

**Newsletter Articles, May Memorial Unitarian  
Universalist Society, Syracuse, NY**

*[Roger Hiemstra](#), Chair, History Committee*



Beginning in January, 2006, articles (written by Roger Hiemstra unless otherwise noted) related to our history under the heading “**Marvelous History Corner!**” were included in the church newsletter as a means for informing church parishioners and friends about and generating interest in our history. They are shown below with added graphics. The date after each number is when it was written; it was published in the next newsletter after that date. The recurring photo is our second minister, Rev. Samuel Joseph May, for whom our church is named.

**2006**



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**William Ingersoll Bowditch**

1. (1/1/06)



William Ingersoll Bowditch House  
*NPS photograph*

I wasn't quite sure why I agreed to become involved with our church history. Yes, I love history and like to dig through old books and papers. I also knew some help was needed. When recently going through all the MMUUS archival materials stored at Syracuse University to understand what was there, I found the real answer. Reading through the Sam May file folders, Rev. May mentioned several times working with [William Ingersoll Bowditch](#) in his various abolition and underground railroad activities (there is a William Bowditch house in Brookline, Massachusetts, shown in the above photo and preserved because of its extensive use as an underground railroad stop). In September our daughter married Sean Bowditch, so I asked his mother (who had done research on the family) and, lo and behold, Sean's great-great-great-great uncle is William. So, with six degrees of separation Janet and I can claim a direct connection to Sam May. How is that for a resounding confirmation of why I volunteered and it shows the enjoyment that can come from understanding MMUUS history? Look for a table in the social hall on January 15 where some of our historical documents will be on display and dream about your own connections to our past. Think, too, about volunteering to help preserve our history. There are many ways you can help.



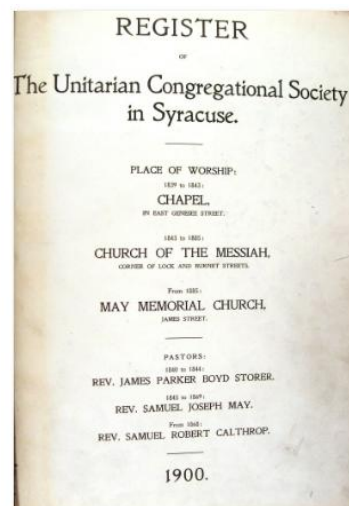
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## Our Church Membership Book

2. (1/18/06)

“The Book” has been preserved electronically! Yes, that red ledger everyone signs when agreeing to become a member has been preserved through Bob Burdick’s great digital photography skill. From that first page starting with Joshua Leonard and several others who “signed” (those first few year’s worth of names were actually copied over) on September 3, 1838, to those many pages later when seven people signed the book on November 20, 2005, the book has now been photographed. So, give Bob a pat on the back or “thanks” when next you see him. Click here if you would like to see a list of [members for the first 100 years](#).

We now have a new web page related to MMUUS history. If you are interested you can see it at [history.mmuus.org/index.html](http://history.mmuus.org/index.html) If you enjoy a stimulating sermon, you will find several of them from our past settled ministers (and from favorite daughter, Rev. Elizabeth Padgham) you can link to. If you find time to read them, tell me your favorite. I’ll keep a running tally and provide the results later.



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## Our Web Page Development

3. (2/2/06)



Rev. Elizabeth Padgham    Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong

It has been a real joy and very informative to journey through the ten boxes of material MMUUS already has stored in the Syracuse University archives unit. I am a little over half way through and keep discovering exciting “nuggets” that have helped me feel even more a part of the glorious history that is May Memorial. We, as an institution, as well as each of our past ministers (and many past church

members), have made tremendous contributions to the greater Syracuse area and beyond.

On Sunday, February 19, there will be another History display in the Social Hall after the church service. Plan to see it. In addition to some more historical artifacts and another annual scrapbook from many years ago, come see a picture of the most handsome minister we ever had, Rev. Albert Willard Clark, associate pastor of May Memorial, 1902-1904. Look, too, for a special display on Rev. Dr. Samuel Robert Calthrop, our minister from 1868 to 1911. Outstanding preacher, scientist, poet, and athlete, he made a huge mark in Syracuse. Don't miss it! A brief display on our former church locations and buildings will be included. Also on display will be a copy of *The Children's Bible*, signed by our sixth minister, Rev. Robert Romig, and former RE Director, Dr. Elizabeth Manwell. These bibles were given to all children in the 1940s. It was recently donated by a former member.

Remember, too, the [new web page](#) that provides photos, information, and links to sermons for all past settled parish ministers, Rev. Elizabeth Padgham (MMUUS' favorite daughter – see the photo above), and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong, our Minister of Religious Education from 1988 to 2001 and our first settled woman minister. You can see all our past ministers at the following site: [history.mmuus.org/index.html](http://history.mmuus.org/index.html) Finally, look for a handout describing the various ways you can volunteer to be part of preserving our history.



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## Our Evolving History Preservation Activities

4. (2/22/06)

We are proud to announce that MMUUS has won a small grant (\$3200) from the New York State Convention of Universalists to help with preservation of our church archives during the next 12 months. This grant will enable us to purchase archival quality file cabinets, acid free storage containers, archival quality memory scrapbooks, and other



May Memorial  
Unitarian Universalist Society  
Our Glorious History  
[For more information [click here](#)]  
Our Various Names  
May Memorial has had four names in its nearly 170 years. The first was the Unitarian Congregational Society. The second was the Church of the Messiah. Our third was May Memorial Unitarian Society in honor of our second minister, Rev. Samuel May. Finally, we became the May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society after the Unitarian and Universalist organizations merged.

**May Memorial Settled Parish Ministers**  
We have had eleven settled male ministers and one settled female minister [this does not include our religious education leaders/ministers, assistant ministers, or interim ministers]. Following is a brief bio on each of the settled ministers (the years in parentheses after each person's name represents their years of ministry in Syracuse). Click here for a [bibliography of material written by or about](#) some of our ministers. [Photos of settled ministers are courtesy of Bob Burdick.] A beautiful display of these photos now resides in the Memorial Room of our church between the two large marble busts of Sam Calthrop and Sam May, along with descriptive information, past church religious and music leaders, past church presidents, and annual award winners.  
[This "memories wall" was formally dedicated on August 12, 2007.](#)



Rev. John Parker Boyd Storer (1838-1844)

archival supplies. In addition, there will be some financial support for the repair and mounting of the Sam May marble tablet. Look for a rededication service later this year. Finally, we will be able to purchase some equipment for obtaining an oral history of church memories from people long associated with the church. Volunteers will be welcome for some of these activities.

We also have an archival committee (George Adams, June Card, Mary Louise Edwards, Frank Healy, and Harsey Leonard) that will work with me to develop a record management policy and implement procedures for gathering and preserving information related to the ongoing history of MMUUS. Look for our efforts in the near future.

Finally, if you have not recently looked at the web site (see the graphic above) I developed on our church history ([history.mmuus.org/index.html](http://history.mmuus.org/index.html)) you are invited to do so as much of the material shown in both the January and February history displays have been included. Remember, too, to read some of the outstanding sermons by past ministers that you can link to from this web site. A final note: If you have any church-related historical material, contact me to see if it should be included in either the archives at May Memorial or in the archival collection stored at Syracuse University.



