

The Quaker Unitarians of Rochester

Radical Quakers and the First Unitarian Church in the Mid-1800s

By William Fugate, 2023, rev. 2025

www.rochesterunitarian.org/history

The meetings of the International Council of Women were grand affairs. Delegates at its founding conference in Washington in 1888 were honored with a reception at the White House. At its London congress a year later, Queen Victoria invited delegates to a reception at Windsor Castle. At its Berlin congress in 1904, the German Empress received the organization's leaders at her palace.

At one point during the founding conference, there were several women on the podium with two surprising things in common: they came from modest Quaker backgrounds, and they were associated with the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, New York. These women played important roles in the progressive movements of their time, and they brought their commitment to social justice to First Unitarian, with which they had begun to associate around 1850.

From "Unitarian Quakers" to Quaker Unitarians

Their story begins many years earlier, in 1828, when the Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) split into two major bodies. Those who eventually joined First Unitarian came from a group known as the Hicksite Quakers, named after Elias Hicks, whose liberal teachings precipitated the split. The Hicksites were sometimes called Unitarian Quakers, a term that has since fallen out of use. They were called that not because they were associated with the newly formed Unitarian denomination but because their beliefs were compatible with a trend of unitarian thinking that was affecting several denominations.

People with unitarian views generally preferred to focus on the teachings of Jesus rather than beliefs about the significance of his death. They were especially uncomfortable with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the belief that God is three persons in one: Jehovah, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. People who were not trinitarian in theology were often called unitarians. Some of those who had unitarian views formed the American Unitarian Association in 1825 despite opposition from others with similar views who feared the creation of a separate denomination would impede this theological trend.¹

In a speech in 1893, *Susan B. Anthony** referred to this broader unitarian movement when discussing her Quaker ancestors:

I was born into this earth right into the midst of the ferment of the division of the Society of Friends, as it was called, on the great question which has divided all the religious peoples of Christendom, and my grandfather and grandmother and my father, all Quakers, took the radical side, the Unitarian, which has been denounced as infidel.²

Similarly, the *History of Woman Suffrage*, which Anthony helped produce, described famed Quaker preacher Lucretia Mott as "affiliated with the branch called 'Hicksite,' or 'Unitarian Quakers.'"³

* Italic font is used to indicate members of progressive Quaker families who lived in Rochester, including non-Quaker spouses in some cases. Certain names sometimes appear here in a long form not always found in other histories. *Sarah Kirby Hallowell Willis's* name, for example, might appear elsewhere variously as Sarah Kirby, Sarah Hallowell, or Sarah Willis, her birth name and her two married names. The long form makes it easier to keep track of the many family interrelationships in this group of Quakers.

Sunderland Gardner, a prominent Hicksite preacher, explained unitarian theology in his own terms by saying, "Since the beginning of the fourth century religious teachers have divided God into three parts, counting Jesus as one of the parts. Jesus, however, was the Son of God in the same way that others may become the sons of God, by being led by the Spirit of God; and in this sense they are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. But he did not constitute an equal part in the God-head, he was not omniscient, nor is there any omniscience save that of the One God, the Almighty Father."⁴ The Hicksite movement involved many issues, however, and most of its members chose not to label it as "unitarian."

Unitarians and Hicksite Quakers shared some important characteristics other than this point of theology. Notably, neither denomination required its members to adhere to a narrow doctrine; both were composed of congregations with a relatively large degree of freedom of thought and expression compared to other denominations. One consequence was that Hicksite Quakers who were unhappy with their congregation for any reason found in some cases that they could join a nearby Unitarian congregation without abandoning their core Quaker identities. This had already happened in some areas. In the early 1820s, Quakers in New Bedford, Massachusetts, split into two groups, one wanting members to have at least the option of engaging with the new ideas of the modern world, and the other wanting to follow more restrictive policies. People in the former group, who were known as the New Light Quakers, eventually joined the local Unitarian Church in numbers large enough to alter the nature of that congregation. A similar event occurred in Philadelphia a few years later.⁵

The two denominations also shared a concern for social justice, as shown by the many references to Quakers and Unitarians in histories of the movements for the abolition of slavery and for women's rights. Participating in broad-based reform organizations, however, generated controversy among Quakers, who historically had avoided mixing with non-Quakers more than necessary. When a significant number of Hicksite Quakers in the Rochester/Finger Lakes region of New York began to insist on working with outsiders in opposition to slavery, the resulting tension led some of them to seek other religious homes.

A Quaker who transitioned to a Unitarian Church would have experienced a very different type of service. Most obviously, congregants there would not be wearing plain clothing and addressing others as "thee" and "thou." A Hicksite service typically involved quietly waiting for a member of the congregation to speak when inspired by their "Inner Light," which they believed to be a direct awareness of God's will. A Unitarian service, like most Protestant services, was based instead on a sermon. Unlike most Protestant churches, however, a sermon in a Unitarian church might be based on modern ideas. In the 1870s, for example, First Unitarian's minister, Rev. Newton Mann, gained public attention by preaching in favor of Darwin's new theory of evolution.

Abolitionist Activity and the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society

The campaign to abolish slavery involved many Quakers in the Rochester area, especially members of the progressive wing of the Hicksites. They were particularly attracted to the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), founded and led by William Lloyd Garrison. He urged abolitionists to reject politics as a means of ending slavery and instead to use "moral suasion" to convince those who engaged in slavery that what they were doing was wrong. This approach was particularly appealing to Quakers, who had traditionally abstained from voting and other forms of political activity.

Garrison welcomed women into leading positions in the organization, a controversial approach that appealed to many of the progressive Quakers. The AASS convention in 1840 elected Abby Kelley, a

Quaker woman, to its business committee, spurring a walkout of conservatives who created a rival abolitionist organization. Adding to the tensions within the movement, some influential abolitionists were arguing that moral suasion wasn't working, that slavery, instead of fading away, was becoming increasingly entrenched. Turning toward political activity instead, they created the abolitionist Liberty Party in 1840, a move that eventually had repercussions for Rochester's Quaker Unitarians.

Progressive Quakers were the main force within the newly founded Western New York Anti-Slavery Society (WNYASS), which followed Garrison's principles. The Rochester abolitionist community had traditionally been composed of separate organizations for men and women as well as for blacks and whites. The WNYASS, the most radical of the abolitionist organizations in the area, united all opponents of slavery, regardless of sex or race, into a single organization, which seemed like a hazardous social experiment to many people. Women played important roles in this organization, which also created controversy. When *Sarah David Bills Fish*, a WNYASS member who later joined First Unitarian, helped to organize an anti-slavery petition campaign in Rochester in 1835, the mayor's wife wrote her a letter saying that such matters were more properly handled by those who had been entrusted with governmental affairs (who, of course, were all men). This "worldly" activism created severe friction within the Rochester Hicksite congregation, eventually prompting many of those who were active in the WNYASS to associate with First Unitarian.

Arrival of Frederick Douglass

Abby Kelley spoke in Rochester several times and was warmly welcomed by local progressive Quakers. When she spoke in 1842, she was accompanied by a newcomer to the abolitionist speaker circuit, Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery. *Amy and Isaac Post* invited Douglass to stay at their home during his visit, marking the beginning of his long friendship with these leading Hicksite Quaker activists. When Douglass decided in 1847 to locate his new abolitionist newspaper in Rochester, he did so, he said, because of the warm welcome he had received there.

Douglass opened the office of the *North Star* on Main Street a short distance from Isaac Post's pharmacy. The WNYASS became one of his main supporters, raising money for his newspaper with a series of anti-slavery fairs, fourteen of them in 1848 alone. The WNYASS opened an abolitionist reading room directly above Douglass's office, providing tracts and other reading material for the public and a meeting place for activists. William Nell, Douglass's co-editor, who was also African American, boarded with the *Posts* for over a year.

In 1851, Douglass created turmoil among abolitionists by abandoning Garrison's strategy of opposing slavery by moral suasion and turning instead to political action. The WNYASS, still committed to its original beliefs, switched its fund-raising efforts to Garrison's abolitionist organization in Boston. Douglass responded by encouraging the creation of a new abolitionist organization, the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society (RLASS), which approved of political action. The RLASS, a group of about thirty people at most, raised money for Douglass' newspaper and sponsored a series of lectures, including Douglass' famous "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"⁶

Douglass described the resulting situation in his autobiography, referring to several Quakers and non-Quakers who are discussed further below in connection with First Unitarian:

Among my friends ... were Isaac and Amy Post, William and Mary Hallowell, Asa and Hulda Anthony, and indeed all the committee of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. [Italics

added to identify progressive Quakers - WF.] They held festivals and fairs to raise money, and assisted me in every other possible way to keep my paper in circulation, while I was a non-voting abolitionist, but withdrew from me when I became a voting abolitionist. For a time the withdrawal of their cooperation embarrassed me very much, but soon another class of friends was raised up for me, chief amongst them who were the Porter family of Rochester. The late Samuel D. Porter and his wife Susan F. Porter and his sisters, Maria and Elmira Porter, deserve grateful mention as among my steadfast friends, who did much in the way of supplying pecuniary aid.⁷

The Porter sisters, Maria and Almira (spelled Elmira by Douglass), were members of the First Unitarian Church. Maria was the RLASS's treasurer for its entire existence, and Almira served on its executive board.⁸ Other women from the church were members of the RLASS also, which was consistent with First Unitarian's long association with political abolitionism. Slavery had been abolished in New York State through political action, with Matthew Brown, the first chairman of Rochester's Board of Town Supervisors⁹ and First Unitarian's congregational president during its formative years, helping to secure that legislation. On the day in 1827 when that law took effect, a delegation of African Americans visited Brown to thank him for his work.¹⁰ Myron Holley, another of First Unitarian's earliest leaders, was a co-founder of the abolitionist Liberty Party, which was designed to force the major parties to address the issue of slavery.¹¹

First Unitarian and the Abolitionists

First Unitarian now had the curious distinction of being a stronghold of two rival abolitionist groups, the WNYASS and the RLASS. (There were also other abolitionist organizations in Rochester, including one with an all-male membership and one with a membership of black women.) Fortunately for the church, the rivalry between "moral suasion" and "political action" abolitionists was not as strong in Rochester as it was in some other areas. The WNYASS eventually faded away while the RLASS was active until 1868. For several years it funded the work of Julia Wilbur, one of its members, who relocated to Washington to assist the large number of formerly enslaved people who sought refuge there.

Avoidance of political activity had flowed naturally from the traditional Quaker practice of maintaining a distance from the "world's people," but when progressive Quakers broke with that tradition and began working with non-Quaker activists, there was less reason for them to avoid political action. They were acutely aware, however, that a focus on politics would tend to marginalize women, who were prevented by law from voting. Nonetheless, *William Hallowell*, a progressive Quaker who joined First Unitarian as early as 1849, made it clear that he had switched to political abolitionism in 1856 by joining the newly formed Republican Party, a successor to the Liberty Party.¹²

It is remarkable that the church was so welcoming to abolitionists. Rightly remembered today as heroes, abolitionists endured strong hostility in their own time. Writing in the 1930s, Dexter Perkins, Rochester's City Historian (and a member of First Unitarian), 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."¹³ Even those who agreed that slavery was abhorrent feared that pressing the issue could lead to a disastrous national conflict.

The Friends of Human Progress

The increasing tension among Hicksite Quakers between those who wanted to stand apart from the outside world and those who wanted to work with others for social justice reached a breaking point in 1848. In June of that year, about two hundred Hicksite Quakers walked out of a regional meeting in Farmington, New York, near Canandaigua, to form a new organization. Originally called the Congregational Friends and later the Progressive Friends, the organization was eventually named the Friends of Human Progress to make it clearer that membership was not restricted to Quakers.

