 'abolitionist' was a word of much the same sinister connotation that 'communist' is for many people today."[35]

Even more remarkably, First Unitarian was a stronghold of two *rival* abolitionist organizations. Many of the church members who came from Quaker backgrounds were members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. This radical organization included men and women as well as blacks and whites. That, of course, upset traditionalists within the community, who did not like the idea of men and women mingling together in public or of blacks and whites mingling together. They were scandalized at the idea of mixing men, women, blacks and whites all together in one room. This abolitionist group advocated moral suasion rather than politics as a means of ending slavery, as did Frederick Douglass initially. That approach was especially appealing to Quakers, many of whom at that time did not believe in voting or other forms of political activity. This group helped raise funds for Frederick Douglass's newspaper, but when Douglass switched his abolitionist activity from moral suasion to political action, it switched its fund-raising efforts from his newspaper to one in Boston that supported moral suasion.

A new organization, called the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, promptly arose to continue raising funds for Douglass's newspaper. Several of its members were from First Unitarian, whose earliest leaders, such as Matthew Brown and Myron Holley, had engaged in political action against slavery. Maria Porter, for example, was the treasurer of the new organization, and her sister Almira, was a member of its executive board. In addition to raising money for Douglass's newspaper, the new organization sponsored his speeches in Rochester. On July 5, 1852, the day after the annual Independence Day celebrations, it rented Rochester's Corinthian Hall so Douglass could deliver what became his most famous speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"[36]

Conflict within the church increased when the minister hired by the congregation in 1848 to replace Rev. Holland revealed that he was strongly pro-slavery. He didn't last long, of course, but, according to Rev. Holland, his predecessor, the uproar he created "very nearly destroyed the Society." Holland, who had been unaware of the incoming minister's views, said he had advised him, "not to attack any of the great reforms of the day; that if he did, he would surely knock his head against a post because the society was permanently committed to these humane enterprises and would not be driven from them. He was foolish enough to do this very thing … Not even William Henry Channing could recover the church from the injury and disgrace inflicted by this unworthy and unprincipled man."[37] For several years afterwards, the divided congregation shrank in size and experienced a high turnover of ministers,[38] some of whom left simply because the congregation could not pay their salary. The church eventually fell into a state of near-paralysis.

In 1859, the ever-energetic Susan B. Anthony attempted to start a new congregation, a "Free church in Rochester … where no doctrines should be preached and all should be welcome."[39] Anthony said she modeled her proposed church on the one in Boston led by Theodore Parker, a radical abolitionist[40] and a Unitarian minister who helped set the direction of the denomination by questioning the authority of the Bible and the validity of miracles. Anthony abandoned her project after a trial run of several meetings failed to attract enough potential members. Significantly, her church, had it been successful, would have resembled the one that First Unitarian itself evolved into after the Civil War.

First Unitarian's building was destroyed by fire in November 1859. The exhausted congregation drifted with no minister, no building, and no regular services throughout the Civil War, which ended in 1865. Its leadership structure remained in place, however, enabling the church to begin restoring normal activities after the war had ended.

Protecting Frederick Douglass

In a dramatic story that first came fully to light more than 150 years after the event, members of First Unitarian helped to protect Frederick Douglass at a perilous moment in his life. In the period just before the Civil War, an abolitionist named John Brown led an unsuccessful attack on the U.S. armory at Harper's Ferry in Virginia, intending to seize weapons and spark a slave uprising. Brown and six of his companions were executed for their role in the attack.

Douglass knew of Brown's plans, having discussed them with him at length. He declined to support the attack on Harper's Ferry, however, and was lecturing in Philadelphia when the attack took place. Even so, law enforcement officials sent a telegram to the sheriff in Philadelphia with instructions to arrest Douglass as a collaborator with Brown. The message was received there by a telegraph operator named John Hurn, a former member of the Sodus commune who had lived in Rochester. He had family members and close friends who were members of First Unitarian, and he had almost certainly attended services there with them.[41] Risking severe legal penalties, Hurn notified Douglass of the danger he was in and delayed delivery of the telegram until he had time to slip across the river into New Jersey.

Douglass, knowing he had papers in his home in Rochester that could be used against him, sent an unsigned telegram to his close friend Frank Blackall, a telegraph operator in Rochester who was a member of First Unitarian, that simply said, "Tell Lewis (my oldest son) to secure all the important papers in my high desk." Blackall, knowing that Douglass's oldest son was named Lewis, understood the anonymous message and conveyed it to members of the Douglass family, who ensured that the papers would not be found.[42]

Because Douglass was easily recognized through his fame as a public speaker, he decided to return to Rochester surreptitiously and make plans for leaving the country. Amy and Isaac Post, Underground Railroad activists with close ties to First Unitarian, secretly conveyed him on the first part his flight to Canada. Douglass was met there and taken to safety by William Hallowell, a member of First Unitarian who happened to be in Canada on business. Douglass traveled from there to Britain where he remained until it was safe to return. One can only imagine the tragic – and momentous – consequences if things had gone differently. None of the earlier histories of First Unitarian tell of this secretive activity. Probably very few people knew about it. Many of the details appeared for the first time in a biography of Amy Post published in 2018 that included information discovered in letters and other original materials.[43]

Rochester Activists on the National Stage

Susan B. Anthony moved to New York City during the Civil War and, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, founded the Women's Loyal National League, the first national women's political organization in the U.S. Anthony was the chief organizer of the League's petition drive in support of a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery. Some 2,000 women collected nearly 400,000 signatures on this petition, representing about one out of every twenty-four adults in the Northern states. The largest petition drive in the nation's history up to that time, it significantly assisted the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, which ended slavery.

Fully embarked on her career as a full-time activist, Anthony lived without a home of her own for about thirty years, staying mostly with other activists in cities across the country. After the Civil War, she

focused her energy primarily on achieving women's right to vote. She returned to Rochester frequently, staying with her sister Mary and attending services with her at First Unitarian.

Frederick Douglass helped the war effort by playing a major role in recruiting African Americans, including his sons Lewis and Charles, into the Union army.[44] Douglass and his family relocated to Washington D. C. in 1872. Later in life, he became the United States's consul-general to Haiti.

Anthony and Douglass were allies on most but not all issues. Notably, they disagreed about the proposed Fifteenth Amendment, which declared that the right to vote could not be denied because of race. Anthony was furious because the amendment did not also declare that the right to vote could not be denied because of sex, something she felt had been promised by abolitionist leaders, who were now a powerful force in Congress. She opposed the amendment, holding out for one that would provide universal suffrage regardless of race or sex.[45] Her great rival in the women's suffrage movement, Lucy Stone (who was a member of a Unitarian Church in Massachusetts), was also gravely disappointed, but she supported the amendment, saying, "I will be thankful in my soul if *any* body can get out of the terrible pit." Tragically, even after its ratification, the Fifteenth Amendment was eventually thwarted in southern states, where the great majority of African Americans lived, by white supremacists who used intimidation and violence to prevent them from exercising their constitutional right to vote.


Sallie Holley

Sallie Holley, the daughter of Myron Holley, one of First Unitarian's founders, was a member of the church as a young adult. Rev. Holland, the minister at the time, urged her to enroll at Oberlin College, which had recently become the first in the country to admit women. He gave her $40, a significant sum in those days, to help pay for tuition. There she met her life partner Caroline Putnam, who was also a Unitarian.[46] After the Civil War, they moved to Virginia and founded the Holley School, which served African Americans who had been freed from enslavement. The school became the life work for both women. Children attended the school during the day, and adults during the evening. After Holley died in 1893, control of the school passed to Putnam. When she died, control passed to an African American board of directors who continued the work of the school.

Rebuilding after the Civil War

Frederick W. Holland, the minister who had done much to solidify First Unitarian during the 1840s, returned in 1865 to pull the congregation together once again. The most pressing issue was the construction of a new building, but the demoralized congregation found it difficult to raise the necessary funds. The board of trustees decided not even to attempt the project unless $10,000 was raised in advance. The fund drive faltered well short of that goal, but help came from an unforeseen source. According to Holland, "Mrs. Jonathan Watson saved me by her unexpected generosity from being crushed, when I had become sick by over-effort and refusal of aid. Let her $4,000 be held in ever grateful remembrance."[47] The new building was completed in 1866.

Elizabeth Lowe Watson and her husband Jonathan became members of First Unitarian after moving to Rochester in 1864 from Titusville, Pennsylvania, where Jonathan's father had become wealthy after the world's first oil wells were drilled there. Like some other members of First Unitarian, Elizabeth was a spiritualist. She also supported abolitionism and women's rights, and she enthusiastically worked with other social activists in the church, including Susan B. Anthony. Apparently, the Watsons moved to

Rochester for no other reason than to be with its community of Unitarians, spiritualists and social activists, and perhaps to be with Susan B. Anthony in particular. Jonathan, unfortunately, liked to gamble. After he lost most of the money he had inherited, Elizabeth divorced him and moved to California. She eventually was elected president of the California Equal Suffrage Association and found herself once again working with Susan B. Anthony whenever Anthony's campaign for women's suffrage took her to California.[48]

First Unitarian's new church was dedicated in January 1866. The lot cost $5,000, and the building cost $8,600. It was located where City Hall offices are today on North Fitzhugh Street, a short distance from the site of First Unitarian's previous building before it burned.

First Unitarian's 1866 building

Clay MacCauley became First Unitarian's minister as a young man in 1868 but stayed for only one year. He later became the leader of a long-term Unitarian mission to Japan that was based on the respectful and mutual exchange of ideas. He was personally honored there by the Japanese emperor.[49]

Rev. Newton Mann

Newton Mann

First Unitarian chose Newton Mann as its minister in 1870, marking the beginning of a long and much-needed period of stability and growth. Under his leadership, the church began to resemble the one that Susan B. Anthony had attempted to start in 1859.[50] Rev. Mann advocated what he called a rational approach to the Bible, which, he said, would make it more appealing by giving it "a purely human quality which quite atones for all the mistakes it contains."[51] Rather than teaching that religion should be based on a narrow creed, he once said:

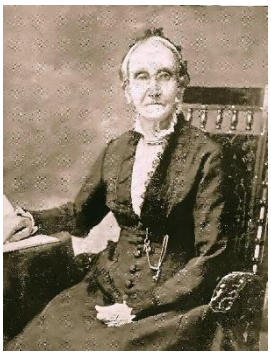
> "The best religion is that goodness which is so sweet and so perfectly natural that it is never suspected of being religion."[52]

Deeply interested in science, Rev. Mann owned a telescope and served a term as president of the Rochester Academy of Science. He was the first minister in the country to preach in favor of Darwin's theory of evolution, having done so only two years after Darwin's theory was published and before First Unitarian chose him as its minister. Believing the scope of evolutionary theory should be expanded, he asserted that people's souls evolve as they become aware of their spiritual environment and develop their spiritual abilities.[53]

In his 1881 history of First Unitarian, Rev. Mann noted that the church had changed since it adopted a seal 40 years earlier that featured the Bible and the words "Our Creed." He said the seal was, "of interest as showing the theological position then taken.[54] Church members clearly had been flexible in

adjusting their theology in response to new ideas about such things as evolution and the authorship of the Bible, ideas that were creating serious disturbances in other religious organizations. Many of those who had been leaders of the church when the seal was adopted (George Danforth, Maria Porter, Deborah Kempton Watts, etc.) remained loyal members throughout this shift in theology and most likely helped bring it about. Watts showed her continued loyalty by leaving $2000, a substantial portion of her entire estate, to the church after she died in 1880.

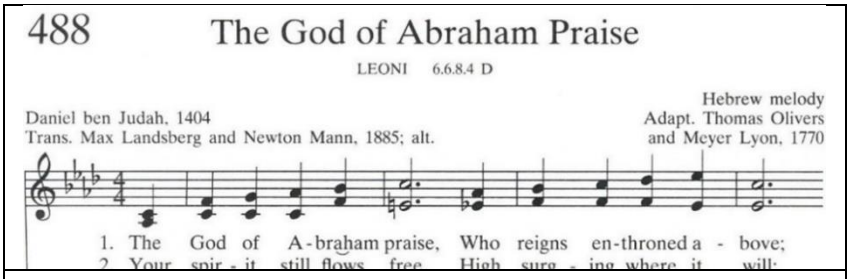
Also untraditional in politics, Rev. Mann was a socialist. Later in life, he wrote *Import and Outlook of Socialism*, which includes a chapter called "Socialism the Applied Ethics of Jesus."[55] One section of that chapter is titled "Socialism the Real Second Coming of Christ."


Amy Post

Amy Post, who was in many ways the center of the community of progressive Quakers in Rochester, began attending services regularly at First Unitarian during Rev. Mann's ministry. She had been loosely associated with it earlier, and some of her adult children had already joined the church and were occupying positions of responsibility within it. She and her husband Isaac were spiritualists, he especially so. After his death, she attended church at First Unitarian with her children until her death in 1889,[56] although she does not appear to have become a member. Funeral services for both Amy and Isaac were held at First Unitarian. The Posts are credited with assisting more people on the Underground Railroad than anyone else in Rochester, having been part of that effort since its early days. After the Civil War, she was active in the National Liberal League, which opposed laws such as those that required the Bible to be read in public schools, and she was on the Executive Committee of the Freethinkers Association, which welcomed unorthodox religious views, including agnosticism and atheism.

Rev. Mann almost died of pleurisy in 1889. On the advice of his physician, he left First Unitarian and rested for a year in Europe. Afterwards, he became the minister of the Unitarian Church in Omaha, where he continued to preach the importance of evolution.

"Extremely Close" Ties with Temple B'rith Kodesh


488 The God of Abraham Praise

LEONI 6.6.8.4 D

Daniel ben Judah, 1404
Trans. Max Landsberg and Newton Mann, 1885; alt.