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### **Our Prestigious Ancestors**

5. (3/06/06)

We have had some prestigious ancestors. You've already been introduced to Rev. Elizabeth Padgham, our favorite daughter. She and her sister, Clara, were accomplished musicians. From an August, 1879, newspaper clipping, it was noted that Elizabeth played "Hebe" in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Good Ship Pinafore" at the old Weiting Opera House in Syracuse. At age 5 and known as "Baby Padgham," she had a "strong voice and was a thoroughly self-possessed little performer." She was in several other types of performances and operettas growing up and continuing in musical activities in college. Her father, Amos, who "signed the book" in 1884, was a County Supervisor, and was first elected to our church Board of Trustees in 1889.



*Syracuse Cathedral was built on an ancient Greek temple*

Another early leader was Dudley Phelps, who joined the church in 1839. He was a member of the New York Assembly in 1855. He was early opposed to slavery and was a delegate to the 1848 Free Soil Convention in Buffalo. The Free Soil Party was a short-lived U.S. political party (1840-1856) that was opposed to the extension of slavery into any of the then existing U.S. territories. Frank Hiscock, who also became a member in 1884, was a prominent Onondaga County Judge. He was an active member of our Board of Trustees from 1919 into the 1930s.

Finally, there is [John Wilkinson](#) who became a member of the church in 1839 and was instrumental in its early development. John was Syracuse's first lawyer, first Post Master, and instrumental in bringing railroads to the Syracuse area. He also came up with the name "Syracuse" for the town, suggesting it based on his knowledge of Syracusa in Sicily (see the Syracuse Cathedral shown in the photo above). His wife, [Laura Starr Wilkinson](#), was an early home economist (called then Domestic Economy) and helped form the first professional home economics association, the National Columbian Household Association, in 1893. One of Sam May's daughters married a Wilkinson son. Many of you know Jack Wilkinson who graced our church halls for many years, a direct descendent of John.



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**Scholarship on Sam May**

6. (4/4/06)



**PEOPLE  
OF FAITH  
AGAINST  
THE DEATH  
PENALTY**

Those who attended our Sam May Day service on March 26 heard a wonderful presentation by [David Kaczynski](#). You also heard how fervently Rev. May expressed his own views against the death penalty, with the six reasons why capital punishment should be abolished from his July 25, 1851, *New York Daily Tribune* article. The more you learn about Sam, the more you realize how fortunate we were to have his heritage as such an important part of our church history.

Thus, in the Sam May web page are three new items for your reading pleasure. One is a wonderful thesis written in 1964 by Catherine Covert Stepanek entitled, [Saint Before His Time: Samuel J. May and American Educational Reform](#), showing another important aspect of Sam's many contributions to Syracuse. Irene

Blakeslee is converting it to a digital format for our web site. Thanks Irene and Bob. Another is a paper also written by Catherine, entitled, [Heretic in Syracuse: Samuel Joseph May, 1845-1871](#). The third is an address by Catherine given in this church on February 13, 1972, entitled, [The Remarkable Mr. May](#). Dr. Stepanek's executrix, her daughter Carolyn Holmes, has kindly given us permission to include these three documents on our web page.

Incidentally, Carolyn also loaned me a copy of the [Memoir of Samuel J. May](#) that her mother owned. This book, a memoir, was published in 1873. It makes for great reading and although I have only read parts of it, I have already learned so much new about the amazing Sam May. I will share some excerpts at a later date.



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### **The Origin of Sam May as God's Chore Boy** 7. (4/17/06)



Many who read this newsletter think fondly about several past and present social activities: Friday Night Pub, square dancing, talent shows, potlucks, concerts, potlucks, Garnet Hill ski weekend, etc.. Such socializing opportunities are very important and help make attending MMUUS so wonderful. But, socializing has been very important since this church was formed. In 1838 through the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Syracuse was dominated by Calvinists. Presbyterian principles ruled and most of the leading people were Presbyterian. In many ways it was stifling for our ancestors and the Calvinists simply refused to associate with us because we would not accept Trinitarian beliefs. The archives contain reports of how being with each other became crucial. Thus was born lovely and lively Unitarian social evenings of food, entertainment, games, and conversations, church hallmarks that have continued for nearly 12 decades.

Here is the origin of "chore boy" mentioned during the Sam May Day service. It is from the *Memoir of Samuel Joseph May*, Thomas Mumford (Ed.), Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1873 (available online at [www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;idno=ABJ1200](http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;idno=ABJ1200)), p. 232, and attributed to Transcendentalist Amos Bronson Alcott ([www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/alcott/](http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/alcott/)), Sam's brother-in-law: "Mr. A. B. Alcott was once at Syracuse when Mr. May was

engaged from morning until night in errands of mercy, -- visiting the sick, burying the dead, helping fugitive slaves and canal boys (see the photo above of a canal boy leading mules pulling an Erie Canal boat), and prisoners who wish to reform. When he reached home at evening, and was drawing off the boots from his weary feet, Mr. Alcott said: 'I have found a new name for you. You are the Lord's chore boy. You do the Lord's chores.' ”



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### May Memorial's Service During War Time

8. (5/10/06)

Florida Tracy, an active member of May Memorial during much of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, was a font of information about our church. Her involvement, observations, and memory are recorded in many places throughout the archives. Here are some of her remembrances. During WWI, May Memorial was the first church in Syracuse to provide recreational activities for soldiers of the U.S. Army's Rainbow Division (part of the New York National Guard and 42<sup>nd</sup> Division, the first Division sent to Europe in 1918 to support French troops) being trained in the Syracuse area and camped at the State Fair grounds, known as "[Camp Syracuse](#)." Six days a week in the church dining room from noon to the evening we provided a free cafeteria service with church women serving as hostesses. Showers were installed in the cellar and our church President at that time, Irving Merrill, taught literacy classes in arithmetic. WWI affected us in other ways, too. Our minister during the time period, Rev. Dr. John Henry Applebee, took a leave to serve as a Red Cross Chaplain. This war service on battlefields and in hospitals undermined his health. On his return he found that his wife, Alice, was suffering from cancer and died after much suffering. He never really recovered.

The Women's Alliance, an active church women's group during this time period and up into the 60s, carried out a number of community service activities. For example, each year the Alliance provided a noontime Christmas dinner and entertainment on the last day of school before the holiday for 75 to 100 of the poorest first and second graders in two nearby public schools. Eventually as the



need for a meal lessened, it morphed into the “Mitten Tree,” a traditional still carried on today. Church sewing groups also provided clothes and bandages for the Red Cross to use and after both world wars this energy went to producing clothing for refugee babies. As can be expected, and I am talking to the men of the church now, where would we all be without the tireless efforts, great energy, and super leadership of May Memorial women.



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### **Two of our Tireless Ancestors**

9. (5/17/06)

May Memorial has been blessed throughout its history, and continuing right up until today, to have had many pillars that step up, often very quietly, to take on important and/or needed roles in the church. From unsigned material in the archives, someone provided testimony to two such people in our past. The first was Dr. Marion Sylvester Dooley (see the photo above), an active member during the first part of the last century, who made it a life long habit to visit people when they were ill. Many people in our church were sustained by visits from Dr. Dooley and his wife. A doctor of medicine, for many years he was Professor and Head of the Department of Pharmacology at the Syracuse College of Medicine. He wrote valued pharmacology and drug therapy books during the 30s and 40s. He was President of our Laymen’s League, a member of the Board of Trustees, and Chair of the Unitarian Service Committee. His family members were active in the church, too.