The organization sponsored annual meetings in Waterloo, New York, that welcomed all social reformers, including, in its words, "Christians, Jews, Mahammedans, and Pagans."¹⁴ (The word "Pagans" was a reference to the traditional beliefs of Native Americans, whose rights were championed by Quakers in the Finger Lakes area.) According to Quaker historian Christopher Densmore, the organization, "provided a platform for reformers who were otherwise Quakers, Unitarians, Spiritualists and Free Thinkers."¹⁵ Most members were former Hicksite Quakers, including the *Posts* and others who had left that group as they became more active in the abolitionist movement. *Susan B. Anthony* served a term as one of its clerks, an important position within the group. One of its members was Rev. Samuel May, the Unitarian minister in Syracuse.

At its annual meeting in 1853, the organization declared that "every member of the human family, without regard to color or sex, possesses potentially the same faculties and powers, capable of like cultivation and development and consequently has the same rights, interests and destiny."¹⁶ According to historian Nancy A. Hewitt, this assertion of the fundamental equality of all humans regardless of race or sex may have made it unique among organizations of that time.¹⁷

In a sense, this was a minor organization, having no periodical, no headquarters, and no leaders aside from those who organized its annual gatherings at the Quaker Meetinghouse in Waterloo, New York. On the other hand, these gatherings often included leading reformers such as Frederick Douglass, *Susan B. Anthony* and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ensuring a national impact. Other Friends of Human Progress groups were organized in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio.

A Church Home

Having left their congregations, these progressive Quakers were without a church home. For several years those who lived in Rochester held "free meetings" in members' homes, often at the *Post's*, where they and others with similar views could worship as they saw fit. Like the meetings of the Friends of Human Progress, these were open to everyone regardless of race, sex or religious background, and they were conducted in an atmosphere that encouraged social activism. Some of these Quakers, such as the *Anthony's* and *Hallowells*, also began attending services at First Unitarian. Others followed, and eventually First Unitarian became the church home for several of these families.

The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention

In July 1848, only a month after progressive Quakers in western New York split from the main Hicksite body to form their own organization, three women from that group helped organize an historic event whose reverberations are still felt strongly today. Mary Ann M'Clintock, Martha Coffin Wright, and Jane Hunt met in Waterloo with Lucretia Mott, a leading Hicksite Quaker who was visiting from Philadelphia, and with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a non-Quaker from nearby Seneca Falls. The meeting began as a casual gathering of friends but soon developed into something much more as Stanton voiced her frustrations with the restrictions on women.

A married woman in those days was considered to be an extension of her husband. According to Blackstone's *Commentaries*, the basis for common law in both Britain and the U.S. at the time, "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."¹⁸ A woman wasn't allowed to vote, and she was not supposed to speak at a public gathering, especially one that included men, or even eat alone at a restaurant. A woman who was married could not sign legal contracts; her husband had nearly complete control over the family's money and its members. He even had the legal right to specify in his will that custody of "his" children should be given to someone other than their mother in the event of his death.

Quaker families tended to be organized along more equitable lines. Quaker women, including well-known activists such as Lucretia Mott, played important roles within their family, their congregation, and their community. Many lesser-known female Quakers also embraced wider roles. Within Quaker congregations, women spoke when moved to do so by their Inner Light, just as men did, providing invaluable experience for those who participated in meetings organized by abolitionists and other activists. Contrary to the standard practice of the time, organizations influenced by progressive Quakers, including the WNYASS and the Friends of Human Progress, usually referred to a married woman by her own name rather than her husband's (Amy Post instead of Mrs. Isaac Post, for example).¹⁹

Stirred by Stanton's impassioned outpourings about the discrimination suffered by women, and well-schooled in public speaking and social activism, the four Quaker women joined Stanton to issue a call for a women's rights convention to be held a few days later, on July 19 and 20, 1848, in nearby Seneca Falls. It drew about 300 people, women and men, largely from the immediate area. The world's first women's rights convention, it launched an entire movement, inspiring other activists to organize a series of regional and national women's rights conventions over the following decade.

Frederick Douglass attended the Seneca Falls Convention and spoke forcefully there for women's rights. He traveled from Rochester with four progressive Quaker women: *Amy Kirby Post*, Amy's stepdaughter *Mary Post Hallowell*, Amy's sister and Mary's aunt *Sarah Kirby Hallowell*, and *Catherine Fish Stebbins*. *Susan B. Anthony*, who was teaching school in central New York, did not attend.

The Rochester Women's Rights Convention

As the convention ended, an announcement was made of a follow-up convention to be held two weeks later in Rochester, a larger community about 50 miles to the west. It met on August 2, 1848, in the First Unitarian Church, which some of the progressive Quakers had already begun to attend. The organizing committee, which was chaired by *Amy Kirby Post*, included her stepdaughter *Mary Post Hallowell*, *Sarah David Bills Fish*, *Sarah C. Owen* and *Rhoda DeGarmo*.²⁰

The committee decided to nominate a woman to preside over the convention, something not even the Seneca Falls Convention had dared to do. What would happen if she needed to rule a man out of order? How would he react? How would the convention react? As the convention opened, the committee nominated Abigail Bush, who was active in the WNYASS, as its presiding officer. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, key organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention, strongly opposed this move, thinking it "a most hazardous experiment to have a woman President." Despite their opposition (for which they later apologized), the convention at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester elected Abigail Bush as its presiding officer, making it the first public meeting of both men and women in the U.S. to do

so. Three women also served as secretaries for this convention: *Sarah Kirby Hallowell*, *Catherine Fish Stebbins* and *Mary Post Hallowell*, with *Sarah Anthony Burtis*, a schoolteacher with a strong voice, assisting with the reading of the minutes.²¹

Decades later, while preparing for First Unitarian's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of this event, Rev. William C. Gannett asked long-time church member *Mary Post Hallowell*, one of the convention's organizers, about these women. She said, "All were Hicksite Quakers of the anti-slavery kind (most of the Hicksites here not being abolitionists), who were probably going to this Unitarian Church and gradually identifying themselves with it."²²

The Rochester convention also differed from the one in Seneca Falls by including in its discussions the problems faced by working women. Its declared purpose was "to consider the Rights of Woman, Politically, Religiously and Industrially." The convention called for equal pay for equal work and created a committee to investigate the condition of working women in Rochester. A month later, this committee formed a local branch of the Working Women's Protective Union with Mrs. George Roberts as president, Charlotte Cavan as vice president, Sarah C. Owen as secretary, and *Amy Kirby Post* as treasurer. "Mrs. George Roberts" is thought to have been Ruth Roberts, the widow of the former editor of a small local newspaper that advocated workers' rights.

Three Neighboring Churches

Abigail Bush, who presided over the Rochester Convention, as well as Charlotte Cavan and Sarah C. Owen, officers of the Working Women's Protective Union, were former members of the Second Presbyterian Church, usually known as the Brick Church. Much as had happened to the local Hicksite Quakers, antislavery activists in the Brick Church had been forced to leave their congregation. Some of them eventually joined First Unitarian, including Charlotte Cavan and her husband James, a tailor, both of whom joined in the 1850s,²³ as well as John and Lemira Kedzie (more on them below).

The Brick Church, the Hicksite Quaker Meetinghouse, and the First Unitarian Church were clustered together at what is today the intersection of North Fitzhugh Street and Allen Street in downtown Rochester. The Brick Church, with its unusually tall steeple, was on the west side of Fitzhugh. It evolved into today's Downtown United Presbyterian Church (DUPC), which has a progressive congregation in a newer and much larger building. The Quakers were on the east side of the street almost directly across from the Brick Church. First Unitarian's building was a little to the south of the Brick Church in what today is the parking lot of the DUPC complex. A plaque on the wall of the DUPC building nearest to the parking lot commemorates the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian.

The Sodus Bay Phalanx

Another movement that attracted progressive Quakers was one that sought to create cooperative communities based on the writings of French utopian socialist Charles Fourier. One such community, the Sodus Bay Phalanx, was established in 1844 about 40 miles east of Rochester. Such cooperative communities, which would probably be called "communes" today, were popular at the time, leading Ralph Waldo Emerson to comment, "Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket."²⁴ This historic site is now an animal shelter that welcomes visitors on its hiking trails.²⁵

A surprising number of the progressive Quakers who later associated with Rochester's First Unitarian Church were part of the Sodus Bay Phalanx. *Benjamin* and *Sarah Fish* were key members; Benjamin was the community's president for most of its short life (it closed in 1846). *Catherine Fish*, their daughter, met and married Giles Stebbins there. Stebbins was a Unitarian from Massachusetts and a former member of a Fourierist community in that state. *Asa* and *Huldah Griffin Anthony* were members, as was *Huldah's* sister, *Sarah Hoxsie Griffin Hurn* and her husband *John White Hurn*. *Isaac* and *Amy Post* were non-resident members of the phalanx. More on these families appears below.

The Underground Railroad

Many of these same individuals were involved in the Underground Railroad, a loosely organized network of abolitionists who assisted African Americans who were fleeing slavery. The network was quite active in Rochester, which for some escapees was the last stop before crossing Lake Ontario to freedom in Canada. It operated somewhat openly in Rochester until Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, which made it more dangerous to assist runaways; it operated less openly afterwards. *Amy Kirby Post* estimated that the Rochester section assisted about 150 people per year.²⁶

A study of the Underground Railroad in the Rochester area that was written by the Monroe County Historian identified "stations" that were operated by over fifty individuals and families.²⁷ Of those, six were operated by Quaker families that included one or more members who eventually associated with First Unitarian: *Daniel and Lucy Anthony*, *Asa and Huldah Anthony*, *Isaac and Amy Post*, *William and Mary Post Hollowell*, *Benjamin and Sarah Fish*, and *Lewis and Sarah Anthony Burtis*. Non-Quaker members of First Unitarian, including Maria Porter and John and Lemira Kedzie, were also listed in this study as active in the Underground Railroad. According to church lore, at least one other church member was active in the Underground Railroad, but this has not been independently verified.²⁸

Frederick Douglass and John Brown

In October 1859, abolitionist John Brown led an attack on the U.S. armory at Harper's Ferry, hoping to spark an uprising of enslaved African Americans. Brown was captured and sentenced to death along with six of his companions. On the day of his execution, *Susan B. Anthony* organized a meeting of "mourning and indignation" at Rochester's Corinthian Hall to raise money for Brown's family.²⁹

Frederick Douglass had been in close contact with Brown and knew of his plans, although he did not support the attack on Harper's Ferry and was lecturing in Philadelphia at the time of the attack. Brown's action nonetheless had repercussions for Douglass that led to dramatic actions by people associated with First Unitarian.

John W. Hurn had moved from Rochester to Philadelphia, where he worked as a telegraph operator. He intercepted a telegram to the local sheriff instructing him to arrest Douglass on suspicion of conspiring with Brown. Risking severe criminal penalties, Hurn alerted Douglass and delayed delivery of the telegram long enough for him to flee across the river to safety in New Jersey.

Douglass, aware that he had papers at home that could be used to implicate him, sent a carefully worded and unsigned telegram to his friend Frank Blackall, a telegraph operator in Rochester. Douglass asked Blackall to tell Douglass's son to secure Douglass's papers, which he did.

Douglass unobtrusively returned to Rochester and went into hiding for a short while. When a Rochester newspaper published a letter from him to John Brown, Douglass decided it would be dangerous to remain in the country. *Isaac and Amy Post* secretly conveyed him on the first part of his journey to Canada. Douglass was met there and taken to safety by *William Hallowell*, the Post's son-in-law, who happened to be in Canada on business. Douglass remained outside the U.S. until after the start of the Civil War.³⁰

Remarkably, everyone involved in this episode except Douglass himself was either a member of First Unitarian or was otherwise part of its broader church community: *John W. Hurn*, Frank Blackall, *Isaac and Amy Post*, and *William Hallowell*. Details are farther below.

The First Unitarian Community

There were several reasons why First Unitarian might have attracted Rochester's progressive Quakers. Its unitarian theology would have been familiar to them. It met their desire for worship in a relatively open atmosphere without rigid doctrinal restrictions. Importantly, several of its members were committed social activists who worked beside these Quakers in the Underground Railroad and the women's rights movement.

