

Loving the Hell out of the World: Universalists and Their Influence in Northern New York

SOAR
October 2015



Stevie Michaelson

Stevie is “to the manner born” Universalist and has belonged to Universalist churches in Wisconsin, Illinois, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The Canton UU Church has been her church home for over 40 years.

Her mother grew up in the Universalist Church in Edwards.

Her father was a Universalist minister, graduating from the Theological School at SLU in 1944.

She is a retired school counselor/psychiatric social worker.

Eileen Raymond

Eileen grew up in the Unitarian church in Massachusetts. Her parents found Unitarianism in the 1930s while working in Boston with labor unions and the Socialist Party.



As an adult, she has belonged to Unitarian-Universalist churches and fellowships in Maryland, North and South Carolina.

Since 1992, she has been an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton. She is retired from SUNY Potsdam as Associate Dean of Education.

Class Outline

- ❖ **Class 1: 1800-1890: Formation**
- ❖ **Class 2: 1890-1960:
Growth, decline and change**
- ❖ **Class 3: 1961-present day:
Merger with Unitarians**

Our Journey

- ✓ **Canton Unitarian Universalist Church Archives**
- ✓ **St. Lawrence University Archives**
- ✓ **Potsdam Museum Archives**
- ✓ **St. Lawrence Historical Society Archives**
- ✓ **N.Y. State Convention of Universalist Archives**
- ✓ **Coots Memorial Library (at Canton UU Church)**
- ✓ **O.D. Young Library, at SLU**
- ✓ **New York Historical Newspapers database**

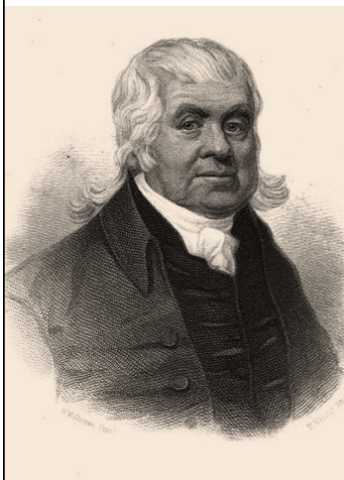
**What do you think of when you
hear the words:**

“Unitarian Universalist”

1700's
Calvinist
Preaching



John Murray
1741-1815



- 1770 – Landed in New Jersey, preached at Thomas Potters farm
- 1774: preached in Gloucester MA
- 1779 -- Founded the First Universalist Society in Gloucester MA
- Considered the Father of American Universalism

Hosea Ballou **1771-1852**

- Became a “convinced” Universalist after studying the Bible; use of reason
- Ordained in 1794
- Circuit preacher: New England and New York
- *Treatise on Atonement*
- “Death and Glory Universalism”
- Known as “Father Ballou”



The Universalist Church of America

The Winchester Profession was adopted in Winchester, NH on September 22, 1803, to “prevent confusion and misunderstanding.”

- The Old and New Testaments reveal the character of God and the final destination of humanity.
- There is one God, revealed in Jesus Christ.
- Holiness and happiness are inseparably connected.

“Go Into the highways and byways of America...”

- ❖ **Traveling preachers took up the challenge!**
- ❖ **Their mission? “ *To free human minds from the cruel prisons of dread and fear; to help them to understand that God and life are kinder than they supposed*”.**
- ❖ **They left behind them “*a hundred little clusters of converts in their wake— peculiar people calling themselves Universalists.*”**