Miss Elizabeth Ann Lewis was thought of as a saint, tireless worker, and premier thinker in our church and our denomination regarding religious education. She was director of our church school during the twenties and introduced liberal textbooks and liberal teaching. She worked cooperatively with a few other advanced thinkers in the Unitarian church to influence the direction of curriculum building committee at our national headquarters. She also taught numerous adult education courses in our church. She helped provide leadership for our lending library, the social action committee, and neighborhood discussion groups active during that time. She was very active in the greater Syracuse community, too. MMUUS’ heritage is so rich because of people like Marion and Elizabeth.



Finally, if you have not looked at the [Sam May link](#) on our web page, there are four new pieces there about Sam. Two from historian, Dr. Catherine Covert Stepanek, and two sermons from Rev. Richard (Rick) R. Davis, First Unitarian Society of Salem (Oregon). All four are terrific and you certainly will gain new insight into Rev. May's life.



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### **The Other Sam**

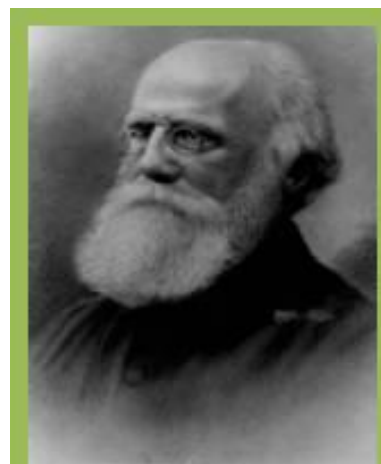
10. (6/6/06)

Our third minister was Rev. Dr. Samuel Robert Calthrop, a minister for 43 years (1868-1911) and pastor emeritus after that.

Rev. Calthrop was truly a renaissance man. See [history.mmuus.org/index.html](http://history.mmuus.org/index.html) and [history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html](http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html) for more information and a marble bust of Sam stands in the little foyer just before entering the RE area.

Born in England, he entered Cambridge at the age of 19 where he excelled. However, he refused to sign 39 Articles of the Anglican church faith required by the university which prevented his graduation and eventually led him to the United States and Unitarianism. He was an excellent scientist having patented a streamlined train, discovered numerous sunspots, and learned to predict the weather. He lectured in our church and elsewhere on a wide variety of topics beyond religion such as astronomy, botany, financial management, flowers, geology, physical training needs, and even raising tomatoes. He knew Sir Thomas Carlyle and Oliver Wendell Holmes and was a friend of Susan B. Anthony. Like his predecessor, Sam May, he was very interested in education and youth. A teacher prior to becoming a pastor, he organized the Syracuse Boys' Club, established the first playgrounds in Syracuse, and even taught at Syracuse University. Click here for a [biography of Sam](#) written by his daughter, include pictures of that streamlined train.

Dr. Calthrop was a very physically fit individual most of his life. Tall, with a big frame, and a great white beard, he was an expert boxer in his younger days, and skilled at billiards, crew, cricket, hockey, rowing, and tennis. His true passion was chess where he was known as one of the best in the country by winning local and state championships. He beat opponents while playing blindfolded and by playing



several at the same time. Able to quote verbatim from Greek and Latin Classics, he was widely published, a gifted poet, and a sought after orator. All of this while maintaining his pastorate here and being well loved and respected by both May Memorial church members and people throughout Syracuse. Renaissance man, indeed. Wow, were we lucky or what.



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### Sam May – A Man Ahead of His Time

11. (6/26/06)



As most who read this newsletter know by now, the marble tablet honoring Sam May that was in the James Street church, once thought lost, was found. It will be repaired, [hung on the southwest outside wall of the church](#), and [dedicated on October 1](#). An exciting and meaningful time for us, so I'm ruminating just a bit more on our beloved Rev. May.

In many ways, Sam was always ahead of his time. He helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Hear the power, poignancy, and even irony in his words when he spoke on May 8, 1834, at the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary meeting of that Society in NYC: "By the laws which sustain slavery, millions of human beings are held as chattels. Yes . . . they are driven along the streets of Washington, with less liberty than cattle, in the sight of that proud capital, where the national flag is flying, and where so many fine things are *said* in the favor of liberty." He spoke with such fervor for years throughout the Northeast and was mobbed five times for the voice he refused to quiet. No wonder he brought that fire here and eventually was front and center in the "Jerry Rescue" saga. As our own Rev. John Fuller said in a 1966 sermon about Dr. May and the Jerry rescue, "He was a man on fire for the freedom of all men, on fire for righteousness, on fire especially for his poor brothers in slavery."

He was ahead of his times in so many other ways, too. You know of his stance against the death penalty, but did you know that in 1826 at age 29 he founded one of the earliest Peace Societies in the U.S., the Windham County (CT) Peace Society. When he was President of the Syracuse Board of Education he abolished corporal punishment. Peace, forgiveness, and do no harm obviously were

part of his lifelong motto. One can go on and on about our Sam May, so once that marble tablet is in place, walk by occasionally and thank him for who he was.



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### **The Ladies of the Unitarian Society**

12. (8/9/06)



History Committee members have been involved in various preservation activities this summer. For example, George Adams is inventorying our many files, folders, and boxes; Harsey Leonard is retrieving images from slides and other media. Mary Louise Edwards and I are removing acid from old papers and preparing material to be stored at Syracuse University. It is hard work at times, but most enjoyable, and we keep learning more about our wonderful history. We do need more help so please volunteer some time.

I can't resist sharing one of the items Harsey retrieved from an old microfilm. Someone photographed old scrapbooks years ago and many delightful items have come alive. Let me take you back to yesteryear, near the birth of our beloved church. It's 1862 and this delightful piece shows up in the local newspaper:

The Ladies of the UNITARIAN SOCIETY, will repeat their entertainment  
“**An Evening with Dickens,**”

In Wieting Hall On Monday Evening, Feb. 3, 1862

PROGRAMME:

1. Tableau – The Soldiers Dream.
2. Pantomime Ballad – Mistletoe Bough.
3. From Dombey & Son – [and it goes on from there for 13 acts]

Admission 25 cents – Children 15 cents

Can't you just picture people from throughout Syracuse coming out to watch the Unitarian ladies and their entertainment activities? As Big Russ would say (for those who have read Tim Russert's *Big Russ and Me*), “what a country” and what a city where Unitarians can entertain people of varying faiths with material from Dickens. It must have been something!