Hebrew melody
Adapt. Thomas Olivers and Meyer Lyon, 1770

1. The God of A-braham praise, Who reigns en-throned a - bove;
2. Your spir - it still flows free High sure - ing where it will;

Hymn 488 in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*
translated by Rabbi Max Landsberg and Rev. Newton Mann

Rev. Mann formed a close friendship with Rabbi Max Landsberg of Temple B'rith Kodesh, Rochester's first Jewish congregation and today the city's largest congregation of Reform Judaism. Mann, who was fluent in Hebrew, assisted Landsberg, whose birth language was German, with his project of translating Hebrew hymns into English. One of those hymns, "The God of Abraham Praise," was included in Reform Judaism's *Union Hymnal for Jewish Worship* and in some Christian hymnals as well. In today's *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990), it is hymn 488.

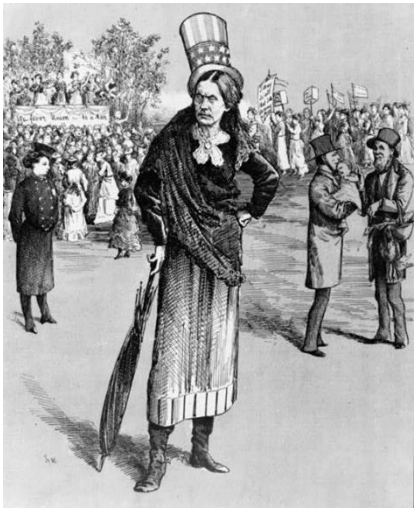
Peter Eisenstadt's history of B'rith Kodesh describes the relationship between that congregation and First Unitarian during this period as "extremely close."[57] In 1870, soon after Mann arrived in Rochester,

Temple B'rith Kodesh invited him to give an evening lecture there. This interfaith event, the first of its type in Rochester, was one of the issues that led to a formal split between reformers and traditionalists within B'rith Kodesh and, according to *The Jewish Community in Rochester* by Stuart Rosenberg, "shook the Jewish community in America and even had reverberations abroad."[58] Mann and Landsberg regularly exchanged pulpits, each delivering the sermon for the other's congregation. In 1874, the two congregations joined with the First Universalist Church to hold a Union Thanksgiving Day service, beginning an annual tradition. With the addition of other congregations, it continues today and is thought to be the oldest such interfaith service in the country.[59] In 1884, Rabbi Landsberg occupied the pulpit at First Unitarian for seven weeks while Mann was ill, attracting visitors from other religions and, according to a history of Rochester published later that year, leading to speculation about the development of a universal church.[60] Temple B'rith Kodesh held its worship services at First Unitarian for several weeks in 1909 after their building was destroyed by fire.

According to B'rith Kodesh's website, the congregation in its earlier days chose not to practice many aspects of traditional Judaism. Instead of holding services on the Sabbath (which begins at sundown on Friday), for example, B'rith Kodesh held services on Sunday mornings, and it did not treat the High Holy Days as special occasions. Unitarians, with their belief that Jesus was an important Jewish teacher but not God, were seen by many members of B'rith Kodesh as followers of a religion not so very different from their own, and many members of First Unitarian felt the same way about B'rith Kodesh. Imagine that you took a time machine back to Rochester in 1880 and informed people there that First Unitarian and one other Rochester congregation would be part of the same national religious organization in less than a century. If you asked them to guess what that other congregation would be, some would have correctly named the First Universalist Church, but others would have confidently predicted Temple B'rith Kodesh. It was only over a long period that B'rith Kodesh gradually revived traditional Jewish religious practices while at the same time retaining its progressive atmosphere.

Susan B. Anthony Arrested for Voting

Susan B. Anthony returned to Rochester just before the presidential elections of 1872 and convinced election inspectors in her ward that the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed equal protection to all citizens, implicitly gave women the right to vote. When the news spread that Anthony had succeeded in registering to vote, some forty to fifty other women in Rochester also attempted to do so, some successfully and some not. At least nine of those who made this attempt, and almost certainly more, were associated with First Unitarian. They included Elizabeth "Eliza" Mann, the minister's wife, who attempted to register in her ward but was turned away.[62]



"The Woman Who Dared" This political cartoon of Susan B. Anthony during her trial in 1873 implies that her demands would lead to such "absurdities" as women police officers and men caring for babies.[61]

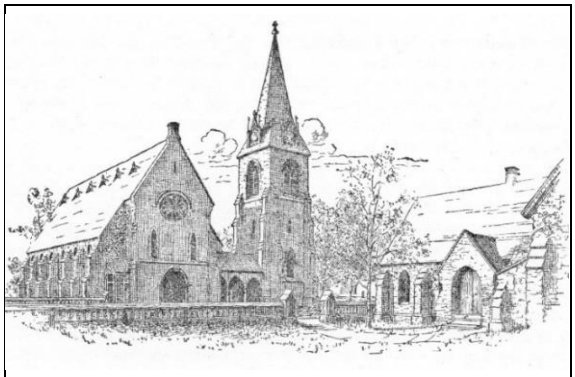
On election day, fifteen women cast their ballots. All were later arrested, but only Susan B. Anthony was subsequently brought to trial. Her trial in Canandaigua was a national sensation, presided over by a Supreme Court Justice working within the now-obsolete Federal Circuit Court System. The trial was widely considered to have elements of farce. Reporting on the trial, the *New York Times* dryly noted that, "It was conceded that the defendant was, on the 5th November, 1872, a woman." After the two days of testimony had been

completed, Justice Hunt refused to let the jurors discuss the case and instead directed them to find Anthony guilty. After reading a verdict that he had prepared beforehand, he fined Anthony $100 (which she never paid). At the end of the trial, during which Anthony had been prevented from speaking, he asked her if she had anything to say. She most certainly did. Over his angry objections, she responded with the most famous speech in the history of the fight for women's suffrage, excoriating him and laws that discriminated against women in scathing language that was widely circulated for years afterward.[63]

In the period leading up to the trial, Rochester women created the Women's Taxpayers Association to support Anthony and to promote women's right to vote. Its name referred to the "No taxation without representation" slogan of the American Revolution. Affiliated with Anthony's National Woman Suffrage Association, it was the first women's suffrage organization in Rochester. Its president, Lewia C. Smith, and its vice-president, Mary L. Hebard, were both members of First Unitarian.

In 1878, the National Woman Suffrage Association held its national convention at the church to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Women's Rights Conventions at Seneca Falls and the First Unitarian Church of Rochester. Participants at this convention included Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth, an African American abolitionist and women's rights activist.

Move to Another Building in 1883



Temple Street building, with Gannett House across the street at right

In 1883, the church sold its building on North Fitzhugh Street to the U.S. Government, which demolished it to make way for a federal office building. First Unitarian's new home was the building that had previously been the home of the Third Presbyterian Church. The purchase included an additional building across the street with a chapel and dining room, a building that played an important role in congregational life during the coming years. The buildings were located on Temple Street (which no longer exists) in the space later occupied mostly by the Xerox Tower (now called Innovation Square). The First Universalist Church was just around the corner.

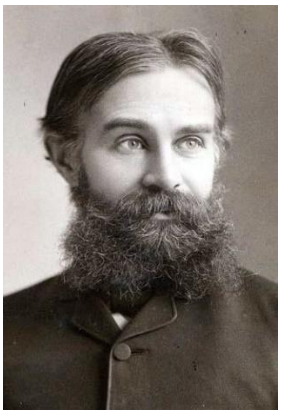
Temple Street building interior

The building was architecturally significant, having been designed by Richard Upjohn, the first president of the American Institute of Architects. Ironically, Upjohn had once turned down an offer to design a church for a Unitarian congregation in Boston. According to his great-grandson, Upjohn decided, "that he, as a staunch Episcopalian and consequently Trinitarian, could not design a building to serve as a place of worship for a body whose beliefs were so at variance with his own." First Unitarian's newly acquired building had a solemn, traditional atmosphere that was designed for a religious outlook very different from the Unitarian readiness to challenge conventional ideas.

Rev. William C. Gannett's National Role

William Channing Gannett had played an important role in the development of Unitarianism before he became First Unitarian's minister in 1889. While he was a young student at Harvard, he had often walked into Boston to hear the preaching of Theodore Parker, the radical Unitarian minister whose congregation had been the model for the "free church" that Susan B. Anthony had tried to establish. Parker's questioning of the validity of miracles and the divine authorship of the Bible had shocked many Unitarians at first, but that kind of questioning had since become part of Unitarian life. Similarly, the denomination had become more open to the admiration that Ralph Waldo Emerson, an influential Unitarian philosopher, was expressing for the wisdom that could be found in Buddhist and Hindu texts. Building on developments like these, a movement began to develop among Unitarians, especially the younger ministers, to acknowledge the fundamental similarities of all religions.

Traditionalists resisted this trend. At a contentious Unitarian national conference in 1866, they convinced a majority to adopt what amounted to a Unitarian creed, one that was exclusively Christian. Supposedly, this creed represented the beliefs of Unitarians in general, but that was impossible for a religious organization whose members were exploring such a variety of ideas. This unrepresentative creed created controversy and ill feelings for an entire generation.


William C. Gannett

Deeply involved in this controversy, Rev. Gannett was on the executive committee of the Free Religious Association (FRA), which was founded primarily by Unitarians who were appalled by the idea of a Unitarian creed. With a mission of supporting the free exploration of religious ideas and encouraging people to see what the world's religions had in common, the FRA attracted Unitarians, Universalists, Quakers, Jews, Spiritualists and others into its organization.[64] It was deeply influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom one historian described as "the first member and the unofficial patriarch of the F. R. A."[65] Emerson, a Transcendentalist, believed that people everywhere have a profound inner spiritual strength and intuition that often goes untapped. He said he was one of those, "who do not wonder that there was a Christ, but that there were not a thousand."[66]

Rev. Gannett became a leader of the growing movement among Unitarians to dispense with a creed and instead unite on an "Ethical Basis." This movement was significantly boosted by the popularity of a short text written by Rev. Gannett called "The Things Most Commonly Believed Today Among Us," which includes these words:

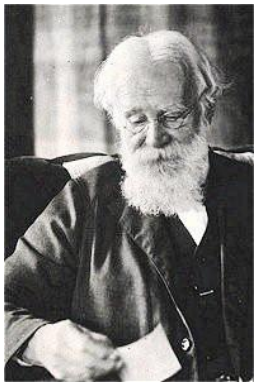
> All names that divide religion are to us of little consequence compared with religion itself. Whoever loves truth and loves the good is, in a broad sense, of our religious fellowship; whoever loves the one or lives the other better than ourselves is our teacher, whatever church or age he may belong to.[67]

The eventual success of this movement at a Unitarian conference in 1894 opened the denomination to people with a broad range of religious beliefs, including non-Christians and non-theists, playing a major role in giving it the character it has today.

Rev. Gannett wrote a concise summary of his ideal of liberal religion that became widely accepted. One observer noted that these ideas were "once vigorously combatted by the majority of Unitarians but now printed by them as a tract for general distribution."[68] In Gannett's words:

> What makes one "liberal" in religion? To hold four things supreme:
> - Freedom of reason and conscience, the *method* of religion – instead of tradition and authority
> - Fellowship, the *spirit* of religion – instead of sectarianism
> - Service, the *aim* of religion – instead of salvation of self
> - Character, the *test* of religion – instead of ritual or creed

Rev. William and Mary Gannett at First Unitarian



William C. Gannett

Mary Gannett

Rev. Gannett was First Unitarian's minister from 1889 to 1908. As a young man, he had worked for three years as part of the Port Royal Experiment, a program that ran from 1862 to 1865 to assist thousands of African Americans in their drive to become self-sufficient on islands off the South Carolina coast where they had previously been held in slavery and forbidden to learn to read and write. As mentioned above, he then became a Unitarian minister and a leader of the Free Religious Association. Prior to moving to Rochester, he had been the minister of a Unitarian church in Wisconsin and vice president of that state's women's suffrage association.

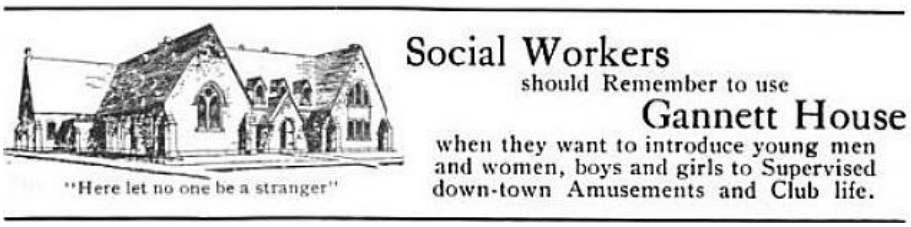
In much the same way that First Unitarian had earlier chosen Rev. Mann as its minister in full knowledge that he was a champion of the controversial theory of evolution, it chose Rev. Gannett in full knowledge that he was helping to create space among Unitarians for a wide variety of potentially controversial ideas about religion. The congregation certainly was not afraid of new ideas.

Mary Thorn Lewis Gannett was "very nearly his co-pastor," according to an earlier history of First Unitarian. Coming from a Quaker background, she never relinquished her membership there, and she attended Quaker meetings whenever she visited Philadelphia, her hometown. She fit in well with the other Quaker Unitarians at First Unitarian although she was much younger than they were. (She was 35 years old when she arrived, while Susan B. Anthony, who became her close friend, was 69.) She, like them, was a committed social activist, and she encouraged others to follow that path. She once said:

> If you want to make life worthwhile, join some cause not your own. My parents always were concerned with many causes that were considered radically dangerous and forward. I have tried to do the same thing and have found that it brought me contact with the greatest souls in the world.[69]

During this period, First Unitarian continued to have a close relationship with Temple B'rith Kodesh. In an outline history of the church, Rev. Gannett noted that, "Its relations with orthodox neighbors are friendly, and with the Jews brotherly." Urging the congregation to be "a seven-day instead of a one-day church," the Gannetts steered it toward greater involvement with its downtown neighborhood of low-income families, many of whom were Jewish immigrants.