Universalist Society of Potsdam

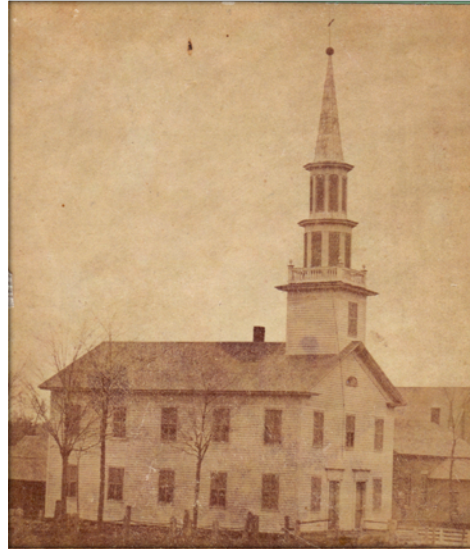
❖ **Gathered on Jan 3, 1824**

❖ **Incorporated on
October 2, 1825**

❖ **Met at Academy until
first church building
could be built in 1832-33**



First Universalist Society of Potsdam



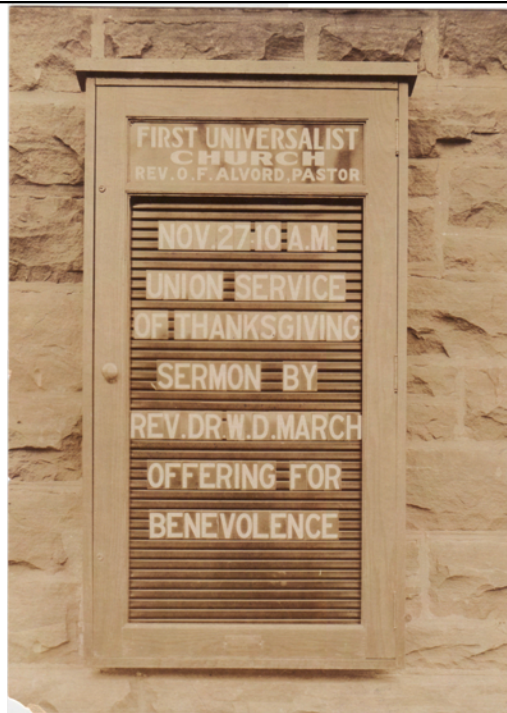
That in May 1858 - having then
 been one year without ~~the services~~
 a Pastor - we had the good fortune
 to secure the services of Rev
 C. Fisher of Leanton, since which
 time we have ^{constantly,} enjoyed his ~~constant~~
 ministrations "

That a new & constantly increasing
 interest & improvement in our
 Society affairs has marked the
 success of his labours "

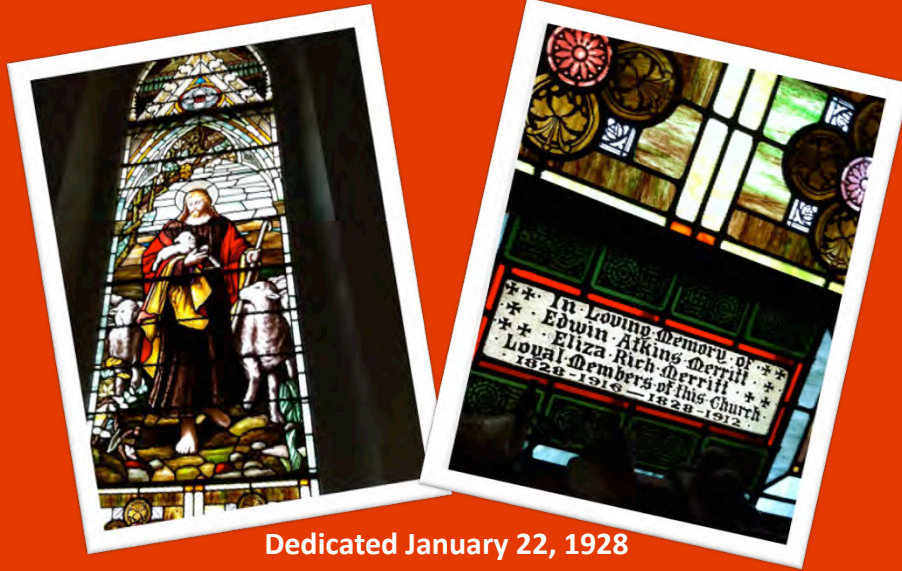
First Universalist Church of Potsdam



- Sandstone church built in 1876
- Congregation disbanded in 1933



Merritt Memorial Window



Dedicated January 22, 1928



Potsdam Museum Today

Merritt Window Comes Home!



Rededicated January 22, 1978

First Universalist Society in the Town of Canton

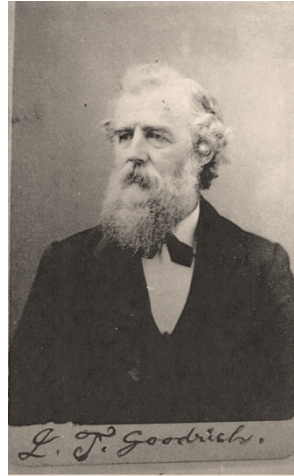
- ✧ Organized in Nov. 17, 1825;
Incorporated in 1836
- ✧ Met in the local school
- ✧ Built the "Union Church"
with Baptists in 1827-29
- ✧ Dedicatory sermon by Rev.
Jonathan Wallace
- ✧ Bought out the Baptists'
share in 1837



The Brick Church

John Temple Goodrich

- Minister at Canton:
1851-1854
- Instrumental in raising
funds for the theological
school
- First President of the
Theological School
(1856-1879)
- Supplied county pulpits
in regularly from 1856-61



Seth Williston Remington (1800-1877)

- ◇ 1854: Came to Canton
to raise funds for the
theological school
- ◇ 1856-1862: Minister at
Canton church
- ◇ Father of Seth
Pierrepont Remington
- ◇ Grandfather of Frederic
Remington