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## Reflecting on Sam May's Life

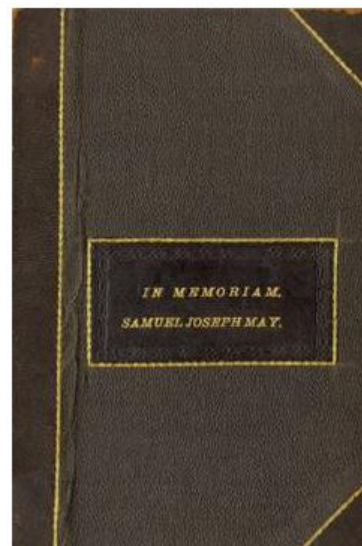
13. (8/29/06)

On September 12 we can celebrate the 209<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sam May's birth. Not necessarily a special occasion, but nearing his birth date prompted me to read through an inspirational little book,

[\*In Memoriam. Samuel Joseph May.\*](#) This book was published in 1871 a few months after Rev. May's death, July 1, 1871. A committee consisting of Rev. Samuel Caltrop and several church members and friends (Mr. C. D. B. Mills, Mr. D. P. Phelps, Mr. H. N. White, Mrs. Mary E. Bagg, and Mrs. Rebecca J. Burt) prepared and published this testimony to the life of Sam May.

Just reading about the July 6 funeral service brings both tears to the eyes as well as renewed awe regarding the many lives that Sam touched. Many people participated in the service, some traveling long distances to do so. This from the address of Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the very respected anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator*, sums up well the sentiment expressed in many ways that day: "I have lost a most affectionate and unswerving friend, an early and untiring co-worker in the broad field of freedom and humanity, a brother beloved incomparably beyond all blood relationship. Syracuse has lost one of its most useful and esteemed citizens; the nation one of the worthiest of its sons; the world one of the purest, most philanthropic, most divinely actuated of all its multitudinous population." Happy birthday, Sam, and thanks for gracing our church and our community with your devoted service.

One of Rev. May's least touted contributions, but, perhaps, one of his most important, was his untiring championing of better education for the youth of our community and our country. Historian Catherine Covert wrote a well researched and delightful Master's thesis on her way to a PhD in History and distinguished teaching career at SU: [\*Saint Before His Time: Samuel J. May and American Educational Reform.\*](#) Thanks to the able assistance of Irene Blakeslee in converting a photocopy of this 1964 document to a digital format and the permission of Catherine's daughter, this wonderful document is now on the Sam May web page along with two other of Dr. Covert's informative pieces related to Sam May



([www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/sjmay.html](http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/sjmay.html)). They are highly recommended reading for anyone interested in education.

Finally, put the afternoon of October 1 on your calendar as we rededicate the Sam May Memorial Marble Tablet that hung on the wall of our former James Street church. More details will follow later.



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### **May Slagle – A Tireless Worker**

14. (9/17/06)

I just love it when an article sort of writes itself. On September 12 Janet and I were election inspectors for the primary. Where I was assigned, one of my fellow inspectors was an 81 year old man by the name of Walt Slagle. I thought nothing of the name, but during our nine hours together I mentioned my involvement with May Memorial. He then proceeded to tell me that he used to attend May Memorial at the former James Street church. He taught Sunday School as soon as he was old enough and he fondly remembers riding in 1941 with a carload of May Memorial boys driven by Reginald Manwell (Hank's dad) to a Rowe, Vermont, Unitarian church for a youth conference. He remembers most fondly Rev. Robert Romig (our minister from 1941 to 1946) who he said was a wonderful man.

But here is where the fun began. I knew I should know that name. Then he told me that his Mom was May Slagle and it all "clicked." I remember her name from pouring over old documents, but some who read this newsletter will remember May as a long time and indispensable office manager of May Memorial. As noted in *May No One Be A Stranger* (p. 45) "in the minds of many church school children who heard their parents mention May Slagle, she, not the minister from 100 years ago, was the source of the church name" (see the photo above of May playing the piano so some RE children could sing along). May was one of the most active of all our volunteers in the school lunch program the church sponsored and ran during WWII. She edited the church newsletter, for many years, too. She retired in 1974 and died in May (what other month could it be) of 1978 at the age of 85. Walt remembers that Nick Cardell did a beautiful memorial service for his



Mom. Incidentally, his brother Eugene went to our church and his Dad ran a woodworking center for youth in the James Street basement. His aunt, May's sister, Helen McKnight, was an active church member and served as church historian for several years (thanks, Helen).

So this article is dedicated not only to May Slagle, but to all the wonderful people who have served as office manager, treasurer, sextant, custodian, and many other important staff positions during our 168 year history down to people such as Karen and Leslie today. This church could not have happened without you. We send a big thanks and salute back through the ages.



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### **Dedicating Sam May's Marble Tablet**

15. (10/3/06)

The dedication service on October 1 was wonderful and the rains stayed away. The choir sang, we all sang, and several people spoke, including former member and Historian, Jean Hoefler. She and Bill traveled from afar to be with us for the dedication (see the photo above). In addition, Professor Ron DeRutte from SU described how he will repair and mount the tablet this fall.

Here is a bit about the tablet's history. It was installed below a stained glass window in the James Street church in 1886 as a memorial to Sam May. The sermon delivered at its unveiling was by a good friend, Rev. William P. Tilden, who had been influenced by Sam during Sam's ministry at South Scituate, Massachusetts. Rev. Tilden described Sam this way in words so consistent with what we have come to know about Sam May: "Calm as a June morning, but firm as Gibraltar, he was a Moral hero" (from this document found by Betsy Fuller – Vinal, W. G., 1954, *Old Scituate churches in a changing world*, Norwell, MA: Ladies Alliance of The First Parish Church, p. 34). See [history.mmuus.org/windows.html](http://history.mmuus.org/windows.html) for a look at all the stained glass creations in that church and click on the name being honored shown at the bottom of each window to read a description. The tablet was broken while being removed from the church in 1963 before its razing, transported to the Onondaga Historical Society, then lost.



Jean Hoefler at the  
Dedication Service

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Fortunately, it was rediscovered last summer, transported to May Memorial, and soon will adorn our outside southwest wall. Somehow it feels fitting that it will look out on the Memorial Garden and Pavilion. See [history.mmuus.org/maytablet.html](http://history.mmuus.org/maytablet.html) for a color photo of the tablet. The inscribed words are difficult to read in the photo, so here they are as they were written one hundred and twenty years ago:

*In memory of Samuel Joseph May, born in Boston September 12, 1797, died in Syracuse July 1, 1871. The beloved minister of this church during twenty-four years, his life diffused the radiance of piety and charity throughout this community. A loyal follower of Jesus, he loved God supremely and his fellow-men as himself. He helped the erring and sorrowful and uplifted the downtrodden. In the struggle against slavery he was among the earliest, most fearless and most constant. A fervent, devout preacher, an assiduous, loving pastor, an untiring apostle of education, temperance and peace, a steadfast defender of spiritual liberty. Trusting wholly in the ideal right he labored from youth to age to bring in the kingdom of God. When death was near he said: "I may have hereafter a clearer vision, I can hardly have a surer faith."*

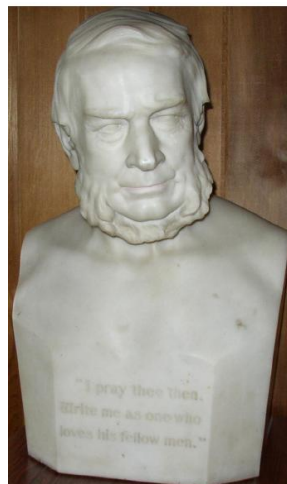
I close with the words read by President, Fred Fiske, as the official dedication of the tablet and pavilion: "We have gathered here today to remember Ernie Archambault as a representative of the many MMUUS parishioners over our history who have stood for selfless commitment to May Memorial and to remember Samuel J. May as a representative of the many ministers and others throughout our history who have provided leadership for May Memorial to maintain an important place in the greater Syracuse Community. May this pavilion and this marble tablet stand as symbols of such devotion for many generations to come. We so dedicate these symbols."