The Gannett's most successful project was the Boys' Evening Home, which was housed in the chapel building across the street from the church. Sarah Colman Blackall, the person to whom Frederick Douglass had given his gold pen, was a leader of this project, where she was affectionately known as "Mother" Blackall. Volunteers and financial contributions from Temple B'rith Kodesh, which was only a few blocks away (near today's Eastman School of Music), assisted with that work. With a membership that reached 250, many of them Jews, especially after the first few years, the Boy's Evening Home provided a safe space for neighborhood boys, something they truly needed. Several of its first members were in the process of being sentenced to the State Industrial School. The boys could exercise in a gym, play games, read, join art and handicraft workshops, and take classes in such subjects as current events, zoology, literature and journalism. As they neared adulthood, several of its members formed the Judean Club, which, according to Stuart Rosenberg's *The Jewish Community in Rochester*, became "the most important cultural forum in the Jewish community of that time."[70] At least four members of the Boys' Evening Home went on to become rabbis, and another became executive secretary of B'rith Kodesh. Yet another former member, Meyer Jacobstein, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.



Gannett House ad in *The Common Good*

Mary Gannett also provided leadership for the church's recently established Women's Alliance, which served both the church and the adjacent community for many years. The Alliance established the Neighborhood Friendly for Girls, which provided classes in housekeeping, cooking and sewing for girls who lived nearby. The Alliance also strengthened ties between the church and its neighbors by sponsoring Friday afternoon social gatherings of local women, gatherings that were sometimes accompanied by music or speakers. The Alliance did not limit its interests to Rochester. Its fund-raising efforts helped to supply, among others, Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and Clay MacCauley's Unitarian mission in Japan. The Alliance also built a lending library of liberal religious books and established the Rochester Post Office Mission to distribute them through the mail. It advertised its services in the *New Republic* magazine and mailed materials to locations as far away as Quebec and Scotland.

The Gannetts contributed to the city's intellectual life through the Unity Club, which was open to anyone in Rochester. With as many as a hundred members, it was divided into small classes that studied such thinkers as Henry David Thoreau, George Eliot, (the pen name of novelist Mary Ann Evans) and the Fabian socialists under the tutelage of the Gannetts. The secretary of the Club's Social Topics class, which discussed the social problems of the day, was Emma Biddlecom Sweet, a young social reformer who was Susan B. Anthony's secretary and a member of First Unitarian.

William and Mary Gannett's role in Rochester's civic life and in the quest for social justice was widely acknowledged. *Rochester History*, a quarterly journal published by the office of Rochester City Historian, devoted an entire issue to their impact on the city.[71] Howard W. Coles, a local African American historian, honored Mary Gannett as an ally of black Rochesterians. He wrote a book in 1941 called *Cradle of Freedom: A History of the Negro in Rochester, Western New York and Canada* that was

dedicated to three people: his daughter Joan, Frederick Douglass's granddaughter Fredericka, and Mary Gannett. He described the latter as "One of Rochester's foremost civic and inter-racial leaders, patron of Negro artists, ministers and the underprivileged; beloved by the entire Negro colony in Rochester and throughout the world."[72]

Members of First Unitarian, especially Mary Gannett and the two Anthony sisters, were deeply involved in civic affairs during this period. In 1885, Mary Anthony gathered a group of women at her home to establish the Political Equality Club. This group of about forty women won several victories, including the appointment of Rochester's first police matron (a woman in charge of women and children detained by the police), the placement of women doctors on the staff of city's health department, and the appointment of women to state institutional boards. Mary Anthony was president of the club from 1892 to 1903, and Mary Gannett also held various other offices in it.

In 1893, Susan B. Anthony initiated the Rochester branch of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, which worked for the educational and social advancement of women, especially working women, who were often exploited by unscrupulous employers.

In 1893, Mary Anthony became the corresponding secretary of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association. During the drive that year for the right of women to vote in New York state, the Anthony home became the headquarters for the state-wide campaign. Several members of First Unitarian, including, of course, Susan B. Anthony, were active in the campaign.

In 1898, representatives of 73 local women's societies met to establish the Rochester Council of Women, later known as the Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs. The founding meeting was called and chaired by Susan B. Anthony, and Mary Gannett played a prominent role in the organization also. It launched a campaign to elect a woman to the local school board even though women were still not allowed to vote. The campaign succeeded when both major parties were persuaded to nominate the same woman for the post. An offshoot of this organization, headed by Mary Gannett and Miriam Landsberg, the wife of B'rith Kodesh's rabbi, developed into the local chapter of the National Consumers League.

Susan B. Anthony was president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the largest organization in the campaign for women's right to vote in the U.S. The campaign went international in 1904 with the founding in Berlin of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (now the International Alliance of Women), which declared Susan B. Anthony to be the organization's first member and Mary Anthony its second.

Rev. Gannett was immensely impressed with Susan B. Anthony. He said, "No other one woman in the last half-century did nearly as much as she to teach women the secrets of organization and the courage of speech." He said the movement towards equality for women was a historic transformation that ranked in importance with "that in science, that in religion, that in industrialism and towards democracy," a transformation that "may gradually be recognized as the most fundamental and far-reaching of all in its consequences."[73]

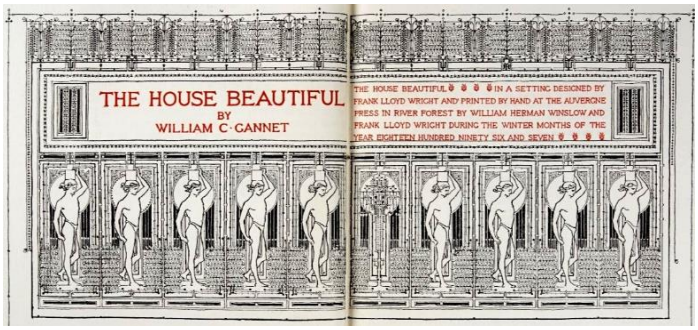
"The House Beautiful"

Rev. Gannett delivered a sermon at First Unitarian in 1895 that influenced far more people than anyone could have imagined. Called "The House Beautiful," it was made into a booklet that sold more than 10,000 copies and was published for more than three decades.[74] A new magazine appeared the

following year under the same name, *House Beautiful*. According to the biography of an editor of this popular magazine, it was named after Gannett's sermon and based on his philosophy.[75] The magazine is still published today.

125th Anniversary edition of *House Beautiful* magazine

In his sermon, Gannett said a home's beauty is based on its welcoming atmosphere, not its ornamentation. Dismayed by the ugly excesses of the homes of the super-rich of that period, he said the ideal should be, "not splendor, but harmony … Seldom is it that the pleasantest homes to visit are the richest." Gannett advised against what he called the "polar parlor," a formal room that typically was reserved for visitors, who were prevented from seeing the rooms "where people really live." Coincidentally or not, parlors went out of fashion in the years afterwards.



Frank Lloyd Wright's edition of Rev. Gannett's "The House Beautiful"

A brilliant young architect who was the nephew of one of Rev. Gannett's closest friends decided to honor Gannett by designing a special edition of his sermon and printing it on a hand-operated press. The young architect's name was Frank Lloyd Wright. Only 90 copies of this gorgeous edition were made. First Unitarian had a copy for years but decided to donate it to the University of Rochester Library, which is better equipped to store it properly.[76]

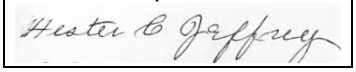
Admitting Women to the University of Rochester

Colleges in the U.S. began admitting women students in small numbers during the 1840s and in increasing numbers during the following decades. The growing presence of female college graduates in positions of responsibility made it increasingly difficult for traditionalists to continue their efforts to convince women that such roles were biologically impossible for them to handle. The phrase "just a woman" was heard less and less often.

The University of Rochester remained behind the times, refusing to admit women. Susan B. Anthony, Mary Gannett, and Miriam Landsberg of B'rith Kodesh were among the leaders of the drive to change that policy. During a meeting at the Anthony home, university officials finally agreed to admit women, but only if enough money could be raised to defray costs. Members of First Unitarian were prominent among those who made significant financial contributions to this effort, as were members of B'rith Kodesh. When Anthony returned home from a suffrage campaign in Wyoming in 1900, however, she was informed that this project had failed because the fund drive was $8000 short, and the deadline was the next day. Determined not to fail, Susan B. Anthony, at the age of 81, drove through Rochester the next morning in a carriage in a last-minute push to close the funding gap, which she accomplished by pledging her own life insurance policy and raising all the remaining money from other members of First Unitarian. The University of Rochester thereafter admitted women students and eventually built a dormitory named after her.

Hester C. Jeffrey

Hester C. Jeffrey signed First Unitarian's membership book in 1895:



Hester C. Jeffrey and her husband Jerome were African Americans who moved to Rochester in 1891. She subsequently became a national organizer for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and held significant positions in other organizations as well. She joined Rochester's AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Zion Church (now the Memorial AME Zion Church) and helped organize women's clubs in the city's African American community. She also developed strong ties to First Unitarian, often attending its services and forming close friendships with Susan B. Anthony and Mary Gannett. She created a local suffrage club for African American women called the Susan B. Anthony Club. In 1895, while keeping her membership in AME Zion, she also became a member of First Unitarian.

Susan B. Anthony window at AME Zion

When Anthony died, Hester Jeffrey was the only non-minister to deliver a eulogy at her funeral.[77] Soon afterwards, she arranged for the installation of a stained-glass window at AME Zion that featured Anthony's image and her famous quote, "Failure is Impossible," which had become a watchword for the women's movement. This stained-glass window was the first memorial to Susan B. Anthony to be created anywhere.

Susan B. Anthony's Later Life

In 1891, at the age of 71, Susan B. Anthony decided to reduce her traveling and settle into the house she shared with her sister Mary in Rochester. The two sisters could be found on Sunday mornings at the First Unitarian Church, sitting in the second pew from the front, on the right side of the center aisle as one entered the building. Children liked to sit with them, thrilled to be in the company of the famous "Aunt Susan."

Mary and Susan B. Anthony

In 1892, she wrote a letter to First Unitarian to be read aloud as part of an anniversary celebration. After citing William Henry Channing and Newton Mann as ministers who had been especially important to her, she added, "and now for the last three years I owe a debt of gratitude to our present loving minister – William C. Gannett – who so perpetually stirs us up to rigorous thought and self-requirement. These are my three helpers to my Sunday up-lifts in this city for the last forty years."[78]

Anthony had no concept of retirement, however, and she continued to campaign for women's suffrage, traveling to California at the age of 75 for a suffrage campaign there. One of the most relentlessly energetic people of her generation, her idea of rest and relaxation after that campaign was to tour Yosemite Park on the back of a mule!

Portraits of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass in the Frederick Douglass House Museum

Anthony's old friend Frederick Douglass died in 1895. They were together for the last time at a women's rights meeting in Washington, where, after his introduction to the audience, he took a seat beside her on the platform. At Douglass's funeral in the AME Church in Washington soon afterwards, Anthony said her farewell to him as one of the speakers. Douglass's family accompanied his body to Rochester for burial in Mount Hope Cemetery, preceded by a funeral service in what is today the Hochstein School. Among the dignitaries on the platform were Rochester's mayor and representatives of the AME Church and the AME Zion Church. Rev. William C. Gannett of First Unitarian officiated at the funeral and delivered the main address. Booker T. Washington, the African American president of Tuskegee Institute, later said, "No other in the United States was better qualified by natural disposition and breadth of mind to give adequate estimate of Douglass as a man." Mary Anthony also spoke (Susan B. Anthony was still in Washington).[79]

Friends and co-workers since early adulthood, Douglass and Anthony respected each other greatly despite occasional disagreements. When Anthony traveled to Washington, she would visit the Douglasses at Cedar Hill, the name of their home there. When Douglass traveled to Rochester, he would dine at the Anthony house. Cedar Hill is now a museum that preserves Douglass's home as it was at the time of his death. Susan B. Anthony's portrait still hangs on one of the walls.[80]

In her younger days, Anthony was reviled by much of the press as a destroyer of marriages, as someone who wanted to overturn the natural order of things. Perceptions changed greatly during her lifetime, partly as the result of her own efforts. The extent of these changes was made clear when President William McKinley invited her to the White House to celebrate her 80th birthday. Newcomers to First Unitarian must have been intrigued to learn that the woman in that pew right over there was the famous women's rights activist who had been honored by the president of the United States at the White House!

Susan B. Anthony died in 1906, never having had the opportunity to legally vote, which was ensured for women only in 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. Because First Unitarian's building was not large enough, her funeral was held in what is now the Hochstein School, the spacious building where Frederick Douglass's funeral had been held. Mary Gannett handled the arrangements. Observers noted the large number of African Americans who visited Anthony's coffin to pay their respects.[81]

Sculpture of King, Einstein, Anthony and Gandhi at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine

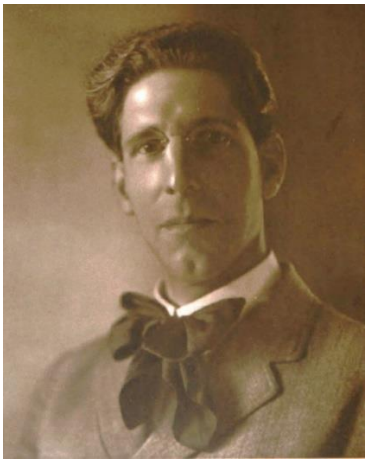
One of the most honored persons in U.S. history, Anthony became the first female citizen to appear on U.S. coinage when her image was placed on the 1979 dollar coin. In 2001, the Cathedral of St. John the

Divine (Episcopal) in Manhattan, one of the world's largest, installed a sculpture honoring four spiritual heroes of the twentieth century: Martin Luther King, Albert Einstein, Susan B. Anthony, and Mohandas Gandhi.

As young adults, both Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony had often been part of the Sunday afternoon gatherings of progressives at the Anthony farm. No one at those small gatherings could have imagined that these two would go on to be among the most important figures in U. S. history.

Rev. Edwin Rumball

Edwin A. Rumball, the minister from 1908 to 1915, continued the orientation toward social service that had characterized First Unitarian during the Gannett years. The chapel building was enlarged to provide better quarters for the Boys' Evening Home and was renamed Gannett House to honor William and Mary Gannett's role in that project. It became a favored meeting place for local organizations working for the public good, including African American groups.