First Unitarian looked particularly attractive during the ministry of Rev. William Henry Channing. Speaking of her parents and siblings, *Mary Anthony* (Susan B's sister) 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* 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's views on social reform were broadly aligned with those of the progressive Quakers, including his commitment to the abolition of slavery. 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 was not large, but he gave like a prince."³³ Channing also championed the rights of women. He was one of two vice presidents of the first National Woman's Rights Convention in 1850 and was a member of the committee that organized several annual national conventions afterwards.³⁴ Earlier, he had also been a leader of the Boston Union of Associationists, which supported Fourierist communities like the Sodus Bay Phalanx.³⁵

Channing, however, left after only two years at First Unitarian, disheartened by conflicts within the congregation. Rev. Newton Mann's 1881 history of the church says that within the congregation 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." Rev. William Gannett, who followed Rev. Mann, said that church services during that period sometimes led to "slamming pew doors as indignant listeners bolted."³⁶

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? The major sources of disruptive conflict, however, were disagreements over social and political issues, such as slavery and women's rights. Some of the members, including *Susan B. Anthony*, unnerved many people by supporting the Garrisonian slogan of "No union with

slaveholders" and calling for the northern states to separate from the slave-holding southern states to protect themselves from the growing power of those states within the national government.³⁷ Spiritualism was another source of contention. This movement began near Rochester when the young Fox sisters, Kate and Margaretta, claimed they could communicate with the dead by interpreting mysterious tapping sounds. Their mother arranged a demonstration for her friends *Isaac and Amy Post*, who became convinced of the girls' ability. Isaac became deeply involved with this new movement, publishing a book in 1852 about what he considered to be his own communications with the spirits of Benjamin Franklin and others. *Benjamin and Sarah Fish* often joined the Post's seances, as did *Asa Anthony* and the *Burtises*. Part of spiritualism's appeal was the belief that it was a scientific breakthrough similar to the newly developed method of communicating over long distances with telegraphy, which was accomplished by tapping messages in Morse code. Another appeal was the way it bypassed established religious institutions and their male-dominated hierarchies. Spiritualism, however, did not interest most members of First Unitarian, some of whom denounced it as a mixture of fraud and self-delusion.

Making a bad situation even worse, the congregation unwittingly hired a minister who turned out to be strongly pro-slavery. He didn't last long, but the uproar created by his ministry damaged the congregation.

These disputes eventually brought the congregation to a state of near paralysis. In early 1859, *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."³⁸ Anthony, who was an agnostic,³⁹ said she modeled her proposed church on the one in Boston led by Theodore Parker, an abolitionist and a radical Unitarian minister who helped to set the future direction of the denomination by rejecting the authority of the Bible and the validity of miracles. Anthony abandoned her project after a trial run of several meetings showed there was insufficient public support. Had it been successful, her new church would have resembled in many respects the church that First Unitarian itself became after the Civil War, a development that was undoubtedly influenced partly by Anthony and other Quaker Unitarians.

First Unitarian's building was destroyed by fire in November 1859. The exhausted congregation drifted without a minister or building for several years, resuming normal activity only after the Civil War had ended and they had put many of their conflicts behind them. Rev. Frederick W. Holland, a former minister of the church who had done much to put it on a solid footing during the 1840s, returned in 1865 to pull the congregation together and construct a new building. In 1870, the church chose Rev. Newton Mann as its minister, one who welcomed new ideas. He advocated 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."⁴⁰ His eighteen-year ministry was a period of stability and growth.

Progressive Quakers at First Unitarian

Susan B. Anthony's parents often hosted Sunday gatherings at their thirty-two-acre farm near what is today the intersection of Brooks Avenue and Genesee Park Boulevard about a mile west of the University of Rochester campus.⁴¹ Frederick Douglass and his family were frequent guests, which means these gatherings often included the man who was becoming the most famous African American of that time and the woman who would soon become the most famous American woman.⁴²

Anthony's authorized biography, written with her direct assistance, mentions these gatherings and thereby provides a useful listing of the members of this group of progressive Quakers. It says, "Here

were gathered many times the *Posts, Hollowells, DeGarmos, Willises, Burtises, Kedzies, Fishes, Curtises, Stebbins, Asa Anthonys*, all Quakers who had left the society on account of their anti-slavery principles and were leaders in the abolition and woman's rights movements."⁴³ Almost all these families eventually either joined the First Unitarian Church of Rochester or were otherwise part of its broader church community. Harold Sanford's 1929 history of First Unitarian names some of them, saying, "Our church was probably by strong majority abolitionist, an earnest group of Hicksite Quakers having attached themselves to the church as their own meeting grew inactive and faded out—the Anthonys, Hollowells, Willises, Posts, Fishes, etc." Below are details about the progressive Quakers who associated with First Unitarian.

Anthonys

The most famous of these families, of course, was the Anthony family itself, especially *Susan B. Anthony*. According to her authorized biography, when she returned home from a teaching position in central New York in 1849, she "found her family attending the Unitarian church, which soon afterwards called William Henry Channing to its pulpit."⁴⁴ Her parents, *Daniel Anthony* (1794–1862) and *Lucy Read Anthony* (1793–1880), made First Unitarian their church home, but they never officially joined the church. Deeply involved in the social justice movements of their time, they attended the August 1848 women's rights convention at First Unitarian and made their farm an important stop on the Underground Railroad.⁴⁵ Once, while Susan was managing the farm in her father's temporary absence, she noted in her diary, "Fitted out a fugitive slave for Canada with the help of Harriet Tubman."⁴⁶

Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was listed as a member of First Unitarian in Rev. Newton Mann's 1881 history of the church (see Appendix). As early as 1853, she worked closely with Rev. William Henry Channing to organize a convention that launched a state-wide campaign for improved property rights for married women.⁴⁷

She was a fierce opponent of slavery. In 1856, she became the New York State agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society and spoke throughout the state, sometimes in the face of intense antagonism. Speaking in Rochester under the banner of "No Union with Slaveholders - No Compromise" in early 1861 on the eve of the Civil War, Anthony and other speakers had to be escorted by the police from the hall in which they were speaking for their own safety due to threats from riotous opponents.

In 1869, she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Shortly afterwards, the American Woman Suffrage Association, a less confrontational organization that included men as well as women, was formed as a rival. Based in Massachusetts, it was led by Lucy Stone, who also was a Unitarian.

In 1872, in an action that made her a national hero to many, Susan B. Anthony gathered fifteen women friends and walked to a nearby voting station to demand the right to vote in the upcoming elections. The election inspectors, who were sympathetic to their cause, agreed to register them, which allowed the women to cast their ballots a few days later. Inspired by their daring, some twenty to thirty other women tried to register elsewhere in Rochester but were turned away. At least nine of those who participated in this action were associated with First Unitarian, and six of those were from Quaker backgrounds: *Susan B. Anthony, Mary Anthony, Amy Kirby Post, Mary Fish Curtis, Mary Post Hollowell, and Sarah Kirby Hollowell Willis*. The other three were Lewia C. Smith, Mary L. Hebard, and Eliza Jane Smith Mann, the wife of the church's minister. The names of only about half of those who participated

in this action are known. It seems likely that other committed suffragists from the church participated also, such as Laura Wilcox Ramsdell and Sarah Colman Blackall.⁴⁸

Of those who succeeded in casting ballots, only Susan B. Anthony was arrested for violating laws that prohibited women from voting. At her trial in Canandaigua, which created a national sensation, she was fined \$100 (which she refused to pay). At the end of the trial, during which Anthony had been prevented from speaking, the judge asked her if she had anything to say. She certainly did. Over the angry objections of the judge, she replied with the most famous speech in the history of the fight for women's suffrage, excoriating the judge and laws that discriminated against women in words that were widely circulated for years afterward.

During the period leading up to the trial, local women created the Women's Taxpayers Association to organize support for Anthony and for women's right to vote. Its name referred to the "No taxation without representation" slogan of the American Revolution. Affiliated with Anthony's NWSA, it was the first women's suffrage organization in Rochester. Its president was Lewia C. Smith, a member of First Unitarian who was better known as Mrs. L. C. Smith, the name by which she is listed in Mann's history.⁴⁹ Its vice president was a younger activist named Mary L. Hebard, also a member of First Unitarian, who had published a pamphlet called "Female Suffrage" based on speeches she had given.⁵⁰ Several other members of this organization were from First Unitarian, including Eliza Mann, *Mary Anthony*, *Sarah Kirby Hallowell Willis*, *Mary Fish Curtis*, *Catherine Fish Stebbins*, *Mary Post Hallowell*, and Sarah Blackall.

Susan B. Anthony became the most visible leader of the women's suffrage movement. The Nineteenth Amendment, which in 1920 guaranteed the right of women to vote, was popularly known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment because of her leadership in the long campaign for its passage. She spent many years of her life on the road without a home of her own, delivering speeches and organizing for women's suffrage. During breaks from her arduous schedule, she would return to Rochester, staying with her sister Mary and attending services with her at First Unitarian.

Mary Anthony (1827-1907), her sister, is also listed in Mann's history as a member of First Unitarian. She was a very active member. According to Susan B. Anthony's authorized biography, "The whole life of Mary Anthony was one of self-sacrifice and service to others ... Every line of the varied activities of the Unitarian Church received her assistance."⁵¹

Mary worked as a schoolteacher in Rochester. When she became an assistant principal, she insisted on receiving the same pay as a man, an unusual accomplishment at the time. She eventually became a full principal. Her house at 17 Madison Street became the home of both sisters when Susan retired from her strenuous speaking tours. Their home is now the centerpiece of the National Susan B. Anthony Museum and House.

Mary Anthony attended the 1848 Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian. She was one of the women who voted in violation of the law along with her sister in the 1872 elections. She also helped to establish the Political Equality Club in Rochester as the successor to the Women's Taxpayers Association and was its president for many years. When she became corresponding secretary for the New York State Woman Suffrage Association in 1893, the Anthony home became the state headquarters for the campaign for the right of women to vote in New York. She was buried next to her sister at Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Posts

Amy Kirby Post (1802-1889) and *Isaac Post* (1798-1872) were in many ways the center of the progressive Quaker community in Rochester. Several of their friends and relatives who were active in reform movements lived near their home and visited them frequently. Aside from *Susan B. Anthony*, Amy Post is the only person in that community to be the subject of a book-length biography: *Radical Friend: Amy Post and Her Activist Worlds*, by Nancy A. Hewitt, the source of much of the information about Rochester's progressive Quakers in this document.

Amy and Isaac Post described themselves as radicals who were working toward a fundamental reordering of society. Both were members of the Friends of Human Progress, for which Amy served a term as clerk. Having aided escapees from slavery almost since their arrival in Rochester in 1836, they are credited with assisting more people on the Underground Railroad than anyone else in Rochester.⁵² The former location of their house on what is now Plymouth Avenue is commemorated by a historical marker near the Hochstein School.

Amy participated in the Seneca Falls convention, traveling there in the company of Frederick Douglass, her sister *Sarah Kirby Hall*, her stepdaughter *Mary Post Hall*, and *Catherine Fish Stebbins*. She was the main organizer of the Rochester Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian two weeks later. She and Isaac were among the founding members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society (WNYASS), and they both served on its executive committee. Amy was the driving force behind its fund-raising fairs in support of abolitionist causes, such as Frederick Douglass's newspaper.

Isaac operated a pharmacy in the heart of Rochester's business district at what is now Main Street and Exchange Street. He undoubtedly attended at least some services at First Unitarian, but, being deeply committed to spiritualism, he was never as closely associated with the church as Amy, their children, and other family members were.