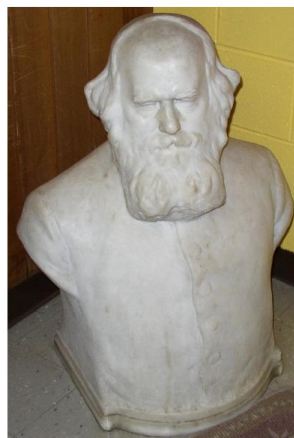
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### **Funeral Services for our Two "Sam"s**

16. (10/17/06)



I looked through material recently and reread the October 9, 2002, *Post Standard* article on Rev. Nick Cardell's death and what he meant to MMUUS, the Syracuse Community, and so many people. It reminded me of his memorial service and all the things said about Nick by various people. Then my "archive" mind lead to searching for similar material on perhaps our two most famous historical figures.



In a May 14, 1917, *Syracuse Herald* article about Rev. Dr. Samuel Calthrop (the photos above show the busts for both Rev. May and Rev. Calthrop – the busts are located in the Memorial Room), the author described how hundreds visited our James Street church for "one last look upon the face of Dr. Calthrop." A high bank of flowers had been built in front of the chancel; over the pulpit and communion table, reaching from the ceiling nearly to the floor, hung an American flag. Entering the church a visitor saw only the flag and flowers and it was not until coming closer that within the bier of flowers could be seen the coffin of the beloved pastor. Rev. Calthrop was crowned with his black skull cap, without which he never appeared in public other than when he delivered a sermon. He lay as if in peaceful sleep and looked just as though he had sunk into an afternoon nap. Mothers lifted their children to see his gentle face among the flowers and tears streamed from the eyes of many who mourned his loss and revered the 49 years of service he gave to May Memorial and the greater Syracuse community.

Rev. Samuel May's funeral on July 6, 1871, had drawn an even bigger gathering of devoted worshipers, friends, community and national dignitaries, and townspeople who respected his great service. At 10 that morning his body in a metallic casket was moved to the Church of the Messiah, our second church building, which had been decorated, and placed before the pulpit from which he had spoken so many faithful, earnest words (see [history.mmuus.org/MMUUSchurchbuildings.html](http://history.mmuus.org/MMUUSchurchbuildings.html)). The church doors were then opened and hundreds filed by for a last look at his loving face. Subsequently, every church seat was filled, the porch was crowded, and the stairway and yard outside filled with the old and young, rich and poor, all eager to join in doing honor to the name and memory of a man who had done so much for so many. Fittingly, Rev. Calthrop gave a moving prayer during the service that brings tears to the eye just reading it some 135 years later. A memorial book to Sam May published in 1871 is being prepared for inclusion on the [church web page](#). It contains much more information about his



life and the funeral service that honored his living, contributions, and meaning to May Memorial. It stands as a testament to the many leaders who have served this church so well.



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### **Some Reflections on Building our Current Church**

17. (11/8/06)



At Dave Ashley's urging, I've looked at material in our church archives and the Syracuse University archives regarding the enormous work by so many associated with conceiving, planning, designing, and building our current church. Especially gratifying was reading through a two inch file at the Syracuse University archival collection regarding the famed Dean Pietro Belluschi's (see his photo above) numerous architectural contributions to our church. It was intriguing to see the various push and pull discussions and a willingness by many people to meet our needs while maintaining the design integrity. Getting behind the scenes of our fascinating venture in the early 1960s was a real treat.

So many people from May Memorial contributed countless hours to enable 3800 E. Genesee St. become the wonderful place that we know. More than 100 people participated via a dozen crucial committees to make it all happen. Some of the current members involved included Doug Aird, Howland Auchincloss, Mal Clark, Al Obrist, Helen Obrist, and Dorothy Riester. The next time you see one of them ask about their memories of this important time in our church history. To look at some related photos and papers, go to [history.mmuus.org/churchbuilding.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/churchbuilding.pdf).

Many thanks go to Lisa Obrist (with help from Helen and Al) who was able to identify several people in photos from that time our current church was being built. Thanks also to Verah Johnson, newest History Committee member, and Irene Blakeslee and Lyn Coyle who have typed much of the new Web page material that has been added recently as noted below.

Finally, three new Web page items have been added that are well worth your perusal. One is Dr. Catherine Covert's wonderful Master's thesis: *Saint*

*Before His Time: Samuel J. May and American Educational Reform* at [www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/covert-may-thesis.html](http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/covert-may-thesis.html) . Another is a very moving story of Sam May's life, death, funeral, and burial: *IN MEMORIAM – Samuel Joseph May*. This can be viewed at [history.mmuus.org/inmemorialsjm.html](http://history.mmuus.org/inmemorialsjm.html). The third is *May No One Be A Stranger* by Jean Hoefer and Irene Baros Johnson at [history.mmuus.org/stranger.html](http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html) . This wonderfully written history of our church from 1838 to 1988 has been enhanced with many links to relevant support material. Both these latter two will be added to the church web page in the near future.



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### **Our Heroic Acts of Social Justice**

18. (11/21/06)



I, like so many, stand in awe of Dan and Doris Sage, who along with Dick Weiskopf, Sam Feld, and Phil and Donna Muhs-McCarten recently traveled to Fort Benning, Georgia, to bear witness in this ongoing travesty against social justice. Initially called the School of the Americas (SOA), and now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), it has been often referred to as the School of Assassins. [SOA Watch](#) is a national organization that helps draw attention to what they really do there. The school trains Latin American soldiers, police, and government officials, many of whom return to their countries to perpetrate various human rights abuses. Dan and Doris, along with Nick Cardell and other Syracuse residents paid a huge price in the past for their witness there, even by serving a six month jail term.

May Memorial members and leaders actually have a long history of heroic acts in the name of social justice. This began with our direct ancestors in the 1830s who braved isolation, hostility, social ostracism, and even persecution to start our religious home in Syracuse. Our many ministers, too, have been courageous leaders for social justice issues. To name a few, Sam May quickly comes to mind for his work with anti-slavery, anti-capital punishment, women's rights, peace, and educational issues just to name a few of his many accomplishments. We also should not forget Rev. Calthrop and his advocacy for the Syracuse Boy's Club, Rev. Argow and his work with public health and housing, Rev. Applebee and his

work with the Red Cross during WWI, Rev. Fuller and his work in civil rights, and Rev. Cardell and Rev. Strong's work with Planned Parenthood.

But it has been our many church wide efforts that have marked May Memorial as an institution dedicated to social justice. Our various women's groups over the years have provided playground equipment for Onondaga County orphans, bought and distributed milk for undernourished children in the schools, provided reading and social rooms for unemployed people during the depression, given financial support to a residence for elderly women, created a USO-type social environment for soldiers being trained at the State Fair Grounds during WWII, fed lunches to children whose mothers were working during that same war, and collected food and clothing for European relief soon after its end. More recently, our sanctuary efforts some two decades ago during El Salvador's horrendous history of abuse, our ongoing homeless and hungry efforts through the collection of food and other items, and our preparation of meals at St. Paul's church serve as examples of that continuing social justice commitment.