Edwin Rumball

In addition to serving as First Unitarian's minister, Rumball became the editor of *The Common Good,* Rochester's leading journal of progressive reform. It began as the newsletter of an organization created by volunteers from Temple B'rith Kodesh to serve a neighborhood of Jewish immigrants just north of downtown. Rumball became its editor in 1910 as part of a project to expand it into a journal devoted to the betterment of the entire city. Published monthly, it campaigned for such things as police reform, cleaner milk supplies and better conditions for factory workers. His wife, Catherine Rumball, was a prominent supporter of the thousands of female garment workers who went on strike in 1913 in the most significant labor dispute in Rochester's history.[82] This bitter conflict ended after one striker was killed by an employer, others were injured, and more than a dozen arrested. The strike indirectly led to the demise of *The Common Good* when businesses that had been helping to support it financially decided to withdraw their assistance.[83]

At a time of surging reform sentiment throughout the nation, Rumball was both a member of the Socialist Party and a respected civic leader. When the Rochester City Club was established in 1910, he was chosen as its first secretary. The club, which had a progressive slant, sponsored weekly speakers at a downtown hotel. Its membership grew into the hundreds, and its speakers included such notable figures as Jane Addams, the social reformer; Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter, future Supreme Court justices; Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor; and Emmeline Pankhurst, the radical women's suffrage leader in Britain. Women were not allowed to join the club and could listen to the speakers only if they sat in the balcony. Mary Gannett frequently attended the programs even though she made it clear that she disapproved of the club's restrictive membership policies. She once created a stir by inviting two African American men to sit with her in the balcony, both of whom later became members of the club. The club invited her to accompany two especially controversial speakers to the platform: anarchist Emma Goldman and African American scholar and activist W. E. B. Du Bois. She joined the club herself when membership was opened to women in 1937.[84]

Late 1910s and Early 1920s

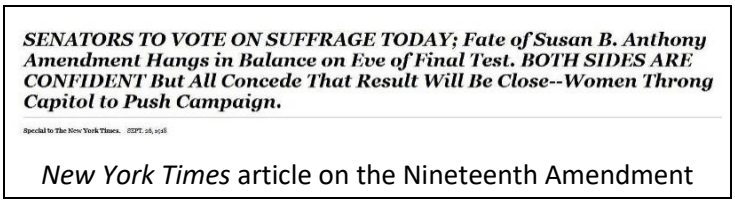
Ludwell Denny was minister from 1917 to 1921.[85] In a sermon entitled "Why Join This Church?", he rather provocatively declared:

> The actual history of the Unitarian Church is this: It has consistently and fearlessly preached the love of God, as opposed to the wrath of God; Jesus as an example, as opposed to Jesus as a blood ransom; salvation by character, as opposed to salvation by creed ... and, a present, living God who reveals Himself in noble lives here and now, as opposed to an absentee, dead God, who made the world in six days and then quit, and dictated one book and then ceased to speak for ever.

Rev. Denny guided the congregation through the devastating flu epidemic of 1918, which was particularly dangerous for young adults. When local hospitals ran out of beds, volunteers from First Unitarian helped to staff a temporary hospital in Gannett House that served 30 patients, six of whom died.

Patients in Gannett House in 1918

In 1920, more than forty years after it was introduced into Congress, the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was finally ratified, declaring that, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." It was popularly known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in honor of her leadership in achieving its passage. It was first introduced into Congress by Senator Aaron Sargent, whose wife, Ellen Clark Sargent, was Anthony's friend and a women's rights activist herself. After the amendment was ratified, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the largest organization in the long struggle to pass the amendment, and one that Anthony had done so much to establish, became the basis for a new organization called the League of Women Voters. When First Unitarian raises money for the League, as it periodically does, it is supporting an organization that has deep roots right in its own congregation.



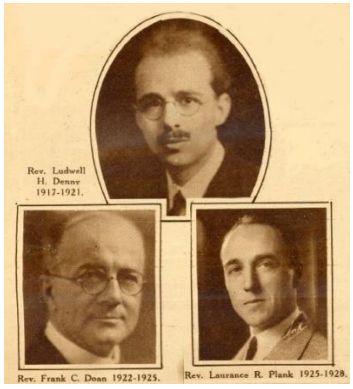
SENATORS TO VOTE ON SUFFRAGE TODAY; Fate of Susan B. Anthony Amendment Hangs in Balance on Eve of Final Test. BOTH SIDES ARE CONFIDENT But All Concede That Result Will Be Close--Women Throng Capitol to Push Campaign.

Special to The New York Times. SEPT. 26, 1918

New York Times article on the Nineteenth Amendment

Frank Doan became the minister in 1922. Previously a professor at the Unitarian's Meadville Seminary, he was one of the forerunners of religious humanism. This movement urged people to aim for reaching their full potential in this life rather than focusing on an afterlife. We should aspire, Doan said, to be more like "the truly human souls of the past—Socrates, Buddha, Jesus, Saint Francis, Tolstoi."[86] Ill health, unfortunately, soon forced his retirement and led to his death in 1925 at the age of 48.

Rev. Doan was followed by Rev. Lawrence Plank, who was the minister from 1925 to 1928.



Ludwell Denny, Frank Doan and Laurance Plank

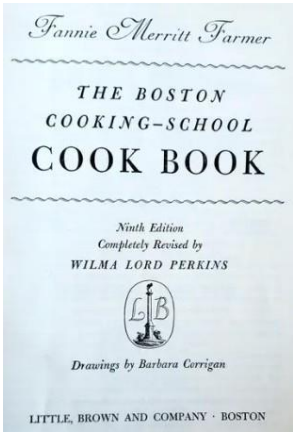
Rev. David Rhys Williams Years

David Rhys Williams began his thirty-year ministry at First Unitarian in 1928 and served throughout the turbulent period of the Great Depression and World War II. As a young radical, he had worn red neckties and signed his letters with "Yours for the Social Revolution." As an older man, he was more restrained but continued to be active in many progressive organizations. He supported birth control, socialism, anti-racism and internationalism. William Schulz, a former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, described him as "one of the leading social activists of the Unitarian ministry in the first half of the twentieth century."[87] He served a term as president of the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice.


David Rhys Williams

In 1932, Rabbi Phillip Bernstein invited Margaret Sanger, a nationally known advocate of family planning, to speak at Temple B'rith Kodesh during a time when federal laws made it difficult to speak openly and frankly about birth control. Sanger was arrested during her talk for answering a question from the audience about how to obtain birth control devices. Despite the risk, Rev. Williams himself advocated family planning and served on the executive committee of the local Birth Control League. A few weeks after Sanger's arrest, Williams preached a sermon on "The Spiritual Significance of Voluntary Motherhood" and invited Sanger back to Rochester to speak from First Unitarian's pulpit. These events led to the creation of the local chapter of Planned Parenthood. First Unitarian provided the controversial organization with office space in Gannett House from 1934 to 1937 when suitable space was not available elsewhere. The organization was formed by eight women, one of whom was Wilma Lord Perkins, a member of First Unitarian.

Wilma Lord Perkins had an unusual occupation. Working from her home for forty years, she edited the popular *Fannie Farmer's Boston Cooking School Cookbook*, which her husband had inherited from his aunt, Fannie Farmer. This groundbreaking cookbook was first published in 1896 and is still in print. It improved on earlier cookbooks by explaining the chemistry of the cooking process and providing information about good nutrition. Perkins guided the cookbook through seven editions, which were printed in millions of copies. Asked why new editions were needed, Perkins explained that guidelines for good cooking kept changing. Fannie Farmer, for example, had done her best to promote good nutrition as it was understood in her time, but she had boiled her green beans for as long as three hours![88]



The Fannie Farmer Cookbook

Her husband, Dexter Perkins, also a member of First Unitarian, was Rochester's City Historian and head of the history department at the University of Rochester. Winthrop Hudson, a professor at the university who specialized in the study of religion in American history, said Perkins was one of the three most influential opinion leaders in Rochester at that time, the other two being Rabbi Phillip Bernstein of Temple B'rith Kodesh and Justin Roe Nixon, a professor at the Divinity School. Hudson said all three were, "forever in demand as speakers to community groups," setting "the pace and the tone in the community" on local, national, and international issues. Rev. David Rhys Williams, according to Hudson, "was also influential in a way, always speaking on various issues, being in many places. But he was always regarded as a bit eccentric and off-beat so he didn't carry quite the

weight of the other three, who were regarded as very solid persons."[89] In 1945, Perkins became the official historian of the U.S. delegation at the international conference that created the United Nations. In 1956, he was elected president of the American Historical Association.[90]

In 1933, Rev. Williams became one of the thirty-four signers of the Humanist Manifesto, which, among other things, rejected the duality between mind and body, described the universe as self-existing rather than created, and declared that humanity is capable of creating a better world but must do so without help from a supernatural source. About a third of the signers were Unitarian ministers. Rev. Williams' theology never fit comfortably with the humanist position, however. Shortly after signing the manifesto, he wrote an article called "Humanism and Mysticism" to explain his belief in "an indwelling God whose power and presence can be substantiated by the facts of man's mystical experiences." He published a book in 1963 called *Faith Beyond Humanism* to explain his differences with humanism.[91]

In 1933, Mary Gannett, who, like Susan B. Anthony and some other early church members, was a Quaker Unitarian, began hosting gatherings in her home of people who wanted to reestablish a Quaker presence in Rochester, the city's previous Quaker congregation having disbanded in 1915. After the new congregation was formed, it held its first worship services in First Unitarian's Gannett House. Mary Gannett afterwards participated in both the Unitarian and the Quaker congregations.[92]

James Ziglar Hanner became the church's Director of Religious Education in the 1930s and then decided to become a minister. After completing his studies at the Unitarian's Meadville Seminary, he returned to Rochester in 1940 to be ordained at First Unitarian. The ceremony was so unusual it made national news.[93] The president of the Meadville Seminary delivered the sermon, Rabbi Henry Fisher of Temple Beth El read the scripture lesson, and Rabbi Phillip Bernstein of Temple B'rith Kodesh gave Hanner his pastoral charge. Rabbi Bernstein counseled against the feeling of being overwhelmed by "the onrushing flood of organized evil" during that dark period when Hitler's armies were rampaging across Europe and forcing Jews and progressives into concentration camps. He based his talk on a passage from the Hebrew text *The Ethics of the Fathers*: "It is not given to thee to complete the work. Neither art thou free to desist from doing it." The ceremony ended with the singing of Yigdal, one of the hymns that Rabbi Landsberg of B'rith Kodesh and Rev. Mann of First Unitarian had translated from Hebrew to English in 1883. Hanner began his ministry in Massachusetts.

Edwine Danforth, another member of First Unitarian, was prominent in church and community affairs for decades. She was the first chair of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, which Susan B. Anthony had helped to establish in 1893 to aid working women. She was a member of the editorial board of the *Common Good*, the progressive journal whose editor was First Unitarian's Rev. Rumball. A volunteer Red Cross nurse during World War I, she became the first president of Rochester's Public Health Nursing Association, which was established in 1919 during the great flu epidemic. (It is now a non-profit called the Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester and Monroe County.) She was on the Memorial Art Gallery's first Board of Directors. She served on the Rochester Board of Education for eleven years, beginning in 1921, and was its president for seven of those years. She was elected president of First Unitarian's Board of Trustees in 1936. Her husband, Henry G. Danforth, was a judge who served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. His father, George F. Danforth, was one of First Unitarian's founders, having been elected as its first clerk in 1841. Toward the end of her long life, Edwine donated the Danforth family home at 200 West Avenue to the city of Rochester to benefit senior citizens. Now known as the Danforth Recreation Center, its motto is "Old Age, We Spit in your Eye."[94]

During the 1940s, First Unitarian began implementing a new approach to religious education that was developed at the national level by Sophia Lyons Fahs, the editor of the Unitarian religious curriculum. Fahs' child-centered approach is reflected in her teaching that, "Each night a child is born is a holy night." Under this new approach, the church school began focusing less on teaching Bible stories and more on encouraging children to develop a sense of spiritual questioning and wonder through their own experiences with such mysterious things as birth, death, dreams, wind, and stars. This practice helps children understand that people all over the world have had questions like theirs and have had similar responses.

First Unitarian's Women's Alliance was especially active during the 1940s and 1950s. Organized in six chapters, it sponsored a variety of fund-raising events, including church luncheons and annual church bazaars, and it even catered weddings. The funds it raised provided support for church improvements, the Susan B. Anthony House, the Unitarian national office and a scholarship fund for aspiring ministers. It also organized guest speakers, book discussions and dinners for its own membership.


David Rhys Williams at the pulpit

During the "red scare" of the early 1950s, thirteen members of First Unitarian accused Rev. Williams of being friendly to communism and attempted to remove him as minister. Rev. Williams had long been known for supporting left-wing causes, but apparently the final provocation in the eyes of his adversaries was his vigorous support for his brother, Albert Rhys Williams, who had been accused by the House Un-American Activities Committee of having supported the Communist Party when he was a young man.[95] When the issue was put to a vote, everyone at the congregational meeting supported Williams except the thirteen who had made the accusation, all of whom subsequently left the church.

Some of the church members who supported Rev. Williams during this controversy disagreed with his political views but supported his right to hold and express them. One prominent member who took this stance was Frank Gannett, head of the Gannett newspaper chain. Gannett's newspaper business, which was initially based on the two daily papers he operated in Rochester, grew to be the largest in the country. Far from being a left-winger himself, Gannett had attempted to win the Republican nomination in 1940 so he could run against President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the elections of that year. (Frank Gannett, incidentally, was a distant relation of Rev. William C. Gannett.)

In 1954, a visiting Unitarian minister noted that First Unitarian had sent eight young men and one young woman into either the Unitarian or the Universalist ministry during the previous fifteen years, more than any other congregation in the country.

In 1955, female students at the University of Rochester were moved to its main campus from the school's original campus on what is today the grounds of the Memorial Art Gallery on University Avenue. The new women's residence was named the Susan B. Anthony Halls. One of its four wings was named after Mary Gannett. Its dining center was named after Edwine Danforth. All three women had been prominent members of First Unitarian.[96]

In 1957 several members of the congregation formed what is now known as the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Rochester to encourage funerals that are modest and low-cost rather than ostentatious. For many years, its mailing address was the same as First Unitarian. Its representatives

testified before congress about the deceitful practices used by some funeral homes to maneuver customers into paying more than they could reasonably afford. The organization now has more than 1800 members.