Amy Post's biographer, Nancy A. Hewitt, examined her spiritual life in a study called "The Spiritual Journeys of an Abolitionist: Amy Kirby Post, 1802-1889." Hewitt said that despite leaving the Quakers, Amy continued to follow their teachings about heeding the Inner Light and seeking social justice. She became an adherent of spiritualism but was shaken when Margaretta Fox admitted that the two sisters had made the mysterious tapping sounds by popping their toe joints. Her enthusiasm for spiritualism waned, according to Hewitt, who found no evidence that she attempted to contact Isaac's spirit after he died. At some point in the 1860s, she began to associate more closely with First Unitarian, some of whose leaders had been critical of the Fox sisters.⁵³ Amy did not abandon spiritualism, however, and held spiritualist meetings in her home into the mid-1880's.⁵⁴

Amy Post apparently never formally joined First Unitarian: her name does not appear in the church membership list in Rev. Mann's history, which was written in 1881. According to Hewitt, however, she regularly attended services at First Unitarian after Isaac's death in 1872 until her own death in 1889.⁵⁵ Amy had been a familiar presence at the church much earlier. When she and her son *Willet* visited Washington in 1863, they spoke with William Henry Channing, the former minister of First Unitarian who was then serving as chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives. In a letter to Isaac, Amy reported that Channing remembered them both and was glad to see them again. Funeral services for both Amy and Isaac were held at First Unitarian.

Post continued to be part of social reform movements in her later years. She attempted to vote along with Anthony in 1872, and she handled most of the arrangements for the National Woman Suffrage Association's national convention in Rochester in 1878. Delegates to the convention were instructed to stop at her house first, which was only a short walk from the Unitarian church, the site of the convention. She was active in the National Liberal League, which in 1876 held its first national meeting in Rochester. The League promoted religious liberty by opposing laws like those that required the Bible to be read in public schools and stores to close on Sundays. She was also active in the Freethought Association, which held that beliefs should be based on facts and logic rather than tradition and revelation.

The Post house was a popular rest stop for traveling progressives. Sojourner Truth, an African American abolitionist and women's rights activist, stayed with them for several months in 1851. Harriet Jacobs, who had escaped from slavery, lived with the Posts in 1849 and 1850. Amy encouraged her to write a book about her traumatic experiences, which was published as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Jacob Kirby Post (1829-1916), a son of Amy and Isaac, and *Jenny Curtis Post* (1840-1899) were listed in Rev. Mann's history of the church as Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Post. Rev. Mann's history says one of their daughters, Jessie, was vice-president of the church's young people's club and another daughter, Georgie, was the church organist.

Jacob, who operated the family drugstore after Isaac's retirement, was apparently highly visible within the congregation. When Harold Sanford described Rochester's Women's Rights Convention at First Unitarian in his 1929 history of the church, he chose to identify *Amy Kirby Post* as "Mrs. Amy Post (mother of Jacob Post)" even though Jacob had died thirteen years earlier.

Willet Post (1847-1917), another son of Amy and Isaac, and *Josephine Wheeler Post* lived with Willet's parents. Amy Post's biographer says Willet considered himself to be a Unitarian for his entire life and raised his children in the church.⁵⁶ After the Civil War, Willet worked in the family drugstore on Exchange Street that was then operated by his brother Jacob. He and his mother organized a local chapter of the National Liberal League. Willet worked for women's suffrage and served as secretary for a meeting in Rochester of the state women's suffrage society.

Details about other members of the Post/Kirby family, including *Mary Post Hollowell* and *Sarah Kirby Hollowell Willis*, are in sections below.

Hallowells

Mary Post Hollowell (1823-1913) and *William Hollowell* (1816-1882) were listed as Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Hollowell in Rev. Mann's history of the church. Mary was *Isaac Post's* daughter from his marriage to Hannah Kirby. (After Hannah died, Isaac married her sister, Amy.) William was raised on a farm near Philadelphia, and, after moving to Rochester, developed a prosperous business of buying and processing wool and sheepskin. He also served on the Board of Education.⁵⁷

In 1848, Mary participated in the Seneca Falls women's rights convention, traveling there in the company of Frederick Douglass, *Amy Kirby Post*, *Catherine Fish Stebbins*, and *Sarah Kirby Hollowell*. She was one of the organizers of the follow-up convention in Rochester at First Unitarian and served as one of its secretaries. An especially close friend of *Susan B. Anthony*, Mary was among the first to join the NWSA, and she served on its national executive committee. She was one of the women who attempted

to vote with Anthony in the 1872 elections. She also was an officer of the Women's Taxpayers Association and a founding member of its successor, the Political Equality Club.

Mary and William were both active in the WNYASS and part of the Underground Railroad. They harbored self-emancipated African Americans in their home at what is now 101 Plymouth Avenue, the site of today's Central Church of Christ (the church with the tall steeple a couple of blocks west of the river and immediately north of the freeway in downtown Rochester).⁵⁸ They were next-door neighbors with Mary's aunt *Sarah Kirby Hollowell Willis* and *Edmund Willis*. Sarah and her niece Mary, who was only five years younger, became close friends as well as family, and their husbands followed suit.

The Hollowells often held abolitionist meetings in their home and hosted visiting activists. They held a dinner party in 1858 for Harriet Tubman, who had escaped from slavery several years earlier and was busily helping others do the same. In 1864, Tubman was a guest at their dinner table along with Maria Porter, a member of First Unitarian and a key figure in the local Underground Railroad.

DeGarmos

Rhoda Rogers DeGarmo (1799-1873) and *Elias DeGarmo* (1788-1876) do not seem to have been part of the First Unitarian community, or at least there is no direct evidence that they were. Church records say that George De Garmo was a member of the Sunday School at the end of 1866, and Rev. Mann's history lists "Miss Jennie De Garmo" as a member of the church, but it is not known if these two people were related to Rhoda and Elias.

Rhoda DeGarmo was a member of the WNYASS, a clerk of the Friends of Human Progress and an organizer of the 1848 women's rights convention at First Unitarian. She attempted to vote along with Susan B. Anthony in 1872 and was a member of Anthony's NWSA. One of the DeGarmo's daughters was married in 1853 by Antoinette Brown Blackwell, one of the first woman ministers. The DeGarmo farm on what is now Brooks Avenue was adjacent to the farm of *Daniel and Lucy Anthony*, and, like theirs, was a stop on the Underground Railroad.⁵⁹

Willises

Sarah Kirby Hollowell Willis (1818-1914) and *Edmund P. Willis* (1817-1882) each had relatives in this small group of progressive Quakers. Sarah was *Amy Kirby Post's* sister and *Mary Post Hollowell's* aunt, while Edmund was *Isaac Post's* nephew. They were listed as Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Willis in Rev. Mann's history of the church. This was Sarah's second marriage, her first husband, Jeffries Hollowell (no known relation to *William Hollowell*), having died.

In 1845, Sarah helped organize a convention of the WNYASS in Rochester. In 1858, she attended the national meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City. When a group of abolitionist speakers, including *Susan B. Anthony*, came to Rochester in 1860 during the tense period just before the Civil War, Sarah served as one of the meeting's officers. After the Civil War, she joined the NWSA and became one of Anthony's closest friends. Sarah was one of the women who attempted to vote in 1872. She was a founding member of the Women's Taxpayers Association and the Political Equality Club.

Edmund and Sarah lived next door to their close friends *William Hollowell* and *Mary Post Hollowell*,⁶⁰ and they undoubtedly assisted the Hollowells with the Underground Railroad stop at their home. Edmund worked for most of his life as William's partner in the woolen business. Aunt Sarah and her

niece Mary traveled together to the women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in the company of Frederick Douglass, *Amy Kirby Post* and *Catherine Fish Stebbins*. They also served together as secretaries of the Rochester women's rights convention in 1848 at First Unitarian. The Hallowells and the Willises are buried together at Rochester's Mount Hope Cemetery. Their gravestones are arranged on opposite sides of a square with a tall marker in the middle that says Hallowell on one side and Willis on the other.

Burtises

Sarah Anthony Burtis (1810-1900) and *Lewis Burtis* (c. 1793-1868) participated in the Underground Railroad from their farm and tree nursery on what is now Genesee Street not far from the Anthony farm. As part of their business, they shipped saplings to Canada by boat, which provided opportunities to create hiding places for self-emancipated African Americans who needed to cross the lake to freedom.⁶¹

Sarah was the sister of *Asa Anthony* and a cousin of *Susan B. Anthony*. When the secretaries of the 1848 women's rights convention at First Unitarian could not speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, Sarah volunteered to assist them, her experience as a schoolteacher having provided her with practice in making her voice heard. Both Sarah and Lewis served on the executive committee of the WNYASS. One of their daughters married the son of George A. Avery, a participant in the Underground Railroad who sheltered escapees in his grocery store on Exchange Street.⁶² In 1854, Sarah became Rochester's first female salesclerk and succeeded admirably despite initial ridicule from some of the customers.

We know from Nancy Hewitt's research that the Burtis children were Unitarians, so their parents must have had at least some contact with the church. There is no direct evidence, however, that they were closely connected with it. In any case, Sarah's main commitment was to spiritualism. She spent summers at a spiritualist camp for the last two decades of her life.⁶³

Kedzies

John Kedzie (1809-1889) and Lemira M. Morgan Kedzie (1812-1884) were listed by *Susan B. Anthony* as among those who attended Sunday gatherings at the Anthony farm. She described them as Quakers, but that seems to be inaccurate because no records have been found that identify them as members of any Quaker congregation.⁶⁴ Perhaps the Kedzies had become so tightly integrated into the progressive Quaker community in Rochester that Anthony mistook them for Quakers when she returned to the family farm from her teaching position in central New York.

The Kedzies had been members of the Brick Church, but they had been forced to leave because they criticized its leadership for not cutting ties with slaveholders. Both were active in the WNYASS. Lemira was one of the signers of the call to a state-wide women's rights convention in Rochester in 1853. John was a silversmith ("We manufacture and keep on hand a good assortment of Silver Spoons warranted as pure as American Coin"⁶⁵) with a shop at 11 State Street, very near Isaac Post's pharmacy and Frederick Douglass's newspaper.

The Kedzies owned a house at what is now 295 Alexander Street (4 Alexander St. in an earlier numbering system) that conveniently had abolitionist neighbors on both sides. When Frederick Douglass decided to buy a house in Rochester, he encountered the obstacles so often faced by African Americans. Over the protests of some people on their block, the Kedzies sold their house in 1848 to Douglass, who lived

there for several years. The site, now a parking lot on the west side of Alexander Street just south of East Avenue, is identified by a historic marker. The Kedzies owned other houses that also were stops on the Underground Railroad at what is now 6 Ford Street, 2 Alexander Street, and 11 North Washington Street.⁶⁶

The Kedzies are known to have been members of First Unitarian as early as 1853, when John paid a pew rental fee. (First Unitarian, like many churches of that time, numbered its pews and rented them to families for an annual fee.) During the campaign to construct a new building for First Unitarian in 1866 to replace the one that had burned, John contributed a substantial amount of money to help place the congregation on a solid basis.⁶⁷ They were not listed as members in Rev. Mann's 1881 history of the church.

Fishes

Benjamin Fish (1791-1882) and *Sarah David Bills Fish* (1798-1868) were listed as Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Fish in Rev. Mann's history of the church. Active abolitionists, they ran one of Rochester's earliest Underground Railroad stops at their farm north of downtown on what is now Hudson Avenue.⁶⁸ Sarah joined the Rochester Female Anti-Slavery Society, one of the early abolitionist groups in Rochester, and served as its secretary. In 1842, she and Benjamin became founding members of the more radical WNYASS, for which Benjamin served a term as president. Sarah was a member of the WNYASS's executive committee and wrote articles for Frederick Douglass's *North Star*. Because of their activities, their Rochester Hicksite Quaker congregation asked them to leave.

The Fishes lived for two years at the Sodus Bay Phalanx, for which Benjamin served as president. They were members of the Friends of Human Progress. Sarah was one of the organizers of the 1848 women's rights convention at First Unitarian.

Curtises

Mary Fish Curtis (1825-1873) and *Joseph Curtis* (1817-1883) are listed as Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Curtis in Rev. Mann's history, which notes that Joseph was one of the church's four trustees. Mary, a daughter of *Benjamin Fish* and *Sarah David Bills Fish*, served on the executive committee of the WNYASS. She attempted to vote in 1872 along with Susan B. Anthony and was a member of the Women's Taxpayers Association.