There actually is not room enough in this short article to give all the credit that is due to the May Memorial people who have devoted countless hours and many dollars to such important issues. You can read more about this devotion and why it is easy to take pride in this church for its ongoing social justice history by reading through [history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html](http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html) and [history.mmuus.org/stranger.html](http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html). So "tip your hat" to Dan, Doris, Dick, Sam, Phil, and Donna the next time you see them and say thanks as fine representatives of our great social justice heritage.



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**Elizabeth and Reginald Manwell**

19. (12/4/06)



**Dr. Elizabeth Manwell**  
**DRE 1936-1949**

Barbara Mihalas recently pointed out to me a great UU web site for church history buffs, the dictionary of UU

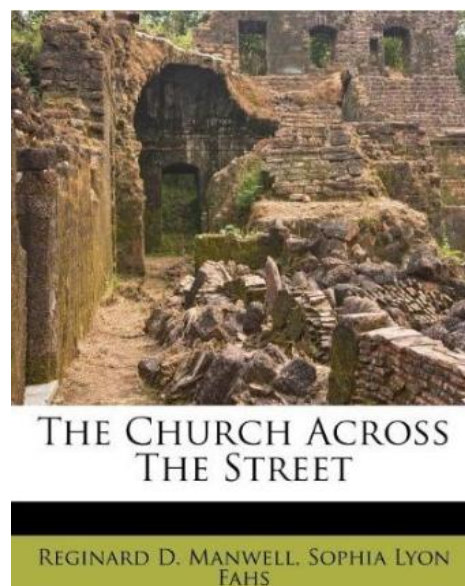
biography: [www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/index.html](http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/index.html) There is a great Sam May biography there. I've now been asked to write one on Sam Calthrop and may do others later. Speaking of web resources, an 1885 booklet devoted to the October 20, 1885, James St. church dedication is now online. It makes for some great

reading. See especially the sermon by Sam May's son, Rev. Joseph May. It is a classic. This booklet is available on the church web site ([history.mmuus.org/maychurch.html](http://history.mmuus.org/maychurch.html)).

I recently interviewed Hank Manwell as part of the History Committee's efforts to talk with long time May Memorial members so we can learn more about our church history. We hope to make several interviews available online some time in the future and they will serve as an important archival resource so current and future May Memorial members can better understand our past. It was a delightful interview and I gained much new information. Some of what I learned will appear in later newsletters and it triggered the heart of this article. We are looking for other volunteer interviewers; we will do the training and supply the digital recorder.

I've long been intrigued with the years of service given to May Memorial by Hank's parents, Dr. Elizabeth Manwell, our DRE from 1936-1949, and Dr. Reginald Manwell. Hank provided great first hand knowledge of their long term involvement with our youth. See *May No One Be A Stranger* ([history.mmuus.org/stranger.html](http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html)) to find out more about their impact on the church.

Reginald, for example, wrote with Sophia Lyon Fahs the classic Beacon curriculum text *The Church Across the Street* (Beacon Press, 1947; a revised edition was published in 1962). Reginald's work was based on his May Memorial church school classes that studied other religious groups and visited many different congregations in the city. A wonderful scrapbook in our archives captures the work that he and various young people did during the 1940-1941 year learning about numerous churches. During then they visited and studied such Syracuse religious institutions as Jewish temples, a Russian Orthodox church, a Catholic cathedral, a Lutheran church, an Episcopal church, a Presbyterian church, a Congregational church, a Methodist church, a Baptist church, a Christian Scientist church, and the Society of Friends. I can only imagine the knowledge and memories taken away by the young people in Syracuse and around the country exposed to this curriculum and certainly envy their experiences. This paragraph can best be ended by paying tribute to all the people in May's history from the 1830s right up through today who have given of their time and talent serving the youth of our church. We owe them much.





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## Past Members Reminisce About our Church

20. (12/30/06)

I am very happy to report that the repaired Sam May marble tablet now resides on our outside west wall overlooking the Memorial Garden. It is so beautiful and takes your breathe away when you think that it first adorned our James Street church wall in 1885. When Jill Evans and I first saw it on December 17 sitting in a protective cradle built by Dale Sherman while the silicone epoxy was drying, it was truly an emotional moment. Professor DeRutte did a marvelous job and thanks to those who helped in various ways, especially in mounting it at its final resting place. So step down to the Memorial Garden and see this work of art.

In keeping with our tablet's history, in the archives is a collection of moving memories about the James Street church. Back in the very early 1960s, a committee headed by a Mrs. Kenneth Kindelsperger and a Polly Lape, asked a number of current or former members of the Women's Alliance, a very active group at May Memorial for many years, to reminisce about the church. The decision had already been made to build a new church and they decided it was important to gather some recollections. We are indebted to their insightfulness. This newsletter piece and at least the next one will report some of these nuggets. For example, Florida Tracy remembers how in the 20s and 30s special collections were taken during Sunday services to meet the needs of several community charities that we having tough financial times because of the depression. She also remembered Mrs. Bigelow, a stately older women, from one of the wealthy Syracuse families, who wore small bonnets tied with a velvety ribbon under her chin, basque [corset shaped] fitting dresses, with billowy skirts. Mrs. Bigelow had told Florida that she remembered making lemonade as a little girl for the annual picnic day that the Unitarians held for lower income children. [We were doing our social justice in many ways a century ago.]

Helen Eager, who was two years old in 1885 when the James Street church was dedicated, remembered her grandmother telling about the very early days of the church when Sunday meetings were sometimes held in cellars and in secret



because the negative feelings toward Unitarians in Syracuse were so intense. Helen also remembers the last day of Sunday School each year as being very special. The children would bring in wild flowers and those they picked from parents' gardens for decoration. Yards of daisy chains also were hung and the church always looked very lovely. Finally, in *May No One Be A Stranger*, Jean (see elsewhere the sad news about Jean Hoefler's death from an auto accident – the photo of the book's cover is shown above in honor of Jean who was one of the co-authors) and Irene talked about the memorial tree tradition that was started by Nick Cardell (p. 51, [history.mmuus.org/stranger.html](http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html)). In the early 1900s we had another "tree" tradition, the Mitten Tree, where mittens and other warm clothing were hung on a tree and later donated to people in need. This tradition even carried over into our current church. It has been fun peaking in on these great memories and more will be shared later.