In 1958, at a special service in honor of Susan B. Anthony, Rev. Williams noted that it had become a routine matter for both women and men to be elected as presidents of the church's Board of Trustees, something that was still unusual for most organizations. At the same time, he unknowingly revealed the long road ahead for gender equality within the congregation with the way he listed the five women who had served as Board presidents. In each case, he referred to them by their husband's names instead of their own. To cite one prominent example, he referred to Edwine Danforth as Mrs. Henry T. Danforth.

Williams announced his retirement in 1958 after 30 years of service. Three months later, while searching for his replacement, the church was informed that a project to build a downtown shopping mall needed the space occupied by their building. The church was now forced to deal with two disruptive issues at the same time.

Leaving Downtown

When First Unitarian moved into its Temple Street building in 1883, the congregation found itself, in the words of Rev. Gannett, "hidden in an out-of-the-way nook" on the opposite side of the river from Rochester's busy downtown, which was on the west side of the river at that time. By the 1950s, the center of Rochester's downtown had moved east of the river, and First Unitarian found itself uncomfortably surrounded by a busy commercial area. Having the church school and other important functions located in Gannett House across the street from the church itself was becoming increasingly problematic. No one liked the idea of children crossing a busy street.

A committee set up by the church in 1958 to study the situation listed several problems. Both Gannett House and the church itself urgently needed expensive repairs. The basement of Gannett House was troubled by dampness, and the basement of the church was in even worse shape, making it essentially unavailable for any type of gathering. The church school did not have nearly enough space. That problem had been partly relieved by combining the church schools of the First Unitarian and First Universalist Churches on a temporary, year-by-year basis, enabling part of the Unitarian church school to gather in the nearby First Universalist Church, which had room to accommodate them.

It was difficult for the membership to think of giving up a building with such strong historical connections. Nonetheless, the congregation voted in 1959 to sell it with the provision that they could occupy it for two more years to allow time for erecting a new building. Construction activity near the building, however, disrupted their plans by weakening its foundations and forcing them to move after only seven months. The pew in which Susan B. and Mary Anthony usually sat was rescued and donated to the Susan B. Anthony Museum and House. During the awkward period of waiting for the new building to be constructed, the church held Sunday services at the Dryden Theatre at the George Eastman House. The church rented the adjacent Hutchison House from the University of Rochester for its offices and church school. Not surprisingly, church membership declined during this difficult period.

Although the congregation was leaving downtown, it did not want to leave Rochester itself, so the church purchased land within the city limits on Winton Road. The congregation approved the design of the new building in 1960, and construction began soon afterwards.

Rev. William P. Jenkins Years


William Jenkins

William P. Jenkins arrived as minister in 1959 with the difficult task not only of replacing the beloved Rev. David Rhys Williams but also of guiding the congregation through the period of disarray when its Sunday services were held in a rented theater. He was a humanist, a founding member of an anti-censorship organization called Audiences Unlimited, and was active in Planned Parenthood and the peace movement.

Rev. Jenkins worked closely with the new building's architect, Louis Kahn, to help him better understand Unitarianism so he could design an appropriate building, and he made important suggestions about the building's design. At his insistence, the sanctuary is furnished with stackable chairs rather than traditional pews, which allows the room to serve multiple purposes. During the early life of the building, the sanctuary sometimes hosted roller-skating parties!

At Rev. Jenkins' suggestion, the congregation voted in 1961 to form the Social Responsibility Committee, an initiative that grew in importance over the coming decades. Its members, who were appointed by the Board, were tasked with examining the key social problems of the day, both locally and worldwide, and organizing congregational actions to address them. Initially, the committee focused on three issues: segregation in housing and schools, capital punishment, and disarmament. Its scope widened dramatically in the coming years.

The Unitarians and Universalists merged nationally in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The two religions were a good match, sharing an open-minded approach to matters of faith and a commitment to social justice. They also proudly shared a reputation as "heretics." The Universalist "heresy" essentially was to say that if you believe in the Biblical teaching that "God is love," then it doesn't make sense to believe in the existence of Hell, a realm of torture. Rochester's Unitarians and Universalists had cooperated for decades in the city's annual Union Thanksgiving Service and in other ways as well. When First Universalist was temporarily without a building in 1844, they met in the basement of First Unitarian. When First Unitarian's building burned in 1859, the congregation met at First Universalist to plan their future. After their replacement building had been constructed, the only non-Unitarian ministers who participated in its dedication ceremony were Universalists.

Ministers of the newly formed UUA created the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and elected Rev. Jenkins as its president. Rochester's First Unitarian and First Universalist Churches considered the possibility of merging but decided instead to retain separate identities. Ironically, the joint church school the two churches had operated during the late 1950s when they were located only a block or two apart had to be discontinued when First Unitarian moved out of downtown. Their joint youth group, however, continued to operate until at least 1963. Today the two congregations enjoy a collaborative relationship.

His predecessor, Rev. Williams, had been relatively uninterested in the day-to-day administration of the church, but Rev. Jenkins saw that as an important part of his ministry. In what became a recurring theme within the church, disagreements arose over who had responsibility for specific areas of church administration, the minister or congregational leaders. After First Unitarian had settled into its new

building, Rev. Jenkins left at the end of 1962 to become the minister of the Unitarian church in Hamilton, Ontario in Canada.


First Unitarian's new building

New Building by Louis Kahn in 1962

After careful search, the church voted to hire Louis Kahn, an internationally known architect, to design its new building. In an implicit rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of the "total depravity of mankind," the church told Kahn that the building should express "the dignity rather than the depravity of man." Kahn, who was described as a "natural Unitarian" by the search committee, happily complied. Kahn later pointed out that the atmosphere of First Unitarian's new building contrasts with that of "the cathedrals, whose size and height was intended to show God's greatness and might and man's lowness."[97]

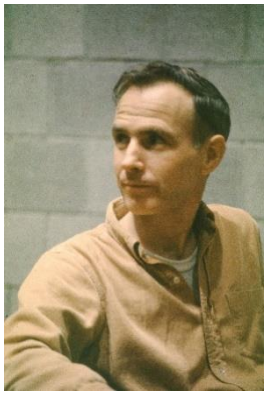

Louis Kahn at the dedication of the addition in 1969

The church moved into its new building in November of 1962. In the space of three years, it had transitioned from a traditional church building with a solemn atmosphere to a dramatically modern one with an atmosphere of open-ended possibilities. Winston Churchill once famously observed that, "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us." First Unitarian's new building was one of the factors that helped the congregation grow rapidly in the following years.

The new building cost $795,000, including $80,000 for the eight-acre lot. Architectural critics loved it. Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer-Prize-winning architectural critic for the *New York Times*, listed it among "the greatest religious structures of the century."[98] A model of it was included in an exhibition of American architecture that was shown in the Soviet Union during the Cold War.[99] The only building of international architectural significance in the Rochester area,[100] it is visited today by students of architecture from all over the world. Kahn's reputation continued to grow. Not long after completing First Unitarian, he began working on his masterpiece, the parliament building for Bangladesh.


Sunday service in 2011

Rev. Robert West Years


Robert West

Robert West was minister from 1963 until 1969. He delivered his first sermon only ten days after Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington. Rev. West participated in that march, as did at least 1700 other Unitarian Universalists, including several from First Unitarian. The march's objectives included laws to prevent southern states from denying African Americans the right to vote and to prevent businesses from refusing to serve them. Rev. West said the atmosphere generated by the march was transformative: "It was clear to anyone on the scene that these were a people who truly had seen a great light."[101]

The church's membership soared during his ministry, which coincided with First Unitarian's move into its new building. Rev. West was an excellent preacher, so the church arranged for a local radio station to broadcast his sermons. During one twelve-month period in 1964 and 1965, the church welcomed 183 new members, and its pledge income increased by 47%! Overcrowding led the church to begin offering two Sunday worship services instead of one. The workload was more than one minister could handle, so the congregation hired an associate minister. Astoundingly, church school enrollment reached 625, far more than the building could handle. New applicants were placed on a long waiting list, and classes for older children were moved to the Harley School more than two miles away.

The church had initially told architect Louis Kahn that the new building did not need to be designed so it could easily be expanded. The church said it planned to establish satellite congregations if an increase in membership led to overcrowding, and it did indeed try to do exactly that. Called the Free Union Fellowship, a new congregation operated from early 1966 to late 1968 in the Pittsford-Perinton-Penfield area. It disbanded when it became clear that most people preferred to attend services at First Unitarian itself. Only two years after occupying its new building, the church was obliged to approach Kahn once again, this time to design a large addition. At first, Kahn refused, saying the building was designed to be complete in itself and should not be expanded. When the church said it would hire another architect if necessary, Kahn relented and completed the addition in 1969.


Newly completed building in 1962

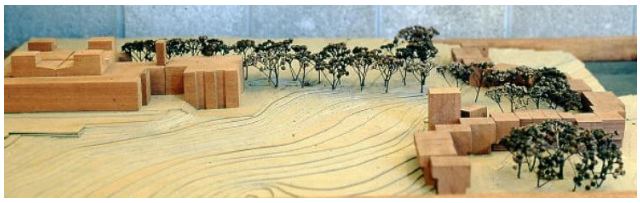

Same view including the addition

In the mid-1960s, First Unitarian's Social Responsibility Committee sponsored forums about the Vietnam War, which led the church to express its opposition to the war in several ways. In 1968, a proposal to declare the church a symbolic sanctuary for men who were resisting the draft was presented to the

annual congregational meeting.[102] The motion passed by a 79 to 53 vote after an impassioned debate. Unfortunately, six members left the church afterwards.

In 1964, a tense situation developed in Rochester when onlookers angrily accused the police of using excessive force while arresting an intoxicated man at a block party in a largely African American neighborhood. The police responded with riot gear and police dogs, which made things much worse. The result was a three-day uprising in which five people died (four when a civil defense helicopter crashed into a house), 350 were injured, and over 900 were arrested. Order was restored only after the governor sent in the National Guard. Local activists, with the help of Saul Alinsky, a nationally known organizer, subsequently created an organization called FIGHT to address the problems of racial discrimination in Rochester. FIGHT highlighted Eastman Kodak's slowness to hire African Americans as an especially serious problem. First Unitarian's Social Responsibility Committee sponsored well-attended programs at church to increase understanding of racial discrimination in the community, and it challenged the congregation to help find solutions to this problem. Alinsky was a controversial figure, however, and several church members who worked at Kodak disagreed with his criticism of their employer. Despite opposition, the church raised $1900 to support FIGHT plus another $500 to help establish a chapter of the Urban League. Some prominent members left the church during this controversy.

A major goal of the congregation was resisting segregation in housing, which was widely and openly practiced throughout the country prior to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968. In 1963, the church formed a corporation called Community Interests, Inc. to provide advice and financial support to African Americans who wanted to buy homes, including homes outside of traditionally black neighborhoods. Money for loans was raised from within the congregation and from foundations. By 1968, the organization's 16 counselors had worked with 254 families and made 64 loans. This successful program was eventually absorbed by the Monroe County Housing Council.



Model of the proposed housing project, with the church at left and housing at right

In the late 1960s, the Social Responsibility Committee, with the support of the congregation, developed a plan to build thirty-six racially integrated housing units on the eastern slope of First Unitarian's property for people with low and moderate incomes. Nine of the units were to be rental, and twenty-seven were to be condominiums. The plan generated controversy among people who lived nearby, with some neighbors organizing in opposition to the plan and others organizing in support. The plan was submitted twice to the Rochester City Council but was never approved.

Rev. West left in 1969 after he was elected president of the UUA. In 1971, he risked a prison sentence by approving the proposal of the UUA's Beacon Press to publish the Pentagon Papers, a collection of leaked documents that exposed the federal government's deceptions about its involvement in Vietnam.

Rev. Richard Gilbert Years

Richard Gilbert became First Unitarian's minister in 1970 and served for 32 years, longer than any other in its history. Committed to working for social justice, he once said, "I grew up in the Bristol Universalist Church: a small country church nestled in the Bristol Hills. There I heard what Universalist preacher

Hosea Ballou once said of religious belief, 'If you can't reduce it to practice, have none of it.' Those words have never left me – they are the center of my religious faith. Faith works." He encouraged church members to work for social justice, saying that part of a preacher's job was, in the words of an old saying, to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comforted."


Richard Gilbert, left, at his installation in 1970

Rev. Gilbert was one of the signers of the Humanist Manifesto II, which was published in 1973. Coming after the traumas of World War II, the Nazi death camps, and the threat of nuclear war, it updated the original Humanist Manifesto with a less optimistic message. The first had confidently declared that humanity was capable of creating a genuinely good society on earth, although it would need to do so without the aid of a supernatural power. The new manifesto starkly stated that, "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."

Rev. Gilbert was active in the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion, an organization of ministers and rabbis who helped women find safe abortions in the period before *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that made abortion a constitutional right. (In 2022, a conservative Supreme Court overturned that decision.) To minimize potential legal problems, no fees were charged for the consultation sessions, and they were conducted in the offices of the clergypersons, which provided a degree of protection due to the right of clergy confidentiality. To confuse legal jurisdictions, referrals were always to licensed physicians in another state, except in the few states where abortions were legal. The organization also pushed for state laws to legalize abortion, which was accomplished in New York State in 1970.

The church's opposition to the Vietnam war continued. Rev. Gilbert offered counseling to conscientious objectors and even accompanied one young man to the hearing that heard his successful appeal of his draft status. Rev. Gilbert also refused to pay the telephone tax that had been created to help pay for the war. When the federal government threatened to force the church to garnish his salary to pay the amount he owed (about $10), Rev. Gilbert wrote a legally binding check on a large anti-war poster that read "War is not healthy for children and other living things." Church members supported him by demonstrating outside the federal building while he presented the check to the authorities (who didn't know what to do with it). The episode appeared in the next day's newspapers, including a photo of Rev. Gilbert and his oversized check.

The Social Responsibility Committee was increasingly active, at one point organizing ten subcommittees to deal with the unwieldy number of issues that were calling for the church's attention. Rev. Gilbert developed a method to guard against being overwhelmed by the many demands for social action, which he described in a book he published in 1980 called *The Prophetic Imperative: Unitarian Universalist Foundations for a New Social Gospel.* It called for polling the congregation to see which issues would attract the most volunteers and then organizing task forces to work on those issues. His model for organizing social justice work was adopted by several other UUA congregations.