Joseph Curtis, who was not a Quaker, became the publisher of Rochester's *Union and Advertiser* newspaper. Their son, Eugene T. Curtis (1844-1910), became chairman of First Unitarian's board of trustees. Another son, Wendell J. Curtis, who was president of the Mechanics Savings Bank, served for many years as church's treasurer.⁶⁹

Stebbins

Catherine Fish Stebbins (1823-1904) and *Giles Badger Stebbins* (1817-1900) met at the Sodus Bay Phalanx and married there. Giles was a Unitarian from Massachusetts⁷⁰ and had been a member of a Fourierist community there that was similar to the one at Sodus Bay. He worked for a while as a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society and served a term as the corresponding secretary for the WNYASS.

Catherine, a daughter of *Benjamin Fish* and *Sarah David Bills Fish* and the sister of *Mary Fish Curtis*, worked as a schoolteacher. Like her parents, she joined the WNYASS and the Friends of Human

Progress. She was the first manager of the WNYASS's abolitionist reading room above the office of Frederick Douglass's newspaper. She attended the women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, traveling in the company of Frederick Douglass, *Amy Kirby Post*, *Sarah Kirby Hallowell* and *Mary Post Hallowell*, and she was one of the three secretaries for the follow-up women's rights convention at First Unitarian in Rochester. She was a founding member of Susan B. Anthony's NWSA and often served on its national executive board. She was one of the editors of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*, a critical examination of the Bible that says its teachings about women are flawed because they reflect the thinking of a less civilized age.

The Stebbins moved from Rochester to Michigan in the early 1850s. There is no direct evidence that Catherine and Giles attended services at First Unitarian before their move, but there is every reason to presume so: Giles was a Unitarian, Catherine's parents were members of the church, and her sister Mary's family were especially active members. Despite their move to Michigan, Catherine and Giles were buried in Rochester's Mount Hope Cemetery.⁷¹

Asa Anthony's

Asa Anthony (1800-1872) and *Huldah Griffen Anthony* (1808-1890) each had relatives in this group of progressive Quakers. Asa was a cousin of *Daniel Anthony* and the brother of *Sarah Anthony Burtis*. Huldah was the sister of *Sarah Griffen Hurn*, who was married to *John White Hurn*. Huldah and her daughter Maria are listed as members in Rev. Mann's 1881 history of the church, so it would not be surprising if Asa, who died in 1872, had attended services there also.

Asa was a founding member of the Rochester Anti-Slavery Society. Asa and Huldah were part of the Underground Railroad, sheltering fugitives in the cellars of their house and barn at the northwest corner of Post Avenue and Anthony Street in the 19th Ward. From there, one group is known to have been secretly carried to Hilton in a load of hay and then on to Canada on a fishing boat operated by an African American named Walter Vond.⁷²

Asa and Huldah were members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx and the WNYASS. Huldah was on the executive committee for the latter organization and was a particularly close friend of *Amy Kirby Post*.

Hurns

John White Hurn (1823-1887) and *Sarah Hoxsie Griffen Hurn* (1818-1890) were not included in *Susan B. Anthony's* list of the former Quakers who had attended Sunday gatherings at her parents' farm. Nancy Hewitt's biography of Amy Post, however, identifies them as Quakers and verifies that they attended those Sunday gatherings.⁷³

John, who was originally from England, and his wife Sarah were core members of the Sodus Bay Phalanx. While at Sodus Bay, John joined a biracial team of abolitionist lecturers, including Giles Badger Stebbins, who toured western New York.

After the Sodus Bay Phalanx closed, the Hurns moved first to a similar community in Wisconsin and then to Rochester, living near the farm operated by *Asa Anthony* and *Huldah Griffen Anthony*, Sarah's sister. Their home was not far from the *DeGarmo's* farm and the farm of *Daniel and Lucy Anthony*. This group of abolitionists, living about a mile west of today's University of Rochester campus, provided shelter for people escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad.

While in Rochester, John worked as the editor of the *Rochester Daily News*. The Hurns moved to Philadelphia perhaps as early as 1854, where John worked first as a telegraph operator (the one who intercepted the telegram calling for the arrest of Frederick Douglass) and then as a noted photographer who took portraits of Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses Grant as well as many social activists.⁷⁴

Their son, *John Matthew Hurn* (1856-1921) moved back to Rochester. Rev. Mann's 1881 history of the church lists "Mr. and Mrs. John M. Hurn" as members, noting that Mrs. Hurn (*Josephine M. Dutton Hurn*, 1857-1918) was a Sunday school teacher. According to the census records of 1880, John M. Hurn was an unmarried man living in a boarding house in Rochester with his mother, Sarah H. Hurn, both with ages that are consistent with the birth years of the Hurns in this story. That was only a year before Rev. Mann's history listed him as a married member of the church, so perhaps his mother was in Rochester to deal with matters pertaining to the upcoming marriage.

There is no direct evidence that John and Sarah Hurn attended services at First Unitarian before they moved to Philadelphia. That seems quite likely, however, considering their son's future membership in the church plus the fact that close friends of theirs from the former Sodus Bay Phalanx and the local abolitionist community were attending services there.

Non-Quaker Unitarian Activists

First Unitarian had been identified with social activism, especially opposition to slavery, since its earliest days, which attracted progressive Quakers to the church. There they became church companions with other social reformers, such as Charlotte Cavan, Mary Hebard, Lewia C. Smith, and Laura Wilcox Ramsdell, all of whom have been briefly mentioned above. Below are details about four other non-Quaker Unitarian activists.

Porters

Maria G. Porter (1805-1896) moved to Rochester and became a member of First Unitarian at a time when the small congregation was meeting in hired rooms. During her early years in Rochester, she worked as a nanny for Thomas Kempshall, who served a term as the city's mayor. She later opened a boarding house near the Erie Canal and just off Main Street at what is now 12 Canal Street, not far from today's Susan B. Anthony Museum and House. It was across Main Street from the spot where, years later, Anthony defiantly cast her ballot despite laws forbidding her to do so. Porter's house, which had room for 20 boarders, welcomed such notable visitors as Frederick Douglass and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Rev. William Henry Channing boarded there while he was minister of First Unitarian.⁷⁵

Maria Porter's home was a busy station on the Underground Railroad. She, together with Frederick Douglass and *Amy Kirby Post*, were among the foremost providers of refuge in Rochester for people who were fleeing slavery. In 1856, Harriet Tubman herself escorted a party of escapees to Porter's home for shelter.⁷⁶

In 1850, several members of Maria's family moved from Philadelphia to Rochester, living together in her boarding house and joining the First Unitarian Church. They had previously been members of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, which itself had welcomed an influx of Quakers in its earlier years. The newcomers to Rochester included Maria's father Samuel Porter (1780-1872), stepmother Isabella Callahan Porter (1798-1877), and sisters Mary Jane Porter (1810-1860) and Almira B. Porter (1825-

1879). Isabella, Mary and Almira ran a well-regarded, co-educational school in the basement of First Unitarian from 1850 to 1859.⁷⁷

The three Porter sisters were founding members of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society (RLASS), which supported Frederick Douglass's adoption of political action as a means of ending slavery, and they played key roles within it. The first president of the RLASS, Susan Farley Porter, was married to their brother, Samuel Drummond Porter. Samuel and Susan had earlier moved to Rochester and joined a Presbyterian congregation. In 1836, they and other dissident Presbyterians established an anti-slavery congregation called the Bethel Free Church.

Laura Griswold Porter Farley (1813-1883), another Porter sibling, was a member of both the RLASS and First Unitarian. She married Joseph Farley, the brother of Susan Farley Porter of the Bethel Free Church.⁷⁸ Their son, Dr. Porter Farley (1840-1919), is listed as a member of First Unitarian in Rev. Mann's history. When Frederick Douglass died in 1895, *Susan B. Anthony* wrote to a friend about the upcoming funeral services in Rochester, saying, "Dr Farley – is preeminently the man to lead off in the matter – for the love of his dear Aunt Maria – & for that of his dear Uncle Sam. – & all of the Porter Family!! None were quite so near to Mr. Douglass as they."⁷⁹

That nearness became evident as early as 1860 while Douglass was in Europe. Tragically, his daughter Annie died at age ten and was buried temporarily in the Porter family plot at Mount Hope Cemetery until Douglass could return and acquire a plot for his family.⁸⁰

Emily Parmely Collins

Emily Parmely Collins had closely followed reports of the women's rights conventions in Seneca Falls and Rochester from her home in South Bristol, New York, south of Rochester. About three months after those conventions, she started the first local women's suffrage club in the country. In 1858, she moved to Rochester, where she joined the First Unitarian Church and became part of its group of social activists.⁸¹ She lived in Rochester until 1869 before moving with her husband to Louisiana for business reasons.

Blackalls

Sarah Colman Blackall (1835-1917) and Burton Francis "Frank" Blackall (1832-1901) were listed in Rev. Mann's history of the church as "Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Blackall." Sarah was the stepdaughter of Lucy Colman, a prominent abolitionist and women's rights activist.⁸² Shortly after arriving in Rochester in 1858, Sarah joined the circle of abolitionists who met in the home of Quaker Unitarians *William and Mary Hallowell*. A devoted friend of *Mary and Susan B. Anthony*, she was active in the National Woman Suffrage Association. She became a social worker and in later years was affectionally known as "Mother" Blackall within the church because of her work with young people there.

The Blackalls were trusted friends of Frederick Douglass. Frank kept the books for Douglass's rental properties in Rochester after Douglass moved to Washington, and Douglass gave Sarah the gold pen that he used to write his third autobiography. As outlined above, Frank was the telegraph operator who helped prevent Frederick Douglass from being arrested for allegedly conspiring with John Brown.⁸³

Hester C. Jeffrey

Hester C. Jeffrey (c. 1843-1934) was a prominent organizer within the African American community nationally. She helped organize the National Afro-American Council, a precursor of the NAACP. She served as the National Organizer for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs for four years and was president of its New York State Federation.

When she and her husband, Roswell Jerome Jeffrey, moved to Rochester in 1891, they joined the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. In 1895, she decided also to become a member of the First Unitarian Church while actively retaining her membership at AME Zion. She joined the Political Equality Club, a local affiliate of the National Woman Suffrage Association that involved several Unitarian women, including its president, *Mary Anthony*. She herself organized a suffrage organization for local African American women called the Susan B. Anthony Club. A personal friend of *Susan B. Anthony*, she was the only layperson chosen to give a eulogy at her funeral. She also was instrumental in the creation of the first public memorial to Anthony anywhere, a stained-glass window with Anthony's image at the AME Zion Church.⁸⁴

Mary Thorn Lewis Gannett and William Channing Gannett

Toward the end of the century, yet another progressive Hicksite Quaker became part of the First Unitarian community. Mary Thorn Lewis Gannett (1854-1952) was the wife of William Channing Gannett (1840-1923), who became First Unitarian's minister in 1889. She remained in Rochester for the rest of her long life, energetically participating in congregational life and local causes. Born a Quaker, she maintained her Quaker membership in her hometown of Philadelphia and attended meetings whenever she visited there.

Although much younger than the first generation of Rochester's Quaker Unitarian activists (she was 35 years old when she arrived), she fit in well with them, forming a close friendship with *Susan B. Anthony*, who was 69 years old at the time. A committed social activist herself, she once offered this advice: "If you want to make life worth-while, 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."⁸⁵

Soon after arrival, Mary Gannett organized the Woman's Ethical Club, a city-wide organization that drew two to three hundred people for discussions on such topics as business ethics, the evolution of nursing, and the double standard of morality for men and women. She also played a leading role in the Political Equality Club. She presided at the founding meeting of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and served it in several capacities, focusing her work on providing legal protection for working women against dishonest employers. She was a key force in two successful local campaigns: the election of a woman as school commissioner at a time when women were not even allowed to vote, and the admission of women to the University of Rochester.⁸⁶

Her husband, William Channing Gannett (1840-1923), had been vice president of the Wisconsin women's suffrage association during his earlier ministry in that state. He was an admirer of Theodore Parker, the radical Unitarian minister whose large congregation in Boston had been the model for the "free church" that *Susan B. Anthony* had attempted to establish in Rochester in the late 1850s.