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### More Reminiscing About our Church

21. (1/9/07)

When you get an opportunity, stop down to the Memorial Garden area and look at the Sam May marble tablet. It will take your breath away when you think that it first adorned a May Memorial church wall in 1885 and now it rests on an MMUUS church wall once again. Thanks to all who helped in some way in the process of this becoming reality. Go to our web page and click on the link to the Samuel May [repaired plaque](#) for more information.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, here are a few more priceless nuggets from the Mrs. Kenneth Kindelsperger and Polly Lape committee that gleaned some reminiscences about our church during its long history. Elizabeth Manwell, for example, remembered that for years in the James St. church, there were "Children's Sundays" several times a year and eventually with so many children they actually encircled the entire congregation. She also recalled one Sunday right after the church school had been given a victrola (wind up record player – see the picture of an old victrola above). She placed it next to a curtain that separated the



religious education area from the sanctuary altar. During the junior service that first week it was there she played a rousing record of an Indian Tribal Dance to illuminate a folk story they were studying, not thinking about how the sound would carry so well through the curtain. After the service, Rev. Dr. Argow asked her quite gently not to that again. Her music happened just as he began his prayer in the sanctuary; he thought it was coming from the organ and that the organist had missed his cue, so he kept on praying thinking the organist would figure out what was happening and stop playing. Dr. Argow told her that he just kept on praying louder and louder thinking the organ would stop, but eventually he had to stop praying thinking the organ had won until he figured out from where the music was coming. Think about that the next time any of us hear some noise in the foyer during a Sunday service and find ourselves becoming slightly irritated.

Florida Tracy talked with fondness about the wonderful work of the Women's Alliance. During the Rev. Calthrop and Rev. Applebee ministries right up until WWI, the Alliance annually gave a Christmas noontime dinner and entertainment to our church youth on a Saturday before Christmas. Eventually, the Alliance voted to include the poorest children in the two nearby elementary schools. This involved 75-100 children, ages 6-8, who typically did not have much of a Christmas simply because their parents could not afford it. She talked about the heartwarming sight of seeing the wide-eyed kids before a lighted tree and then as they received food and gifts. She talked, too, that this notion of giving actually went all the way back to Rev. May's era when church women made hospital clothing and bandages that were shipped to the Union front during the Civil War and then the making of garments and bandages that the Red Cross used in WWI and WWII. They also made garments and sleepers for refuge infants during both wars. It certainly makes me proud to belong to a church that has such a wonderful and long social action heritage.



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### **Still More Reminiscing About the Church**

22. (1/20/07)



I just can't resist sharing a few more wonderful tidbits from that Kindelsperger and Lape committee on recording remembrances in the 1960s about fundraising and about a couple of our past ministers. Think of our current Fine Craft show or biennial Book & CD Sale as fundraisers. Well, Helen Eager remembered not only concerts and plays as ways of raising funds, but they also had wax work shows with human models (I would loved to have seen those). She was part of a large committee, too, that through Rev. Applebee's (see Rev. Applebee's photo above) ministry in the 20s made over 400 calls to members and others who were troubled by the depression and declining economic situation. One of her memories as a youth was about Sam Calthrop and his "famous" forgetfulness: "Dr. Calthrop was a great preacher. He was an English man with a beautifully pitched voice and annunciation. He wore a skull cap over his bald dome when he thought it proper and started the service with it on. But it was not proper for the prayer. He would sometimes forget to take it off and we children would peek from beneath our bowed head to see how long it would be before he remembered to slip his hand up, sneaking it off into his pocket." She also mentioned his propensity to be a bit long-winded at times: "My grandfather was also English and he and the Doctor were close friends. Sometimes the Doctor would get too absorbed in his sermon and go on and on. Grandfather was way down in front and he would hold up his big repeater watch which the Doctor would eventually see and wind up the sermon abruptly."

It seems so common today that sports contests can be held in the evening with all the available stadium lighting. Floss Eustin remembered early in the last century when she and family members would travel to Rev. Calthrop home, known as Primrose Hill, on Sunday afternoons for picnics and visiting with others. Sam, who was a tennis enthusiast, would string lanterns around his tennis court so tennis matches could continue into the early evening and then there would be dancing until midnight. Helen Eager also remembered people frequently going to Primrose Hill after Sunday services where they could look through his telescope and he would talk about his astronomy interests. Polly Lape talked fondly about the custom of using the Sunday collection money gathered near Thanksgiving and Christmas to buy food and clothing for those in need throughout the community. She also remembered Dr. Applebee's interest in dramatics and that he engineered as a fundraiser in the church, a famous play in the 20s entitled, "The Old Peabody Pew," a Christmas romance about a country church. She later became involved in annual Christmas pageants, also used as fundraisers. Finally, Gladys Timmerman recalled another interesting fundraising activity by the Women's Alliance that "was a lot of work, but also a lot of fun, and brought people together." It was called the "Department Store," and involved the sale of various items. The Alliance also was known for its fundraising dinners that were so popular there



would need to be several sittings before everyone was served. So the next time you are asked to help with a fundraising event, remember that they have been an integral part of May Memorial for many, many years.



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### **Sam May's Educational Legacy**

23. (2/5/07)

Sam May's legacy is everywhere! In late January I was at Framingham State College (Framingham, MA) to deliver a keynote address on teaching adults for the college's continuing education faculty.

A panel of three faculty gave a reaction to my address after I finished. I met with them a half hour before the session to determine procedures. The first to arrive was a delightful Professor of History. As the others were gathering he began describing his current research project, an examination of the past Framingham State College presidents. He said his favorite president was Samuel J. May. You could have knocked me over with a feather, as I stammered that he was the man for whom my church was named. As we both enthusiastically began sharing information, some pieces from his life prior to living in Syracuse began dropping into place.

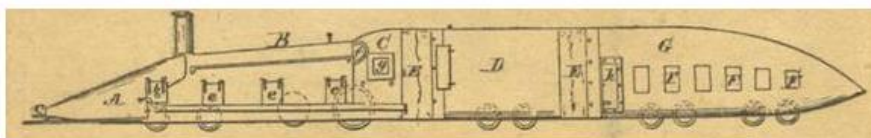
Horace Mann, Massachusetts's initial Secretary of Education, established the first experimental normal school in the country to train women as teachers. This was in 1839 and the first Principal (top official) was Harvard educated Cyrus Pierce. Cyrus became ill and had to step down in 1842. Sam May had been minister of the South Scituate (MA) Unitarian church from 1836-1842. Mr. Mann convinced Sam that because he already had such a passion for improving education, to take on the Principal role (see the photo above). He served the Normal School for two full years (1842-1844) where the enrollment doubled, the school was relocated from its first location in Lexington to West Newton, and many new faculty were hired. Upon Mr. Pierce regaining full health, Sam then accepted the position at our church. As the Normal School eventually moved to Framingham and ultimately became a state college, Sam is called the institution's second president. To read just a bit more this time in his life go to this Internet link: [history.mmuus.org/normalschool.html](http://history.mmuus.org/normalschool.html).



Just a bit more about Sam. When he was beginning his ministerial work in Massachusetts, he laid much of the groundwork for his ministry with us. He formed a Peace Society in 1826 and in 1827 called the first State Convention on Education to consider the defects of common schools. While at the Scituate church his Sunday School children became staunch adherents of Peace and Universal Freedom. In his efforts to promote total abstinence, he also organized a “Cold Water Army” of a few hundred young people, who marched through the town and chanted "eternal hate to all that doth intoxicate." He put the rum dealers and liquor establishments out of business, but the people still loved him as a pastor. That was our Sam!