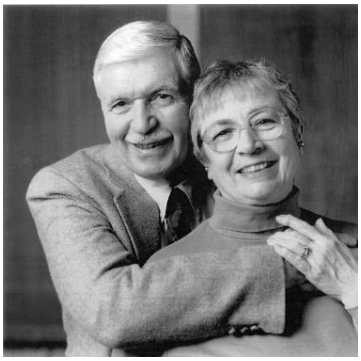
The Women's Alliance, which had been such a powerhouse of activity for decades, met for the last time in 1976. Its demise was partly due to the increasing tendency of women to work outside the home, which left them less time to work on church projects. There was also a growing unease with the idea of

"women's work." Not coincidentally, the meeting room near the kitchen, which was known as the "Women's Workroom" in the early years of the building, began to be called simply Room 110.

Some of the work that probably would have been done by the Women's Alliance in earlier years began to be performed by groups that were open to both men and women. One such group, the Caring Community, was established during this period to help church members cope with a wide range of stressful situations, including hospital stays, the first days at home after being in the hospital, marriage breakups, and receptions at memorial services.

In 1981, the church entered the computer age by purchasing an Apple II desktop computer for the office that had 48 kilobytes of memory. Its first task was printing mailing labels for the newsletter, which was printed, assembled and mailed each week by a team of volunteers. First published in 1951, the printed version of the newsletter was discontinued in 2011 and replaced by an emailed version. The church's website, www.rochesterunitarian.org, was created in 1996.

The organ with its array of pipes was installed in 1981. It became available on short notice from St. Bernard's Seminary, which was in the process of moving elsewhere in the Rochester area. Payment was required immediately, so loans were raised informally within the congregation. Church members quickly disassembled the organ, labeled each of its many parts, and transported it in family station wagons and other vehicles to First Unitarian. In a five-month project that became known as the Great Organ Transplant, it was reinstalled at First Unitarian under the leadership of Ed Schell, its Minister of Music. Roger Coakley and others built wooden enclosures for the pipes, and a team of volunteers reassembled the instrument.


Richard and Joyce Gilbert

Joyce Gilbert, Rev. Gilbert's wife, was remarkably active in congregational life. She sang in the choir, acted in the church's theater productions, volunteered at School 22, helped with the cooking in the church kitchen, and served on many committees. In 1982, she initiated what is now the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries. Both she and Ed Schell were on its organizing committee, and they both served terms as its president. With a membership that quickly grew to several hundred, the AUUMM played a key role in producing the denomination's new hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, in 1993.

In 1983, Rev. Gilbert published the first volume of his *Building Your Own Theology* series, which became the most widely used adult education curriculum within the UUA. Appropriately for a denomination that does not endorse a specific theology, this course invited students to examine their own beliefs and values and to clarify them in a group setting. Each of the course's three volumes provided materials for about ten weekly sessions.[103]

In a church as large as First Unitarian, it can be difficult for newcomers to connect with others. The church's Adult Program Committee worked to overcome this problem by offering a wide variety of activities that were both educational and community-building. *Building Your Own Theology* classes were offered several times during this period. "Personal growth" offerings were popular, especially group discussions about the rapid changes in gender roles and expectations. If a man volunteered to help wash dishes after a church function, would that irritate other men who saw that as "women's work"? How should a married woman sign her name? In a booklet of recipes published by church members in

1955, nearly a third of the women who submitted recipes identified themselves not with their own name but by placing "Mrs." in front of their husband's name. That changed during the 1960s: only two names in the 1973 recipe book were in that format.

In 1988, the congregation established its UU/Schools Partnership program, which assists students in public schools 22 and 15 in Rochester. Church volunteers help students with their reading and math skills, sometimes in small groups and sometimes individually, and they partner with teachers in a variety of enrichment programs. The seed for this project was planted when Rev. Gilbert attended an interfaith conference in Rochester at which Bill Johnson, head of the Urban League at the time and later the mayor of Rochester, chided the religious community for its insufficient support of public education. Rev. Gilbert preached a sermon about this issue at church. Interested members of the congregation met with him after the service to form a task force to implement this program.

Rev. Gilbert and Rev. Helena Chapin, who became the church's Minister of Religious Education in 1990, shared a collaborative ministry. Rev. Gilbert, for example, did most of the preaching, and Rev. Chapin, through her work with the church school and the Adult Program Committee, did most of the teaching, although they each also sometimes performed the other role. The two ministers together led seminars for other congregations that were interested in this collaboration between male and female ministers, which was unusual at a time when the idea of female ministers was still somewhat controversial.[104]

In 1992, after a lengthy period of discussion and self-examination, the congregation voted to alter the wording on the large wooden plaque in the church lobby. It originally greeted visitors with the words "Here Be No Man a Stranger, No Holy Cause Be Banned," words from a hymn written by Rev. Gannett decades earlier. The presumption had been that everyone would understand the word "man" to include all genders and all ages, but people were becoming increasingly aware of the gender and other biases in our language. Several women who were new to the church reported that the plaque's wording had felt distinctly unwelcoming to them. It now more appropriately says, "Here Let No One Be a Stranger."

The church took another step that year towards being a more inclusive community when it welcomed Ed Frock, an openly gay man, as a ministerial intern. The following year, at the suggestion of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns task force, the annual congregational meeting voted to designate First Unitarian as a "Welcoming Congregation."

In 1996, a generous bequest from Marion Ashley Bickford, a former secretary of the church's youth group, enabled the church to install an elevator near the lobby. The second floor afterwards became more a part of everyday church life as people found it easier to access that floor by an elevator at the center of the building than by stairs at the building's edges.

One member of the church during this period, Jim McCollum, had been involved at a young age with McCollum v. Board of Education, the momentous Supreme Court decision of 1948 that outlawed religious education in public schools. His school in Illinois was providing religious education by local religious leaders on school property during school hours. When the school asked his parents to select Catholic, Protestant or Jewish education for their child, they chose none. Jim, who was in the fourth grade, was required to sit by himself during these classes in the same hallway desk that was usually reserved for disruptive students. His mother, Vashti McCollum, with the help of the local Unitarian minister, filed a lawsuit challenging the practice of using taxpayer's money to teach religion. She was subsequently fired from her job, the family was physically threatened, and the family cat was killed. For

his own protection, Jim was sent to live with his grandparents in Rochester. His parents appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, and they won.

Rev. Scott Tayler and Rev. Kaaren Anderson Years

When Rev. Gilbert retired in 2002, the church operated for two years under the guidance of Unitarian Universalist ministers who specialized in interim ministry. The purpose of this interlude was to give church members time to consider what they wanted the church to be in the future and to prepare for changes that new leadership would inevitably bring. Consultants who were brought in during this period said that one of the church's problems was that it was organized like a mid-size church even though it actually was a large one. Congregational meetings as well as board meetings sometimes got bogged down with decisions about relatively small details at the expense of working on the church's larger issues.


Scott Tayler and Kaaren Anderson

Following the interim period, the church called Scott Tayler and Kaaren Anderson, a married couple, as co-ministers in 2004.

Rev. Tayler accelerated the growth of what is known as small group ministry by creating Soul Matters groups. Already in existence on a small scale, this program evolved within two years into sixteen Soul Matters groups with a total membership of 140, and those numbers continued to grow. The groups were created to foster spiritual growth, encourage the practice of listening deeply and respectfully to others, and provide a meaningful way for newcomers to fit into the community. Their gatherings are based on packets of theme-based materials that are also useful for planning church school activities and worship services. The packets, which were originally prepared monthly under the leadership of Rev. Tayler, were easily shared, and eventually more than a hundred other congregations were using them.

In 2006, Rev. Anderson initiated the Greater Good Project, which asks members to cut their usual holiday spending in half and contribute the other half to community projects chosen by students in the church school. Part of the $64,000 raised during the first year of this program aided the Honduras Project, which works to improve the quality of life in a rural community in Honduras. This on-going project is a joint effort by that community, First Unitarian, and the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Rochester's Medical Center.[105]


Jen Crow

In 2005, Rev. Jen Crow, First Unitarian's associate minister, developed a program of spiritual deepening called Wellspring. Now an independent organization with a national membership and a direct affiliation with the UUA, Wellspring's programs have been used by dozens of congregations. As its website explains, "A sense of personal purpose and meaning arises from UU Wellspring's unique combination of spiritual practices, spiritual companionship, readings, and heart-opening sessions."

In 2009, Rev. Anderson and the Reproductive Rights Task Force began developing Connect and Breathe, a telephone talk line that offers "unbiased support and encouragement of self-care" to women who have had

abortions.[106] Now an independent organization, it is staffed by church volunteers and others in the community. Its hours are designed to serve primarily the eastern part of the U.S. A similar organization serves the western part.

In 2010, growth in membership led the church to offer three worship services each week, two on Sunday mornings and a new one on Saturday afternoons. The Saturday service featured Orange Sky, the church's new rock band.

Revs. Tayler and Anderson encouraged a less formal atmosphere during church services. They would heartily call out "good morning" when they first appeared on the podium, and the congregation, somewhat hesitantly at first, would call out "good morning" in return. The ministers made it clear that they liked hearing spontaneous words of support from the congregation during sermons. Sometimes Orange Sky would play rock music at all three services, and that occasionally led to dancing in the aisles.[107] Their approach to preaching drew national attention, and in 2011 they were asked to lead the Sunday morning worship service at General Assembly, the UUA's annual national gathering.

In 2006, well before the Supreme Court decision in 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage in all fifty states, First Unitarian hung a large banner on the side of the building facing Winton Road that said, "Stand on the side of LOVE: Equal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples." Same-sex marriage was highly controversial at the time, and the banner was torn down and stolen (but soon replaced). Rev. Jen Crow, who herself was married to a woman, talked about how stressful it was for the two of them to travel to a state that did not recognize their marriage. If, for example, there was a car accident and one of them was hospitalized, the other could visit only as a friend, not as a spouse, and she would have no say at all in medical decisions for her injured wife.

"Equal Marriage for Same-Sex Couples" banner at First Unitarian

The congregation grew rapidly in size and enthusiasm during this period. The leadership team eventually changed, however. Rev. Jen Crow left in 2012 to become one of the ministers at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, eventually becoming its senior minister. Rev. Scott Tayler left in 2013 to take a position in the UUA national office, leaving Rev. Kaaren Anderson as the sole senior minister at First Unitarian.

Rev. Anderson was brilliantly creative. Dissatisfaction with aspects of her ministry began to surface, however, leading to a decline in membership and financial support for the church. After she resigned in 2016, Rev. Joel Miller arrived for a three-year interim ministry, a longer period than usual, to give the congregation time to heal after an especially difficult period. Rev. Tina Simson, the church's Minister of Pastoral Care and Adult Spiritual Development, provided continuity by postponing her retirement and staying at her post until 2018. When she retired, the congregation granted her the title of minister emerita, as it had earlier granted the title of minister emeritus to Rev. Gilbert. The church returned to a schedule of two weekly services.

First Unitarian had been in a partnership with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua from 2009 to 2016, sharing a single team of ministers while maintaining separate budgets and Boards of

Trustees. The partnership ended after Rev. Anderson resigned, although the friendly relationship continues.

Shift in Church Governance in Early 2000s

In the early 2000s, First Unitarian began implementing what is known as policy governance, a type of governance designed for larger organizations and one that is used by the national office of the UUA. Previously, the Board of Trustees had supervised the work of almost all committees (Adult Education, Social Responsibility, Building and Grounds, Building Use, Parking, Publicity, Landscaping, Audiovisual, etc.), with the ministers providing additional guidance to some of the more important committees, such as Adult Education and Social Responsibility. Today, under policy governance, there are fewer committees, and they are supervised by the ministers, not the Board.

Policy governance at First Unitarian calls for the Board of Trustees to focus on the bigger issues (Are we meeting the goals we have set in such areas as spiritual growth, diversity, and social justice? Do we want to stay the same size, or do we want to grow?) and determines the overall direction of the church. The Board sets the desired outcomes of the ministers' work but does not micromanage them in achieving those outcomes. The church's ultimate authority, as in all other UUA congregations, continues to be the congregational meeting, which is held at least annually. This meeting elects the Board of Trustees and approves the budget.

Rev. Shari Halliday-Quan

First Unitarian's new Lead Minister, Shari Halliday-Quan. arrived in the autumn of 2019. Only six months later, the covid epidemic disrupted the entire world. Quickly pivoting, the church for two years conducted almost all its business, including Sunday services, over the web, working for much of that time in partnership with the First Universalist Church of Rochester. The church gradually resumed in-person Sunday services in the autumn of 2021, beginning in the back parking lot in a large tent whose natural ventilation slowed any potential spread of the virus, then shifting to one service per week in the sanctuary, and finally returning to the usual two services. The option to participate in services via the internet continued.


Shari Halliday-Quan

Cooperation increased with the First Universalist Church of Rochester and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua. Today this includes meetings in which the ministers and staff members of the three churches jointly choose seasonal themes for worship services; pulpit swaps, in which the ministers take turns preaching at the other churches; combined contingents at Pride parades in Rochester and Geneva; and special church services that involve more than one congregation.

AJ van Tine

Verdis LeVar Robinson

The First Unitarian Church of Rochester has a remarkable history. Since its earliest days, it has demonstrated a strong and effective commitment to social justice, an openness to new ideas, a proficiency for fostering spiritual growth, and a resolve to be a more inclusive community. Now one of the largest UU congregations in the country, it is writing a new chapter in its history under the leadership of Rev. Halliday-Quan, with Rev. AJ van Tine as Assistant Minister and Rev. Verdis LeVar Robinson as Minister for Growth.