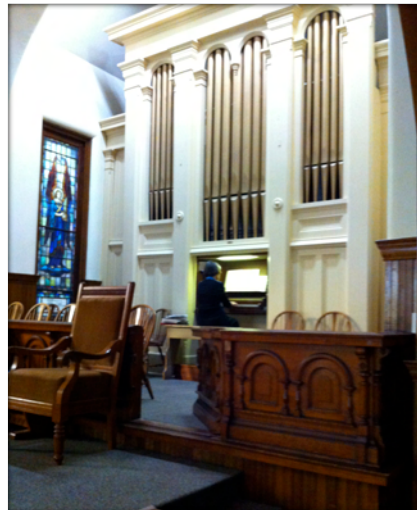
James Milford Payson (1848-1941)

- ✧ **Minister at Canton Church 1894-1904, and again from 1920-1923**
- ✧ **Graduate of the Canton Theological School**
- ✧ **Served as President of the Canton Board of Education for many years**

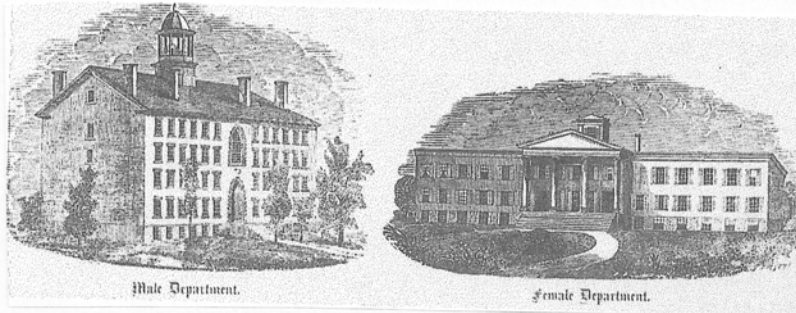


Contributions of the Ladies' Society

- ✧ **1866: Raised funds for purchase and installation of Andrews Organ**
- ✧ **1875: Bought Church Bell**
- ✧ **1891: Bought the Silas Wright residence next door for added space**
- ✧ **1896-7: Raised funds for building of new church**

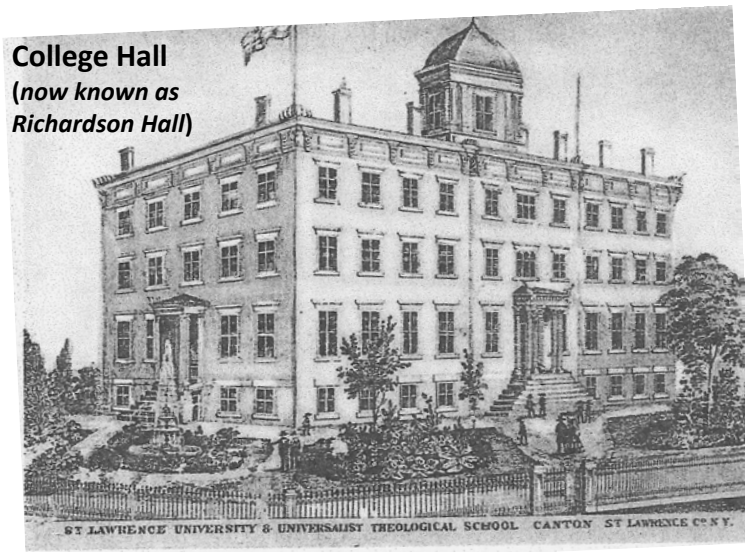


**Clinton Liberal Institute:
Clinton NY (1831- 1879
Fort Plain NY (1879 -1900)**



**St. Lawrence University and
Theological school, Canton NY**

**College Hall
(now known as
Richardson Hall)**



How did Canton come to be selected for the theological school??

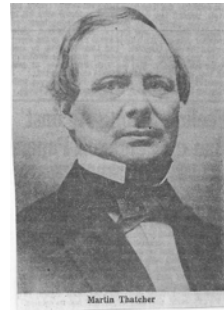
1852: The New York Convention of Universalists appoints an *Educational Society* to raise money necessary to establish a *Theological School*:

Rev. William Balch

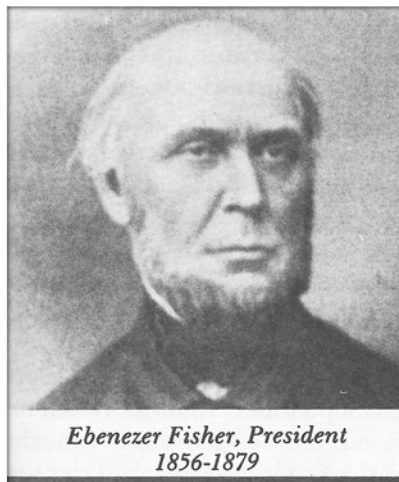
Rev. John Temple Goodrich

Rev. Seth Williston Remington

Mr. Martin Thatcher, Canton



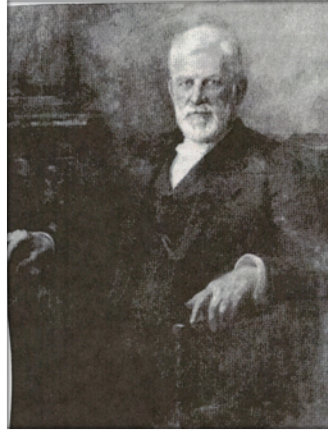
Ebenezer Fisher (1815-1879)