William was a national leader of the movement to have the Unitarian denomination define itself not by a creed, a statement of theological beliefs, but by an "Ethical Basis," a concept much like the "Principles" on which the denomination is based today.⁸⁷ The success of this movement opened Unitarian membership to non-Christians and even non-theists, coincidentally aligning Unitarians nationally with the Friends of Human Progress, the small and little-noticed organization whose membership had been open to "Christians, Jews, Mahammedans, and Pagans." The leading figure of that organization in the Finger Lakes region, a progressive Quaker named Thomas M'Clintock, expressed ideas similar to those of the "Ethical Basis" Unitarians when he declared that "Religion has been emphatically embodied, not in speculative theories, but in practical righteousness."⁸⁸

Mary Gannett helped to reestablish a Quaker presence in Rochester. The denomination had suffered a sharp decline after the Civil War, partly because the opposition of most Quakers to both slavery and war had generated enormous stress when it became clear that the Civil War carried the possibility of ending the evils of slavery through the tragedy of war. After the war, younger Quakers began to abandon the distinctive Quaker dress and manner of speaking. The last Quaker organization in Rochester disbanded in 1915. In 1933, a group of Quakers met in Mary Gannett's home to begin reestablishing a local congregation. They began holding services the following year in First Unitarian's parish house. That congregation, called the Rochester Friends Meeting, traces its origin to that effort.⁸⁹

The Gannett ministry was one of the most successful in First Unitarian's history. The Gannett's biggest project was a clubhouse and educational center for children in the church's low-income neighborhood of immigrants. Encouraged by "Mother" Blackall and other volunteer staffers, four of its members went on to become rabbis, and another was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. *Rochester History*, a quarterly journal published by the Rochester City Historian, devoted an entire issue to the Gannetts and their impact on the city.⁹⁰

The International Council of Women

Susan B. Anthony worked for years toward the establishment of an international women's organization. She and Elizabeth Cady Stanton spent months in Europe in 1883 conferring about this project with leaders of women's movements in several countries. As noted at the beginning of this document, their project came to fruition in 1888 with the establishment of the International Council of Women. Still working for the advancement of women all over the world, it is associated today with the United Nations.

The founding conference featured a special event that honored the "Pioneers" of the women's rights movement in the U.S. About forty activists were recognized, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass, who was invited to deliver a speech to the gathering. Among those honored were seven women from Rochester, all of them with progressive Quaker backgrounds: *Susan B. Anthony*, *Mary Anthony*, *Amy Kirby Post*, *Mary Post Hallowell*, *Sarah Kirby Hallowell Willis*, *Catherine Fish Stebbins*, and *Sarah Anthony Burtis*.⁹¹ All were also associated with the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, or, in the case of Sarah Anthony Burtis, had children who attended it. It was a fitting tribute to the Quaker Unitarians of Rochester who had made such important contributions to women's rights and to social progress in general.

Untold Stories

One puzzling aspect of the story of Rochester's Quaker Unitarians is that it remained untold for so long. Some histories of First Unitarian briefly mention the influx of Hicksite Quakers in the mid-1800s while others make no mention at all.

Similarly, the Underground Railroad, which involved church members from both Quaker and non-Quaker backgrounds, is mentioned only hesitantly. A church history written in 1929 quotes Rev. Gannett as saying, "Two or three of our homes had Underground Railway connections, I think — Post, Alcott." Only two or three? As outlined above, there were at least eight. Strangely, even though Maria Porter was a revered figure who had been a member of the church since its early days, and Rev. Gannett had been its minister for seven years before she died, he seems not to have been aware that she had been a key member of the Underground Railroad.

In 1884, Amy Kirby Post wrote a chapter about the Underground Railroad for William Farley Peck's *Semi-centennial History of the City of Rochester*.⁹² In it, she movingly described the situation of exhausted runaways arriving in Rochester with the knowledge that freedom in Canada was tantalizingly close but still not achieved. She did not, however, provide the names of those who had operated the Underground Railroad in Rochester. Later historians pieced this information together largely from letters and other personal documents.

This admirable focus on the story of the escapees was not unique to Amy Post. Quaker historian Christopher Densmore says, "My reading of the writings of the people who were actively engaged in the Underground Railroad — as self-emancipators or as helpers — is that they clearly understood that it was the fugitives themselves who were at the center of the story. It was the fugitive who took the initiative and the major part of the risk." It was only in later decades, Densmore points out, that the telling of the story began to focus on the white people who aided the fugitives rather than on the fugitives themselves. Historians are now working to piece together the whole story of those who escaped from slavery as well as those who helped them do so. Some of those who escaped did so almost entirely through their own efforts while others were assisted by networks of helpers. Some of those networks operated entirely within African American communities while others were based on multiracial groups.⁹³

One reason these stories remained partly untold is that the role of women in these movements was often taken for granted and underreported. The emerging women's movement was beginning to challenge this state of affairs with woman-oriented newspapers, books and speaking tours. Even Frederick Douglass, one of the strongest supporter of women's rights of his time, wrote in his autobiography as if only men were involved when he expressed his gratitude to Rochester abolitionists: "From the first, I was cheered on and supported in my demands for equal rights by such respectable citizens as Isaac Post, Wm. Hallowell, Samuel D. Porter, Wm. C. Bloss, Benj. Fish, Asa Anthony, and many other good and true men of Rochester."⁹⁴

Part of Amy Post's own story remained untold also. Her biographer reports that interviews with some of her descendants revealed that they had been unaware of their family's Quaker background; they had assumed it had always been Unitarian.⁹⁵

Another untold story was that of the Friends of Human Progress, the organization that was created by progressive Quakers in western New York just weeks before some of its members played a crucial role in organizing the historic Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention. This organization has only in recent years been given proper attention by historians such as Christopher Densmore, Nancy Hewitt and Judith

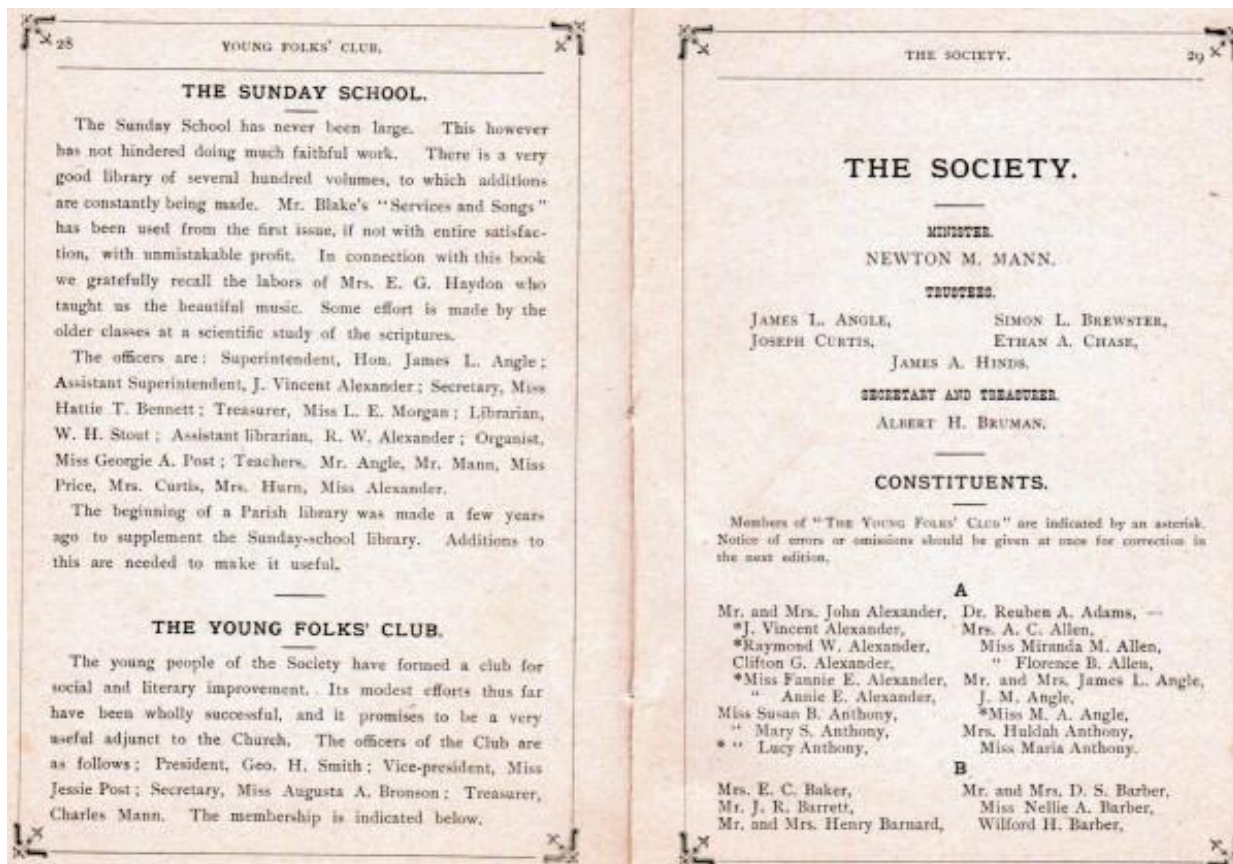
Wellman. Even the *History of Woman Suffrage*, produced primarily by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, barely mentions that organization even though both had been members of it.

The Progressive Quakers and First Unitarian

Many of Rochester's progressive Quakers and their descendants found a church home at First Unitarian. They taught Sunday School there, played the church organ, served on the board of trustees, and, like *Mary Anthony*, participated in "every line of the varied activities" of the church. They also provided the church with some of the deepest roots for its tradition of working for social justice.

The progressive Quakers were considerably ahead of their time in dealing with issues of gender equity, social justice, and religious practice, and of course this must have initially caused friction with the more conservative members of the congregation. Eventually the world caught up with them, and many of their "radical" ideas and practices became the norm within the congregation and elsewhere.

Excerpts from "First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester N. Y.,
A Sketch of its History, with its Organization and Membership"
by Reverend Newton Mann (1881)



THE SOCIETY.	
<p>Miss Daisy Barnard, Anna E. Barnard, Gertrude C. Barnard, Mrs. H. Blanchard, Miss May Blanchard, Mrs. Lydia Boardman, Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Boardman, E. Smith Boardman, Miss Lottie Boardman, Mr. and Mrs. John Bower, Miss Ida K. Bower, Mr. John F. Brayer, Mr. and Mrs. S. L. Brewster, Miss Jane E. Brewster, Miss Amelia L. Brettell, *Mr. Elihu B. Bronson, *Miss Augusta A. Bronson.</p>	<p>*Miss Mattie Bell, * " Hattie T. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Blackall, Robert Blackall, Miss Gertrude Blackall, " Sarah F. Blackall, Miss Emily Boardman, " Lucy T. Boardman, Miss Emily Boardman, *Mr. Carroll Everett Bowen, Mrs. Mary K. Boyd, Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Brewer, Miss Hattie Brewer, Mr. H. C. Brewster, Mrs. Horace C. Brewster, Marietta Brewster.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. D. K. Cartier, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Chase, Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Clark, Frank E. Clark, Howard W. Clark, Helen L. Clark, Mabel A. Clark, Mr. Geo. G. Clarkson, *Mr. Philip A. Cham, *Mr. Homer Collins, Mrs. Chloe Colvin, Miss Laura M. Colvin, Mrs. C. M. Crittenden, Mr. and Mrs. De L. Crittenden, Mr. Claude Crittenden, Mr. Wm. Butler Crittenden, Mrs. E. C. Crittenden, Fred B. Crittenden, George S. Crittenden, Mr. S. G. Crump, Pittsford.</p>	<p>C Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Chase, *Miss Florence A. Chase, Frank F. Chase, Harry B. Chase, Louis N. Chase, Martin A. Chase, Ethan Allen Chase, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Collins, Miss Rosa Collins, Mrs. Z. J. Colvin, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Corning, Miss Anna Corning, William Corning, Jr., Edward Corning, John Sherwood Corning, Mrs. B. P. Crossman, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Curtis, *Wendell J. Curtis, Mr. E. F. Curtis, Mr. Truman Catman, Macedon.</p>
<p>D Mr. and Mrs. Geo. F. Danforth, Miss Jessie A. Danforth,</p>	<p>Mrs. J. Daniels, Miss L. M. Daniels.</p>