Sources

Much of the material here comes from previous histories of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester:

- *First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester N. Y.: A Sketch of its History, with its Organization and Membership*, by Rev. Newton Mann (1881) (rochesterunitarian.org/history)
- *A Century of Unitarianism in Rochester* by Harold W. Sanford (1929)
- *One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years, 1829-1954, A Brief History of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester*, by Frances A. Keef (1954)
- *Covenant for Freedom A History of the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester, New York, 1829-1975*, by Nancy J. Salzer (1975)

Other significant sources include:

- Reminiscences of Rochester, a manuscript by Rev. Frederick Holland (about 1873)
- *Memoir of Rufus Ellis*, Chapter 3, Rochester (1881)
- The Quaker Unitarians of Rochester: Radical Quakers and the First Unitarian Church in the Mid-1800s by Bill Fugate (2023) (rochesterunitarian.org/history)
- "Watts and Briggs Families: Early Members of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester" by Bill Fugate (2024) (rochesterunitarian.org/history)
- List of Ministers of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester (rochesterunitarian.org/history)
- *Radical Friend: Amy Kirby Post and Her Activist Worlds* by Nancy A. Hewitt (2018)
- The Spiritual Journeys of an Abolitionist by Nancy Hewitt (2014), an article about Amy Kirby Post in *Quakers and Abolition*, edited by Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank
- The Gannetts of Rochester by William H. Pease in *Rochester History*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, October 1955

This history contains links to Wikipedia for those who want more information on specific topics. Nothing here, however, is derived from Wikipedia.

End Notes

[1] This newspaper notice was included in *Rochester, A Story Historical*, by Jenny Marsh Parker (1884) on page 221 in a chapter based on old newspaper clippings. Parker did not provide the name of the newspaper or the date when this notice appeared, but she grouped it with clippings that appeared at the end of 1828, the period when Rev. Ware was in Rochester to help establish a Unitarian Church.

[2] Following his stay in Rochester, Rev. Green traveled to Cincinnati to help organize a congregation there. After returning to Massachusetts, he was eventually elected mayor of Cambridge.

[3] Blake McKelvey, "The Voice of the City Historian", in *Rochester History*, Vol. LI, Winter 1989, No. 1, page 10.

[4] *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass (1881), page 276.

[5] *First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester N. Y.: A Sketch of its History, with its Organization and Membership* by Rev. Newton Mann (1881), page 6.

[6] Martha Delano Watts was born into the Delano family, the same prominent family into which Franklin Delano Roosevelt's mother was born.

[7] Originally named the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester, it later was known as the First Unitarian Church of Rochester. The articles of incorporation, which are on file at the Monroe County Clerk's office, were careful to state that only male members of the church participated in the meeting. They had no choice. A law enacted by New York State in 1813, called *An Act to Provide for the Incorporation of Religious Societies,* specified that only men were allowed to incorporate a church.
[8] For more about these families, see "Watts and Briggs Families: Early Members of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester" by Bill Fugate. Ebenezer Watts, whose home, the Ebenezer Watts House, is the oldest surviving residence in downtown Rochester, contributed toward the construction of First Unitarian's new building and was at least a nominal member of the church. (His name is at the top of the list of "Fellow Communicants belonging originally to other Churches" in First Unitarian's earliest record book.) Ebenezer's main allegiance, however, was with St. Luke's Presbyterian Church. Other members of his family were fully committed to First Unitarian, including Ebenezer's wife, Deborah Kempton Watts; Deborah's sister, Sophia Kempton Briggs; Sophia's husband, John Briggs; Ebenezer's son, James Watts; and James' wife, Martha Delano Watts.
[9] The full version of this 1853 painting of Rochester is available on the www.eriecanal.org website here and the University of Rochester Library website here. Members of these churches often lived nearby and walked to services. Many of the progressive Quakers who were attending services at First Unitarian were just across the street from their previous congregation.
[10] This quote comes from page 49 of the *Memoir of Rufus Ellis* (1892), Chapter III, "Rochester". This chapter is the source of much of what is known about the earliest days of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester.
[11] Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, "Frankfort: Birthplace of Rochester's Industry," in *Rochester History*, Vol. L, No. 3, July 1988, page 9
[12] *Twenty-two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman*, by Austin Steward (1857), page 151.
[13] There is a historical marker for Dr. Matthew Brown at the south-east corner of Jefferson Avenue and Brown Street (which is named for him), near the Susan B. Anthony Museum and House.
[14] Rev. Holland had far-ranging interests. He wrote an article called "Rochester: Its Mills, Factories, etc." for the July 1847 issue of *Merchant's Magazine*, the first American periodical devoted to commerce. His name is not listed at the top of the article itself, but it is listed in the table of contents for that issue.
[15] Rev. Samuel May was the uncle of Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*.
[16] *A Century of Unitarianism in Rochester* by Harold W. Sanford (1929). Sanford was quoting Rev. William C. Gannett.
[17] After Maria Porter settled in Rochester, her parents and sisters moved there also and joined Rochester's Unitarian Church. Details are in a footnote on page 80 of *A Life for Liberty: Anti-slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley*, edited by John White Chadwick (1899). Her brother Samuel was one of the founders of an abolitionist congregation in Rochester called the Bethel Free Church.
[18] Some of the Sodus Bay commune's buildings are still standing and are part of an animal shelter called the Cracker Box Palace, whose surrounding farmland includes hiking trails that are open to the public.
[19] See comments at this convention by Lucretia Mott as reported in *History of Woman Suffrage* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (1887), Volume 1, pages 76-77.
[20] *The Independent* (New York City), February 15, 1900, page 414. An African American woman named Marie W. Stewart is thought to have been the first American woman to give a public speech, which she delivered in 1832 in Boston.
[21] Mary Anthony told the story of her fight for equal pay in a letter that was reprinted in *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 1 (1898), pages 191-192.
[22] *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 3 (1908), page 1490.

[23] The *Life and work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 2 (1898), page 859.
[24] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony's close friend and co-worker, said, "To-day Miss Anthony is an agnostic. As to the nature of the Godhead and of the life beyond her horizon she does not profess to know anything. Every energy of her soul is centered upon the needs of this world. To her, work is worship. …. Her belief is not orthodox, but it is religious." See *Eighty years and more (1815-1897): Reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1898), page 161.
[25] *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 2 (1898), page 516.
[26] Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part One", in *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Summer 2005, No. 3, page 20. The site of Douglass's home is identified by a historical marker on the west side of Alexander Street a few dozen steps south of East Avenue.
[27] *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 1 (1898), pages 60-61. The location of the Anthony farm is provided by Blake McKelvey in "Names and Traditions of Some Rochester Streets," *Rochester History*, Vol. XXVII, July 1965, No. 3, p. 18.
[28] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 1892, page 378.
[29] Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part Two," *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Fall 2005, No. 4, page 29. Sarah Colman Blackall's stepmother was Lucy Colman, a member of the freethought movement and a social activist who accompanied abolitionist Sojourner Truth when she met with Abraham Lincoln at the White House in 1864.
[30] Underground Railroad "stations" operated by families associated with First Unitarian include those operated by Maria Porter, Daniel and Lucy Anthony, Asa and Huldah Anthony, Isaac and Amy Post, William and Mary Post Hallowell, Benjamin and Sarah Fish, Lewis and Sarah Anthony Burtis, and John and Lemira Kedzie. This list was created by cross-referencing church membership records with names in *Sweet Gift of Freedom* by Shirley Cox Husted, which has information about the Underground Railroad in the Rochester area, and *Frederick Douglass and the Underground Railroad* by Richard Reisem, which has information about participants in the Underground Railroad who are buried in Rochester's Mount Hope cemetery. See "The Quaker Unitarians of Rochester" for more details.
[31] The quote by Mary Anthony about hearing Channing preach in 1852 comes from *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 3 (1908), page 1491. A biography of Channing written by Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Memoir of William Henry Channing* (1886), agrees with the date of 1852, saying of Channing on page 254 that, "In the spring of 1852, he preached three Sundays in Troy, and in the early summer went to Rochester, New York, where he remained, with occasional absences for preaching, lecturing, attending conventions, meeting family duties, till August, 1854." On the following page, Frothingham says Channing initially agreed to be First Unitarian's minister for six months. At the end of that period, the congregation offered him a settled ministry (one without a predetermined end date). Rev. Mann's 1881 history of the church says only that Channing "was settled April 27, 1853." While accurate, that gives the mistaken impression that that Channing's ministry at First Unitarian began in 1853. Rev. Mann apparently did not realize that Channing had already become the minister on a provisional basis in 1852.
[32] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More (1815-1897): Reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (1898), pages 160-161
[33] Google shows a large collection of ways in which people have displayed Channing's quote.
[34] *Memoir of William Henry Channing* by Octavius Brooks Frothingham (1886), page 258.
[35] "Rochester One Hundred Years Ago" by Dexter Perkins, in *Rochester History*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1939, page 18.
[36] Here is a video of James Earl Jones reproducing Douglass's withering speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July".

[37] "Reminiscences of Rochester" by Frederick W. Holland, a six-page manuscript written about 1873 and now located in the Rare Books and Special Collections Department of the University of Rochester Library, "Unitarian Church, Rochester, New York papers," Series 1, Box 1.
[38] First Unitarian's ministers during this turbulent period were Rev. Rufus H. Bacon, 1848-1848; Rev. W. H. Doherty, 1850-1852; Rev. William Henry Channing, 1852-1854; Rev. Thomas Hyer, 1856-1856; Rev. James Richardson, 1857-1858; Rev. James K. Hosmer, 1859-1859; Rev. Fitzgerald, 1859-1859.
[39] *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 1 (1898), page 167. The phrase "free church" probably implied that it would not charge pew rental fees, a practice followed by First Unitarian and many other churches at that time. First Unitarian's next building, completed in 1866, did not have rental pews.
[40] Theodore Parker was a member of what was later known as the "Secret Six," the group of men who funded John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry.
[41] John Hurn's son and daughter-in-law were members of First Unitarian (she taught Sunday School), and his sister-in-law, Huldah Anthony, was a member also. See "The Quaker Unitarians of Rochester" for details.
[42] *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass, 1892, page 378.
[43] *Radical Friend: Amy Kirby Post and Her Activist Words* by Nancy A. Hewitt, pages 147, 221-222. Hewitt's book has been helpful in documenting the early history of First Unitarian. Also see Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part Two," *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Fall 2005, No. 4, page 11.
[44] Lewis Douglass was a member of the famous 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, the regiment of black soldiers whose extraordinary valor, depicted in the film *Glory*, did so much to change white Northerner's views of black people.
[45] Susan B. Anthony advocated universal suffrage, the right to vote regardless of race or sex, but on one occasion she used an unfortunate choice of words that has enabled some to claim otherwise. In 1867, she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton announced plans to campaign in New York state for the inclusion of universal suffrage in the state constitution. Male abolitionist leaders who were opposed to their project met with these two leading members of the women's movement and told them they should campaign during that period for voting rights only for African American men, not for all African Americans and all women. According to Harper's authorized biography of Anthony, she "was highly indignant and declared that she would sooner cut off her right hand than ask the ballot for the black man and not for woman." She and Stanton continued to campaign for universal suffrage.

Fake versions of what Anthony said during this meeting are now in circulation that make it seem as if her words were part of a speech that expressed opposition to voting rights for African Americans. One widespread version claims that she said, "Look at this, all of you. And hear me swear that I will cut off this right arm of mine before I will ever work for or demand the ballot for the negro and not the woman." This fake quote falsely implies that Anthony was speaking to a large group, and it changes the words "the black man" to "the negro," which switches the focus from gender to race. It also changes "right hand" to "right arm," and it portrays Anthony as saying, "Hear me swear" even though people with Quaker roots would refuse to swear oaths of any kind. Page 261 of Harper's biography is the sole historical source for what Anthony said during this small, private meeting. All other versions are recent inventions. The Wikipedia article about Susan B. Anthony documents some of these invented quotes in one of its footnotes.

Compared to other white people of her time, Anthony had advanced views on race, but, of course, she did not have today's understanding of anti-racism. She certainly had no patience, however, with the frankly racist attitudes that were the norm in much of white society then. Once, when pioneering African American journalist Ida B. Wells was staying at her house, Anthony asked her stenographer to

assist Wells. When the young woman said, “I don’t choose to write for a colored woman,” Anthony fired her on the spot. See page 816 of Harper’s biography.

Anthony’s legacy has been troubled by other distortions of the historical record, including false claims that she campaigned against abortion, as documented on the website of the Susan B. Anthony House and Museum here.

[46] During that time, people often referred to such female relationships as Boston marriages.

[47] "Reminiscences of Rochester" by Frederick W. Holland.

[48] For more information, see "Champion of Suffrage: Elizabeth Lowe Watson, 1843-1927," by Yvonne Jacobson, *San Jose Studies*, Volume 19, Number 2, Spring 1993, reprinted in *The Californian*, Volume 15, Number 2, December 1993, pages 6-11. As president of the California Equal Suffrage Association, Watson worked closely with Caroline Severance, a women's suffragist there who was originally from Canandaigua, New York. She and her husband, Theodore. C. Severance, founded the First Unitarian church of Los Angeles.

[49] MacCauley‘s mission to Japan was supported by people in high places in Japanese society. Having recently opened its borders, which had been almost entirely closed to the rest of the world for generations, Japan was consciously striving for rapid modernization. With the help of Saichiro Kanda, who had studied at the Unitarian’s Meadville seminary, MacCauley operated a non-sectarian, college-level school in Japan that encouraged the exchange of ideas between Japan and the western world. The Japanese Emperor twice presented MacCauley with honors for his work. See *Unitarianism in America* by George Willis Cooke (1902), pages 303-309, and the entry on MacCauley in *American National Biography*, Oxford University Press (1999).

[50] In addition to broadly agreeing on religious matters, Susan B. Anthony enjoyed a good personal relationship with Rev. Mann and his family. According to page 1257 of Harper’s authorized biography of Anthony, Rev. Mann provided, ”much assistance” (probably a polite exaggeration) with the multi-volume *History of Woman Suffrage*, which was produced primarily by Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. One of the two companies chosen to print those volumes was owned by Charles Mann, Rev. Mann’s son, and himself a member of First Unitarian. See this image of the reverse side of the title page of volume 3 of the edition of the history that he printed and also this obituary of Charles Mann.

[51] *A Rational View of the Bible: Five Lectures on the Date and Origin of the various Books of the Old Testament* (1879), by Newton Mann, page 5.