- ✧ Fund raiser and advocate for the Canton Theological School
- ✧ First President of the Theological School (1856)
- ✧ Active in outreach to surrounding communities

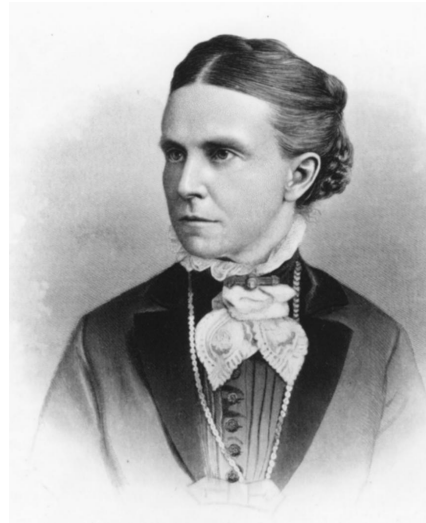
John Stebbins Lee (1820-1902)

- ✧ **First President of St. Lawrence University Preparatory Program**
- ✧ **Active in outreach to communities in the region, often preaching in local churches (listed as pastor in Edwards in 1867)**
- ✧ **Taught on the faculty of the Theological School**



Olympia Brown 1835-1926

- ✧ **Admitted to the Canton Theological School (1861)**
- ✧ **Graduated in 1863**
- ✧ **First woman to be ordained with full ministerial standing by a denominational body**
- ✧ **Active in women's suffrage movement throughout her life**



Isaac Murray Atwood

1838-1917



Isaac Murray Atwood

- 1879- Second President of Canton Theological School
- 1898- General Superintendent of the Universalist General Convention
- 1907- returned to Canton
- Taught at the Theological School, and served the Canton Church as minister (1912-1915)

Fisher Hall (1883 - 1951)

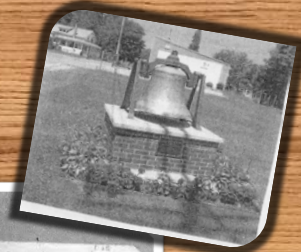
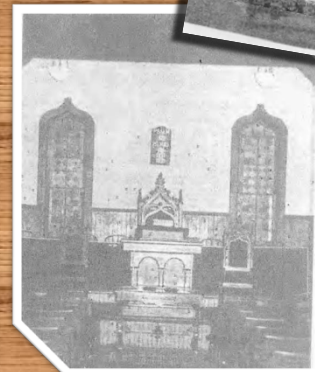
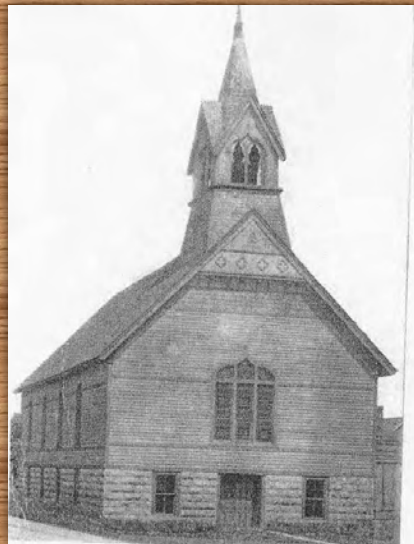


St Lawrence Association of Universalists

- ✧ General Convention of New England States
- ✧ 1825: Universalist Convention of New York
- ✧ 1828: St. Lawrence Association of Universalists
- ✧ Formed to create a formal bond to hold churches together for **mutual aid** and common concern including **filling empty pulpits**
- ✧ By 1870: New York had more Universalists than any other state

First Universalist Church of Edwards

1837-1956 (building razed in 1969)



Universalist Society of Massena 1835- ~1919



- ✧ Incorporated on September 21, 1835
- ✧ ~1900: built Church at W. Orvis and Andrews Streets
- ✧ They held two services each Sunday in 1900
- ✧ No record after 1920
- ✧ 1933- Building was used by the Maccabees Lodge until razed for an Arco station

Between 1824 and today there was a reported Universalist Society or Church in each of these villages in St. Lawrence County:

- ✧ Where are they now??
- ✧ Where did they go??
- ✧ Why??