THE SOCIETY.	
<p>Mr. Charles P. Davis, Miss Jennie De Garmo, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Deuel, *Miss Harriet W. Deuel, * " Bertha E. Deuel, * " S. Cornelia Deuel, Mr. C. C. Drew, Miss Marian Drew, " Ethel Drew,</p>	<p>Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Davis, Frank J. Davis, Walter P. Davis, Charles E. Davis, Kate B. Davis, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Deyo, Lillie B. Deyo, Otis W. Deyo, Miss Matilda Dudley.</p>
<p>Miss Elizabeth Ellithorp,</p>	<p>E *Miss Marie Ernisse.</p>
<p>Dr. Porter Farley, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Fish,</p>	<p>F Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Fenner,</p>
<p>Mrs. Olive Goodrich,</p>	<p>G</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Hallowell, Mrs. C. Haskell, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Hinds, Miss Anna May Hinds, Charles Norton, Mrs. H. H. Howard, Blanche Howard, *Mr. and *Mrs. John M. Hum, Mrs. Susan S. Hughes, James E. Hughes, Bushnell's Basin.</p>	<p>H Mr. William Haight, Mr. and Mrs. D. F. Haupt, Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Hough, Miss M. Irene Hough, Walter L. Hough, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Howe, *Henry B. Howe, Miss Lizzie S. Howe, " Florence M. Howe, " Mary E. Howe, John B. Howe.</p>
<p>*Miss E. E. Iles,</p>	<p>I *Miss Helen V. Iles.</p>
<p>Mr. D. L. Johnston, Henry B. Johnston, Robert H. Johnston,</p>	<p>J Mrs. A. C. Joiner, Mr. Harry C. Jones, Mr. William H. Jones.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Line, Margaret A. Line, Clinton Line, Mary E. Line.</p>	<p>L Mr. R. H. Lansing, Mr. Edward Line, Mrs. N. Leavitt, Liberty.</p>

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<p>Mr. and Mrs. N. M. Mann, *Miss Adelaide Mann, *Charles Mann, H. Spencer Mann, Mr. Walter May, Mr. C. C. Morse, Mr. J. W. Moore, *Miss Louise Mosher.</p>	<p>M Mr. H. C. Maine, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Mann, Herbert Siddons Mann, Mrs. E. A. Marsh, Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Moore, Mr. Samuel C. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. George Morgan, *Miss Letitia E. Morgan.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. B. R. Palmer, Miss Minerva Palmer, M. D. " Elsie M. Jones, Mr. Charles Peters, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Pope, Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Post, *Miss Jessie Post, * " Georgie A. Post, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Pyott, Miss Mary H. Pyott,</p>	<p>P Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Patterson, Mr. and Mrs. George P. Peck, Miss Carrie H. Peck, " Nellie K. Peck, Mr. Wm. F. Peck, Miss Maria G. Porter, Mrs. Charlotte A. Price, *Miss Susan Ida Price, Dr. I. E. Prevost, Emile Prevost.</p>
<p>Mrs. Laura Ramsdell, Edward E. Ramsdell, Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Rogers, Henry D. Rogers, Louis C. Rogers, Alice H. Rogers.</p>	<p>R Mrs. Charles E. Rider, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Richmond, *Miss Hattie L. Richmond, " Lee Richmond.</p>
<p>Mrs. Mary P. Sammons, Miss Caroline Sammons, Mr. L. R. Sexton, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis E. Smith, *George H. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Steward, Spencer Steward, Festus Steward,</p>	<p>S Mrs. E. H. Satterlee, Mr. S. A. Servis, Mr. and Mrs. John Siddons, Miss Nellie Siddons, Mrs. L. C. Smith, *Mr. Wm. R. Story, *Mr. W. H. Stout, Mrs. Norman A. Seymour, Mary Frances Seymour, Elizabeth Catharine Seymour, Mount Morris.</p>
<p>Mrs. R. Sleeper, Mt. Morris,</p>	<p>T Mrs. C. M. Tyler,</p>
<p>*Mr. W. H. Tholens, Mr. Charles True, Pittsford.</p>	

THE SOCIETY.	
<p>Mr. John O. Vogel.</p>	<p>V</p>
<p>Mrs. H. G. Warner, Miss Clara Warner, Mr. Samuel Wilder, Mrs. A. C. Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Willis, Miss Catharine Willis, Mr. Edward F. Wellington.</p>	<p>W Mr. and Mrs. F. B. Watts, Miss Nancy Briggs Watts, Ida K. Watts, Mattie D. Watts, Fred P. Watts, Mr. William Williams.</p>
<p>Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Young, Frederick W. Young, J. Austin Young, *Charles Dean Young, Miss Mary L. Young.</p>	<p>Y</p>

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Many thanks to Nancy Hewitt and Judith Wellman for reviewing this document, correcting errors and providing helpful suggestions. Assistance was also generously provided by local history researcher Charles Lenhart, who notes that some of his ancestors were listed as members of First Unitarian in Rev. Mann's history, namely Minnie Sutherland True and her husband Charles True.

Key Sources

Church records for the early part of First Unitarian's history are incomplete. They are surprisingly detailed in some instances and distressingly lacking in others. Fortunately, additional material is now available from other sources, especially the ones below. Birth and death dates come from Nancy Hewitt's research and from various genealogical websites.

Nancy A. Hewitt

- *Radical Friend: Amy Post and Her Activist Worlds* (2018) is the source of much of the information in this document. Endnotes are provided for the more significant items in this document that are sourced from her book, but, for the sake of brevity, other items (individual's organizational memberships, etc.) are typically not provided with endnotes. The book's index provides access to that information.
- *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (1984) is a pioneering study that includes information about Rochester's progressive Quakers.
- "[The Spiritual Journeys of an Abolitionist: Amy Kirby Post, 1802-1889](#)" in *Quakers and Abolition*, edited by Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank (2014), examines Amy Post's Quaker, Spiritualist and Unitarian experiences.

Judith Wellman

- *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (2004) includes information on the Friends of Human Progress.
- [1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse, Farmington, New York: Historic Structure Report](#) (2017) (John G. Waite Associates, Architects, with Judith Wellman and others) includes information about the origins of the progressive Quakers in western New York and the Friends of Human Progress.

Shirley Cox Husted

- *Sweet Gift of Freedom* in two volumes (1986 and 1994), written by the former Monroe County Historian, provides information about participants in the Underground Railroad in the Rochester area.

Richard Reisem

- *Frederick Douglass and the Underground Railroad* (2010) provides information about participants in the Underground Railroad who are buried in Mount Hope cemetery in Rochester.

Ida Husted Harper

- *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, in three volumes (1898–1908), was written under Anthony's close supervision.

Rev. Newton Mann

- "First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester N. Y., A Sketch of its History, with its Organization and Membership" (1881).

Harold W. Sanford

- "A Century of Unitarianism in Rochester" (1929).

Notes

Abbreviations used in the notes below:

FDUR	Frederick Douglass and the Underground Railroad (Reisem)
LWSBA	The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony (Harper)
RFAP	Radical Friend: Amy Kirby Post and Her Activist Worlds (Hewitt)
SGOF	Sweet Gift of Freedom, Volumes 1 and 2 (Husted)
SJAP	The Spiritual Journeys of an Abolitionist: Amy Kirby Post (Hewitt)
WASC	Women's Activism and Social Change (Hewitt)

¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861*, 1970, p. 54. Also see Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 1979, [p. 54](#).

² Susan B. Anthony, "Moral Leadership of the Religious Press", *Woman's Tribune*, June 17, 1893, p. 268, reprinted in Stephen A. Smith, *Freedom of Religion: Foundational Documents and Historical Arguments*, 2017, Oxbridge Research Associates, [pp. 584-85](#)

³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joselyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, 1881, [p. 412](#)

⁴ Sunderland P. Gardner, *Memoirs of the Life and Religious Labors of Sunderland P. Gardner*, Friends' Book Association, 1895, [p. 240](#); Judith Wellman and others, *1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse, Farmington, New York: Historic Structure Report*, 2017, [pp. 59-60](#) (pdf pages 305-306)

⁵ Charlotte Gaw, "Prodigal Sons and Daughters: Unitarianism in Philadelphia, 1796-1846", 2012, Institutional Scholarship, TriCollege Libraries Institutional Repository (a repository of materials important to Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore Colleges), [pp. 60-65](#).

⁶ Paula Tarnapol Whitacre, *A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur's Struggle for Purpose*, 2017, [pp. 30, 32](#)

⁷ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 1892, [p. 325](#)

⁸ John R. McKivigan, editor, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series Two: Vol. 3, Book 2, p. 785, fn 206.11

⁹ Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, "Frankfort: Birthplace of Rochester's Industry," in *Rochester History*, Vol. L, No. 3, July 1988, [p. 9](#)

¹⁰ Austin Steward, *Twenty-two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman*, 1857, [p. 151](#); Rev. Newton Mann, "First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester," 1881

¹¹ Blake McKelvey, "Woman's Rights in Rochester: A Century of Progress," *Rochester History*, Vol. X, July 1948, Nos. 2 and 3, [p. 2](#); Meryl Frank and Blake McKelvey, "Some Former Rochesterians of National Distinction," *Rochester History*, Vol. XXI, July 1959, No. 3, [p. 14](#).

¹² SJAP [p. 83](#); RFAP p. 224

¹³ Dexter Perkins, "Rochester One Hundred Years Ago", *Rochester History*, Vol. 1, July 1939, No. 3, [p. 18](#)

¹⁴ "Call to Congregational Friends Meeting", *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, May 26, 1854, reprinted in Judith Wellman, et. al., *1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse, Farmington, New York, Historic Structure Report*, 2017, [p. 100](#).

¹⁵ Christopher Densmore, "[From the Hicksites to the Progressive Friends: The Rural Roots of Perfectionism and Social Reform among North American Friends](#)", 2006, *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, p. 248

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends*, 1853, [p. 6](#). To see this text, click the Content tab at the upper right of the linked page. Then click on 1853, Minutes, Page 6. Pull down a thin gray tab near the center of the page to expand the viewing window.

¹⁷ Nancy A. Hewitt, "Feminist Friends: Agrarian Quakers and the Emergence of Woman's Rights in America," 1986, in *Feminist Studies* 12, No. 1, Spring 1986, reprinted in Claire Goldberg Moses and Heidi I. Hartmann, *U.S. Women in Struggle: A Feminist Studies Anthology*, University of Illinois Press, 1995, [p. 36](#)

¹⁸ Quoted in Ann D. Gordon, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Against an Aristocracy of Sex, 1866 to 1873*, Vol. 2, 2000, [p. 41](#)

¹⁹ The practice of referring to a woman by her husband's name rather than her own name lingered for decades. A century later, First Unitarian occasionally produced recipe books with contributions from church members. In the 1955 recipe book, nearly a third of the women's names were in the "Mrs. John Doe" format. Things changed apparently during the 1960s: only two names in the 1973 recipe book were in that format.

²⁰ RFAP p. 129

²¹ Willis, Stebbins and Hallowell were named as secretaries in the published Proceedings of the convention. Elizabeth M'Clintock, a Quaker from Waterloo, was nominated as a secretary but declined because she disagreed with the nomination of a woman to preside. See RFAP p. 131.

²² From a note in William Channing Gannett's hand at the top of page 4 of his handwritten "Speech for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Rochester Woman's Rights Convention, 1898" in the First Unitarian Papers collection at the Rare Books and Special Collections Department of the University of Rochester, Series 8, Box 1, Item 7.