[52] "Authority: A Sermon", by Newton Mann, in *Unity*, April 13, 1899, page 136.

[53] Blake McKelvey, “When Science Was on Trial in Rochester: 1850-1890,” *Rochester History*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October, 1946, page 14.

[54] When early members of First Unitarian declared the Bible to be "Our Creed," they were being more unconventional than might first appear. As Rev. Mann explained later in his history, they were thereby declaring that the Bible was "sufficient creed." In other words, members of the church were free to interpret the Bible as they wished without being restricted by an official creedal statement that specified how it should be interpreted.

[55] *Import and Outlook of Socialism* (1910) by Newton Mann, pages 265-298.

[56] Nancy A. Hewitt, “The Spiritual Journeys of an Abolitionist”, in *Quakers and Abolition*, edited by Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank (2014), pages 82-83. According to Hewitt, “Although Amy Kirby Post embraced Unitarianism, she still considered herself a progressive Quaker at heart and also continued her friendships with former spiritualists.” Hewitt says Amy Post continue to hold spiritualist meetings in her home after her husband died although there is no evidence that she ever attempted to contact his spirit.

[57] *Affirming the Covenant: A History of Temple B'rith Kodesh, Rochester, New York, 1848-1998* by Peter Eisenstadt (1999), page 83. On that same page, Eisenstadt notes that, "Rabbi Landsberg was an outspoken defender of women's rights," which undoubtedly helped make him popular with Susan B. Anthony and the many other supporters of women's rights at First Unitarian.
[58] *The Jewish Community in Rochester: 1843-1925* by Stuart E. Rosenberg (1954), pages 85-86.
[59] Rochester's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service has since been expanded to include other faith traditions, including Catholic, Islamic, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian.
[60] *Semi-Centennial History of the City of Rochester* by William Farley Peck (1884), pages 285-286. Peck was a member of First Unitarian.
[61] The cartoon is from *The Daily Graphic* (New York), June 5, 1873, page 1.
[62] Members of First Unitarian who are known to have attempted to register to vote included Susan B. Anthony, Mary Anthony, Eliza Jane Smith Mann, Mary Fish Curtis, Mary Post Hallowell, Sarah Kirby Hallowell Willis, Lewia C. Smith, and Mary L. Hebard. Amy Kirby Post, who had begun to attend services regularly at First Unitarian, also tried to register. The names of only about half of those who participated in this action are known. It seems likely that other supporters of women's suffrage at First Unitarian, including Laura Wilcox Ramsdell and Sarah Colman Blackall, participated also.
[63] The Federal Judicial Center, a branch of the U.S. government, provides a transcript of Anthony's speech in an article called "The Trial of Susan B. Anthony" by Ann D. Gordon (2005), pages 45-47. Professional actors Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard (a married couple) reenact Anthony's speech on YouTube.
[64] Caroline Severance, a Unitarian and a women's suffrage activist who was originally from Canandaigua before moving to California, was elected as one of the Free Religious Association's vice-presidents at its founding meeting. Frederick Douglass was elected as one of its vice-presidents at its 1893 meeting, according to "The Frederick Douglass Papers", Library of Congress website, image 6.
[65] *Freedom Moves West* by Charles H. Lyttle (1952), Beacon Press page 173.
[66] The quote by Emerson comes from his talk at the second meeting of the FRA. Here is the full quote: "The earth moves, and the mind opens. I am glad to believe society contains a class of humble souls who enjoy the luxury of a religion that does not degrade; who think it the highest worship to expect of Heaven the most and the best; who do not wonder that there was a Christ, but that there were not a thousand; who have conceived an infinite hope for mankind; who believe that the history of Jesus is the history of every man, written large." This quote is contained in "The Free Religious Association" by George Willis Cooke, *New England Magazine*, Volume 28, 1903, page 490.
[67] *Unitarianism in America: A History of its Origin and Development* by George Willis Cooke (1902), American Unitarian Association, Boston, page 227. Gannett's statement was sometimes reprinted with small variations in the wording.
[68] "Memories of William Channing Gannett," by Charles W. Wendt, *Unity* magazine, March 6, 1924.
[69] *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 28, 1938.
[70] *The Jewish Community in Rochester: 1843-1925* by Stuart E. Rosenberg (1954), pages 74-75.
[71] "The Gannetts of Rochester" by William H. Pease in *Rochester History*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (October 1955), which is the source for much information about the Gannetts in this document.
[72] *Cradle of Freedom: A History of the Negro in Rochester, Western New York and Canada* by Howard W. Coles, Oxford Press, 1942, Dedications page.
[73] "Was There a Need of a Susan B. Anthony?" by William C. Gannett, *Unity*, March 23, 1911, page 55.
[74] *The House Beautiful: A Book Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright*, Pomegranate ArtBooks (1996). The statistics come from the Forward by John Arthur.

[75] *Tastemaker: Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the Postwar American Home* by Monica Penick (2017), Yale University Press, page 9, which says the magazine's founders, "adopted the philosophy of William C. Gannett, the Unitarian minister from whom they borrowed the magazines title." The name "House Beautiful" first appeared in 1678 in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which House Beautiful, located near Hill Difficulty and the Valley of Humiliation, serves as a resting place for weary pilgrims on their journey to the Celestial City.

[76] Images of the entire Frank Lloyd Wright edition of "The House Beautiful" can be viewed here. The text of Gannett's essay is here. An article about First Unitarian's donation of its copy of the book to the University of Rochester Library in 2013 is here. That copy had earlier been donated to First Unitarian by Rev. Gannett's granddaughter, Ruth Gannett Kahn. The book is valuable (in 2024, the copy owned by Wright's mother was valued at over $30,000), which made it problematic to store at church.

[77] Cheryl Sampson, a founding board member of the Rochester Academy Charter School, reproduced Hester Jeffrey's eulogy on YouTube as part of Rochester's celebration of 200th anniversary of Anthony's birth.

[78] Susan B. Anthony wrote a letter to First Unitarian in 1892 that recalled her warm memories of her many years in the church. A transcript of the letter and a scan of its first page are available here.

[79] Most of this paragraph is sourced from a scrapbook of newspaper articles at the Monroe County Library called "Douglass, Frederick. Obituaries, accounts of his funeral and other material. 1895. Scrapbook of Rochester, N.Y., newspaper clippings".

Oddly, David W. Blight's massive biography of Douglass (2018), page 754, mentions only two speakers at Douglass's funeral, saying that "eulogies were offered by the Reverends H. H. Stebbins and W. R. Taylor." The newspaper article from the Rochester *Union and Advertiser* on page 8 of the scrapbook tells a different story, saying that Rev. Stebbins gave the prayer and benediction, Rev. Taylor gave the invocation, and Rev. Wesley A. Ely (of AME Zion) read the from the scriptures, while the two main addresses were delivered by Rev. Gannett and Mary Anthony. Booker T. Washington's biography of Douglass agrees, saying on page 344, "Rev. W. C. Gannett, of the Unitarian Church, delivered the funeral oration. No other in the United States was better qualified by natural disposition and breadth of mind to give adequate estimate of Douglass as a man." John W. Thompson's *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument* (1903) also agrees, saying on page 24 that "Rev. W. C. Gannett officiated at the funeral" and on page 31 that Rev. Gannett delivered "the address of the day." A large portion of Rev. Gannett's address is reproduced on page 12 of the scrapbook and pages 345-346 of the biography by Washington. Gannett said, among other things, "Here was a man who used to the utmost all the opportunities that America held forth to him, and when opportunities were not at hand, he made them."

Telegrams from Rev. Gannett to Helen Douglass, widow of Frederick Douglass, about arrangements for his funeral services in Rochester are preserved at the National Archives here and here.

During his talk, Rev. Gannett promoted the idea of creating a monument to Douglass in Rochester, a project that had been announced a few days earlier by John W. Thompson, a local African American activist (see page 40 of Thompson's History and page 347 of the biography by Washington). Thompson led the project, which resulted in the statue of Douglass that now stands at South Avenue and Robinson Drive in Highland Park, near the site of Douglass's former home. It was the first monument in the country that was created to honor of the life of an individual African American.

Douglass's religious affiliations were complicated. He had historical ties with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church in Rochester, having published the first issues of his newspaper in its basement. He later attended Rochester's Plymouth Congregational Church (according to Susan B. Anthony's remembrances, as reported on page 74 of *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument* by

John W. Thompson, 1903). When Douglass moved to Washington, he became a member of that city's AME Church. (The AME and the AME Zion Churches are different denominations.) He also had long-standing ties with the First Unitarian Church of Rochester. He indicated his agreement with at least some of the liberal religious values of the Unitarians by serving as a vice president of the Free Religious Association, a national organization that had many Unitarian ministers in its leadership, including Rev. Gannett, and that welcomed into its membership people with a wide variety of unorthodox religious views.

[80] "Fraught Friendship: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass" by Ann D. Gordon, the editor of the six-volume *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, is an excellent summary of their relationship.

[81] The *Post Express*, March 15, 1906, page 5, for example, reported that, "A noticeable feature was the many negroes who passed the bier." That article is reprinted in *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* by Ida Husted Harper, Vol. 3 (1908), pages 1429-1431.

[82] Edwin and Catherine Rumball wrote a sixteen-page study called "The Working Girls and Women of Rochester, N. Y.", which can be read here. "E. B. Sweet" is hand-written in the upper right corner of the title page of this copy of the document. That would be Emma Biddlecom Sweet, Susan B. Anthony's secretary and a long-time member of First Unitarian.

[83] *A Needle, a Bobbin, a Strike: Women Needleworkers in America* by Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davidson (1984), Temple University Press, page 105. Also see Rev. Rumball's "The Story of the Common Good", which is the final article in the final issue of that magazine.

[84] "A History of the Rochester City Club" by Blake McKelvey in *Rochester History,* Vol. IX, No. 4, October 1947, pages 14-17.

[85] After he left First Unitarian, Ludwell Denny went into the newspaper business, eventually becoming the chief editorial writer for the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain. He married Dorothy Detzer, head of the U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

[86] "Just Being Human" by Frank C. Doan, page 231, in *Humanist Sermons*, edited by Curtis W. Reese (1927).

[87] *Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism* by William F. Schulz (2002), page 105

[88] "Perkins Understood the Art of Cooking" by Jim Memmott, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Sept. 25, 2019, page 2A. This article can sometimes be viewed here.

[89] "Rochester Jewish Community (1925-1975)", a 1976 interview with Winthrop Hudson by Nancy J. Rosenbloom that was part of the Rochester Oral History Project, pages 2 and 10.

[90] "AHA President Dexter Perkins", on the website of the American Historical Association.

[91] The quote by Rev. Williams comes from *Making the Manifesto: The Birth of Religious Humanism* (2002) by William Schulz, page 105. Schulz, a religious humanist and a former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, defines religious humanism on page 1 of his book as, "a religious movement that emphasized human capabilities, especially the human capacity to reason; that adopted the scientific method to search for truth; and that promoted the right of all humans to develop to their full potential … a movement that sought to construct what Rev. John Dietrich called a 'religion without God.'" Rev. Williams probably would have agreed with everything in that definition except the "religion without God" part. A copy of Williams' *Faith Beyond Humanism* is available for reference in First Unitarian's archives.

[92] Elizabeth Hoisington Stewart and Rochester Friends Meeting, "Rochester Friends Meeting: A History of the 20th Century Rochester [NY] Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends", 2005, p. 3.

[93] "Interfaith Ordination," *Time* magazine, Oct 7, 1940. Unfortunately, we do not have all the information we need to explain the unusual nature of Hanner's ordination. (Note: The first sentence of the *Time* article should be ignored because it contains historical inaccuracies.)
[94] "Retrofitting Rochester: Danforth House" by Emily Morry, Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle*, Sept. 13, 2015.
[95] Albert Rhys Williams was a reporter in Russia during the 1917 Communist revolution. He was a friend of Lenin, Russia's new leader, and vigorously supported his policies, although he was critical of Stalin, Lenin's successor. In 1919, after he returned to the US, he was invited to speak at the Rochester City Club, which Rev. Rumball had helped to establish. Threatened with arrest if he spoke in favor of communism, he cancelled his talk and spoke instead in another city. In 1932, he was once again invited to appear at the City Club, where he spoke on "The Religious Significance of Communism." See "A History of the Rochester City Club," *Rochester History*, Vol. IX, No. 4, October 1947, pages 11-12.
[96] See "Susan B. Anthony Halls" and "Campus Buildings from 1850 to the Present" on the University of Rochester's website. Edwine Danforth's name is incorrectly spelled Edwina in some places on these websites.
[97] *18 Years with Architect Louis I. Kahn* by August Komendant (1975), page 40. Wikipedia has a detailed article on the architecture of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester.
[98] "Housing for the Spirit" by Paul Goldberger, *New York Times*, Dec. 26, 1982.
[99] During the exhibition, the mayor of Leningrad commented to Kahn that First Unitarian's building did not look like a church. Kahn, aware that the Soviets discouraged religion, jokingly responded, "That's why it was chosen for exhibition in the Soviet Union." See *Modern Architecture and Other Essays* by Vincent Scully (2003), page 310.
[100] According to Cynthia Howk, President of the Landmark Society of Western New York, during her lecture at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the building in 2012.
[101] "The 1963 March on Washington", by Robert West (1963), published on the website of the Unitarian Universalists Association.
[102] The designation of the church as a sanctuary expressed support for draft resistors but had no legal effect. If a draft resistor had claimed sanctuary at the church, that would not have protected him from arrest.
[103] The content of Volume 1 of the *Building Your Own Theology* series is available here.
[104] There was still a lingering opposition in parts of the congregation to women in the ministry. Rev. Chapin told the author that, after a sermon she had delivered, an elderly female member of the church quietly said to her, "You know, you don't belong up there."
[105] "Congregation Pledges to Halve Holiday Spending", *UU World*, Dec 22, 2006
[106] "Our Mission" on the website of Connect and Breathe. Also see "To Listen Without Judging" by Kimberly French, *UU World*, Feb. 28, 2011.
[107] During one church service, Rev. Anderson secretly organized a "flash mob" that led to exuberant dancing in the aisles. Here is the video.