²³ RFAP p. 138

²⁴ Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, in *The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 1891, Vol. 14, [p. 125](#)

²⁵ Judith Wellman, Marjory Allen Perez, with Charles Lenhart and others, "[Sodus Bay Phalanx](#)", pp 311-340, in "[Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County, New York, 1820 to 1880](#)", Wayne County Historian's office, 2008. The first link displays the relevant section of the document. The second link leads to a web page that offers the complete document for purchase in addition to limited views on a section-by-section basis. The animal shelter is called the [Cracker Box Palace](#).

²⁶ Amy Post, "The Underground Railroad," in William Farley Peck, *Semi-centennial History of the City of Rochester* (1884), Chapter XLIII, [pp. 462, 458](#)

²⁷ SGOF Vol. 1, p. 22

²⁸ Rev. Gannett named "Alcott" as a church member who was said to have been active in the Underground Railroad, probably referring to Sidney S. Alcott, or perhaps William W. Allcott.

²⁹ LWSBA, Vol. 1, [pp. 180-181](#)

³⁰ The "Frederick Douglass and John Brown" section combines information from several sources: RFAP pp. 221-222; Victoria Sandwich Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part Two," in *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Fall 2005, No. 4, [p. 11](#); Sally Parker, "[Preserving Family Memories by Remembering an Icon](#)", in *New York Archives*, Spring, 2018; James Monroe Gregory, *Frederick Douglass the Orator*, 1893, [pp. 44-48](#). Most versions of this story say that Douglass traveled to Canada by boat across Lake Ontario, but researcher Charles Lenhart has found indications that he traveled by land. See the account of Douglass's journey by Anson S. Wood, former Deputy Secretary of State for New York, in a scrapbook of newspaper clippings at the Monroe County Library, [p. 21](#).

³¹ LWSBA Vol. 3, [p. 1491](#)

³² Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More (1815-1897): Reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 1898, [pp. 160-161](#)

³³ Quoted in Peter Wirzbicki, *Fighting for the Higher Law: Black and White Transcendentalists Against Slavery*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021, [p. 138](#)

³⁴ "[More Women's Rights Conventions](#)", Women's Rights National Historical Park

³⁵ Peter Wirzbicki, *Fighting for the Higher Law: Black and White Transcendentalists Against Slavery*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021, [p. 137](#)

"[More Women's Rights Conventions](#)", Women's Rights National Historical Park

³⁶ Gannett's quote comes from Harold W. Sanford, "A Century of Unitarianism in Rochester," 1929. Mann's history implies that Channing was minister of the church for a year, but Frothingham's *Memoir of William Henry Channing*, 1886, [pp. 254-255](#), says he served for two years, first on a provisional basis and then as a settled minister.

³⁷ LWSBA Vol. 1, [pp. 148-149](#)

³⁸ LWSBA Vol. 1, [p. 167](#)

³⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony's closest co-worker, described Anthony as an agnostic. In 1877, Anthony's dying sister asked her to talk about the afterlife, but, as Anthony later wrote, "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." See LWSBA Vol 2., [p. 516](#). Perhaps the guidance Rev. Channing gave to the young Susan B. Anthony that "had a lasting spiritual influence on her" dealt with how to lead a religious life if you are unsure about the existence of God.

⁴⁰ *Unity* magazine, March 15, 1879, [p. 19](#)

⁴¹ The location of the Anthony farm is provided by Blake McKelvey, "Names and Traditions of Some Rochester Streets", in *Rochester History*, Vol. XXVII, July 1965, No. 3, p. [18](#).

⁴² Anthony and Douglass were lifelong friends. They famously clashed in the late 1860s over the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave African Americans the right to vote. Douglass supported it, but Anthony, to the disappointment of many of her admirers in future generations, opposed it, holding out for a universal suffrage amendment that would guarantee the right to vote regardless of sex or race. Their friendship remained intact, however, with Douglass dining at the Anthony house when visiting in Rochester and Anthony visiting the Douglasses when in Washington. See "[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*.

⁴³ LWSBA Vol. 1, [pp. 60-61](#)

⁴⁴ LWSBA, Vol. 1 [p. 58](#)

⁴⁵ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 19; FDUR p. 55

⁴⁶ LWSBA, Vol. 1, [p. 216](#)

⁴⁷ LWSBA Vol. 1, [pp. 104-105](#)

⁴⁸ WASC p. 208; RFAP pp. 266, 367 note 126

⁴⁹ Lewia C. Smith's full name is provided in Ann D. Gordon, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Their Place Inside the Body-Politic, 1887 to 1895*, 2009, [p. 238](#)

⁵⁰ RFAP pp. 261, 268-269

⁵¹ LWSBA Vol. 3, [p. 1490](#).

⁵² SGOF Vol. 2, p. 45; FDUR p. 71

⁵³ SJAP [p. 82](#)

⁵⁴ RFAP p. 285

⁵⁵ SJAP [p. 82](#)

⁵⁶ SJAP [p. 82](#)

⁵⁷ "William R. Hallowell" in William Farley Peck, *History of Rochester and Monroe County, New York*, Vol. 2, 1908, [p. 1243](#)

⁵⁸ SGOF Vol. 2, pp. 34, 56

⁵⁹ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 28; FDUR pp. 57-59

⁶⁰ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 56

⁶¹ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 24

⁶² RFAP p. 209; SGOF Vol. 2, p. 20; FDUR p. 57; "Sarah Anthony Burtis Dead," *New York Times*, October 31, 1900.

⁶³ SJAP [p. 83](#), which says, "The younger members of many progressive Quaker families adopted Unitarianism as well, including the sons and daughters of Sarah Burtis, Sarah Fish, Lemira Kedzie, and other coworkers in the WNYASS and the woman's rights movement"; WASC, pp. 208-209, which says, "the Unitarian society also attracted members of the Anthony, Hallowell, Willis, Post, Kedzie, and Burtis families to its pews"; "[Death of an Old Resident: Mrs. Sarah Anthony Burtis Passes Away at the Home of Her Daughter](#)", *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, October 31, 1900, page 8,

⁶⁴ According to Nancy Hewitt in an exchange of emails.

⁶⁵ "[New Watch and Jewelry Store](#)", *The North Star*, Oct. 6, 1848, page 3 (fifth column from the left, fifth item down)

⁶⁶ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 38; FDUR pp. 65-66; Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part One", in *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Summer 2005, No. 3, [p. 20](#). See "[Frederick Douglass in Rochester](#)" on the [lowerfalls.org](#) website for additional details, including an image of the [deed](#) for the house.

⁶⁷ Church records show that the Kedzies contributed \$100 toward the new building, a considerable amount at the time. The Hallowells and Willises also contributed \$100, and the Curtises \$200.

⁶⁸ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 30; FDUR p. 61

⁶⁹ "[Wendell J. Curtis, 80, Dies](#)", *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Oct. 4, 1943, p. 25

⁷⁰ Wellman, et al, "[Sodus Bay Phalanx](#)" in "[Uncovering the Underground Railroad](#)", p. 318

⁷¹ "[Catherine Fish and Giles Stebbins Grave Site](#)", Freethought Trail website. At the unveiling of a plaque in honor of the Anthony sisters in 1923, Mary Gannett implicitly verified Stebbins' church membership by saying, "All three of the secretaries of this meeting were, originally Hicksite Friends, later members of our Church."

⁷² SGOF Vol. 2, p. 19; FDUR p. 55

⁷³ RFAP pp. 147, 221, 241

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- ⁷⁴ Information about the Hurns comes from RFAP and from the Hurn Family subsection of the [Sodus Bay Phalanx](#) section of Wellman, et al, "[Uncovering the Underground Railroad](#)", pp. 322-325.
- ⁷⁵ Obituary of Porter in the *Rochester Herald*, Dec. 14, 1896, reprinted as "[Maria G. Porter](#)" on the Friends of Mount Hope website; LWSBA Vol. 1 [p. 104](#)
- ⁷⁶ SGOF Vol. 2, p. 44; FDUR p. 69; RFAP p. 213
- ⁷⁷ William Farley Peck, *History of Rochester and Monroe County, New York*, Vol. 1, 1908, [p. 243](#); John R. Kaufman-McKivigan, *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Three: Correspondence*, Vol. 2: 1853-1865, fn 2 & 6, [pp. 293-294](#); John White Chadwick, *A Life for Liberty: Anti-slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley*, 1899, [p. 80](#). Sallie Holley was the daughter of Myron Holley, an early leader of First Unitarian.
- ⁷⁸ WASC p. 152; Eleanor Lenoe, "[Investigating the Porter Family Collection](#)", University of Rochester Library, 2021; "[Porter family papers](#)," University of Rochester Library.
- ⁷⁹ The quote by Susan B. Anthony comes from Victoria Sandwich Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part Two", in *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Fall 2005, No. 4, [p. 21](#).
- ⁸⁰ Richard O. Reisem, *Buried Treasures in Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, New York: A Pictorial Field Guide*, 2018, p. 81, Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, NY
- ⁸¹ RFAP p. 261
- ⁸² RFAP, p. 196, identifies Lucy Colman's husband, Luther, as having been killed in a railroad accident in March 1854. Brown Thurston, *Thurston Genealogies*, [pp. 173-173](#), says Lucy was the second wife of this Luther Colman and confirms that by his first wife he had a daughter named Sarah who married Burton Francis Blackall. Sarah's father is listed in the *Genealogy* as a Universalist, a denomination that was compatible with the Unitarians and that merged with them in 1961 to form today's Unitarian Universalist Association. (Susan B. Anthony's mother's father also was a Universalist, according to LWSBA Vol. 1, [pp. 4-6](#).)
- ⁸³ Victoria Sandwich Schmitt, "Rochester's Frederick Douglass, Part Two," *Rochester History*, Vol. LXVII, Fall 2005, No. 4, [p. 11](#); Sally Parker, "Preserving Family Memories by Remembering an Icon", in *New York Archives*, Spring, 2018, [pp. 14-18](#)
- ⁸⁴ Material in the Hester Jeffrey section is combined from these sources: John W. Thompson, "Mrs. R. Jerome Jeffrey" in *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument*, 1903, [pp. 159-160](#); "[Hester Jeffrey](#)" by the Rochester Regional Library Council; Colleen Hurst, "Hester C. Whitehurst Jeffrey", available in First Unitarian's archives.
- ⁸⁵ *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Feb. 28, 1938. This quote is available in "[Biographical Sketch of Mary Thorn Lewis Gannett](#)" at alexanderstreet.com.
- ⁸⁶ William H. Pease, "[The Gannetts of Rochester: Highlights in a Liberal Career 1889-1923](#)", *Rochester History*, Vol. XVII, Oct 1955, No. 4
- ⁸⁷ The first Principle of today's Unitarian Universalist Association asserts "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," which implicitly contrasts with the Calvinist doctrine of the inherent "total depravity" of every person. The remaining principles refer to such things as "justice, equity and compassion in human relations" and "the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process." The full list of Principles is [here](#).
- ⁸⁸ Thomas M'Clintock, "To the Association of Friends for advancing the cause of the slave, and improving the condition of the Free People of Color", reprinted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 16, 1840 and in Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, [p. 109](#)
- ⁸⁹ 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
- ⁹⁰ William H. Pease, "[The Gannetts of Rochester](#)", *Rochester History*, Vol. XVII, Oct 1955, No. 4
- ⁹¹ RFAP p. 287
- ⁹² Amy Post, "The Underground Railroad" in William Farley Peck's *Semi-centennial History of the City of Rochester*, op. cit., begins on [page 458](#). Peck himself was a member of First Unitarian, as he explains on [page 449](#) of his *History of Rochester and Monroe County, New York*, and he is listed as such in Rev. Mann's history.
- ⁹³ Christopher Densmore, "[Quakers and the Underground Railroad: Myths and Realities](#)", on the "Quakers & Slavery" project page of the Tri-College website of Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore Colleges
- ⁹⁴ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, from 1817-1882*, 1882, [p. 234](#)
- ⁹⁵ RFAP p. 287