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### **The Scientific Skills of Samuel Calthrop**

24. (2/13/07)

Since becoming the MMUUS History Committee Chair, I have been fascinated with Sam Calthrop, our third minister. Besides being a beloved long-time minister of this church, he was well known as an athlete, philosopher, and even poet. However, one of his favorite avocations was dabbling in science. For example, on August 8, 1865, he filed a patent (No. 49,227 – the graphic above shows a side view of his invention) for “improvement in construction of railway trains and cars.” This was way ahead of its time and the forerunner of what became known as the bullet train. It called for tapering the front and rear to lower wind resistance, encasing each car with a false bottom for further sleekness, raising the tender to create a bullet shape, enclosing doors to make them flush with the sides of each car, enclosing the intervals between cars with flexible hoods, rounding as much as practicable the sides of all cars, and avoiding all projecting surfaces such as window ledges. The patent material included drawings that also seemed ahead of their time even by today’s standards. A need for cash with a growing family eventually resulted in sale of the patent. Oh! If he had only kept it and willed it to May Memorial!

Another endeavor was his interest in the sun and sun spots. Using a telescope, he studied the sun for many years and began forecasting the weather based on his growing knowledge. The local Syracuse papers even relied on some of his predictions. For history buffs, an interesting related article can be found in

the *Syracuse Herald*, April 4, 1915. Those non-skiers who have suffered through the cold and snow as of late can take solace in Sam's thoughts from that article: "Be patient with the present weather conditions. The longer these conditions continue, the better weather we will have during the summer." So, if you can find the sun, give it a glance and know that Sam is predicting a great summer for us. More on Sam Calthrop can be found in an [interesting compilation by his daughter, Edith Calthrop Bump, in 1939](#).

On another note, Janet and I had a great time visiting Hank and Sally Manwell in their Melbourne (Florida) UU church a few Sundays ago. Thus, it seems fitting to quote Hank's mom, Elizabeth, from her September 20, 1964, reminiscence on the James Street Church. She remembered four great thoughts from the sermons of past ministers: Dr. Argow – "You are God. He is not up there, out there, he is the great creative force about and within all." Rev. Romig – "You have wholeness within you. Think not mainly of your immaturities, think of your strengths." Rev. Canfield – "Cultivate the growing-edge of your minds." Rev. Zoerheide – "Seek to find the hidden loveliness that is in every human being."



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### Remembering Some of our Past Ministers

25. (3/3/07)

As we are near finding our next settled minister, let's [remember our past ministers](#). Much could be said about each, but only a few highlights are presented here. Our ministerial history begins with Rev. John Storer (1839-1844 – see his photo above). He worked diligently to raise money for our first regular building, the Church of the Messiah. He traveled throughout the east soliciting nearly 40% of the necessary funds from friends, many of whom were not Unitarians.

Most readers of this newsletter know much about Rev. Sam May, our 2<sup>nd</sup> minister (1845-1868), and Rev. Sam Calthrop, our 3<sup>rd</sup> minister (1868-1911), as



Rev. Storer



Rev. Argow

several past history corner pieces have been about them (see the two web links shown at the end of this article for more information).

Our 4<sup>th</sup> minister, Rev. John Applebee (1911-1929 – his photo was shown in an earlier column), was very active in the Syracuse community as well as with his May Memorial activities. He headed several civic and charitable organizations and supported the Association of Workers for the Blind, learning Braille so he could transcribe literature for them. Rev. Waldemar Argow, our 5<sup>th</sup> minister (1930-1941 – see the photo on the preceding page), was highly respected for his sermons. He was actively involved in Syracuse with membership in the Onondaga Health Association and a committee to study housing needs. He also was active in denominational activities and was a member of several American Unitarian Association committees.

Rev. Robert Romig (1941-1946 – see the photo to the right), our 6<sup>th</sup> minister, was not only respected as an effective church leader, he also stepped up during WWII to serve on the United War Fund that raised funds for the USO, War Prisoners' Aid, Seamen's Service, and various foreign relief agencies. Our 7<sup>th</sup> minister, Rev. Glenn Canfield (1946-1952), was active in the NAACP during his May Memorial ministry. He also chaired a Syracuse Council of Churches housing committee to improve living conditions for black residents. Our 8<sup>th</sup> minister, Rev. Robert Zoerheide (1952-1961), also served on the board of NAACP and supported civil rights and better housing efforts. He was instrumental, too, in convincing our congregation to support the Unitarian and Universalist merger. Our 9<sup>th</sup> minister, Rev. John Fuller (1961-1973), was very active in social action activities within the community, including the Civil Rights struggle and the anti-Vietnam War effort. He also counseled conscientious objectors and women seeking legal abortions outside of New York.



Rev. Romig



Rev. Canfield



Rev. Zoerheide



Rev. Fuller



Rev. Cardell

Rev. Nick Cardell (1974-1995 – see the photo on the preceding page), our 10<sup>th</sup> minister, served as Chairperson of the Planned Parenthood board during the 1970s. He also protested the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia, was subsequently arrested, and served a six-month jail sentence. Rev. Liz Strong (1988-2001 – a photo of her was shown in an earlier column), our first female minister (of Religious Education), also was heavily involved with the Planned Parenthood. In addition, she coordinated a strong adult education program for May Memorial. Our most recent settled minister, Rev. Scott Taylor (1997-2004 – see the photo above), helped organize our efforts with the Southside Interfaith Housing Corporation and facilitated numerous Soul Matters adult education groups. Wow! What energy, dedication, and devotion to May Memorial and our community from them all. The heritage they helped create provides a solid foundation upon which the new minister will build our future. Check out these two Internet sites [history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html](http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html) and [history.mmuus.org/stranger.html](http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html) plus our church web page for more information.



Rev. Taylor



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### **Sam May's Famous Friends and Relatives**

26. (3/20/07)

On behalf of the History Committee, I am pleased to announce that MMUUS has received another grant from the New York State Convention of Universalists. This will enable us to continue our preservation activities, create some additional history display areas, and even share what we have learned as a committee with others in the St. Lawrence District. We still welcome anyone who would like to join the committee or volunteer to word process old material, scan documents, prepare documents for Syracuse University Library, etc.

There have been many pieces in this column written about Sam May, but there is so much information pertaining to our namesake that can be shared. Thus, here is another piece. As many already know, Sam grew up in a fairly privileged home. He had eleven siblings but, as was often the case in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, eight died as youths or as young adults. Only one sister and brother lived beyond their mid 30s. Sam therefore had many opportunities in terms of education, obtaining

private schooling as a young person and then two Harvard degrees, including graduation from divinity school. The circles in which he was able to travel meant that he knew people like William Ellery Channing, Horace Mann, and Daniel Webster. Later in life he became friends with notables such as Susan B. Anthony, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gerrit Smith, and William Lloyd Garrison (publisher of the anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*).

He had many interesting relatives, too. One relative in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century published a history of the English Parliament. On his mother's side a great grandfather was minister of Boston's Old South Church, another relative wrote the first anti-slavery book in 1700 (*The Selling of Joseph*), great-aunt, Dorothy, married John Hancock, and great grandfather Chief Justice Joseph Sewell of Salem, was the first official to expose the Salem witchcraft delusions. His father, Joseph (a successful businessman who would have become a minister had not the Revolutionary War intervened), was a long-time Warden (lay leader, often involved in day-to-day church operation) and ardent supporter of King's Chapel in Boston, the first Unitarian Church in the United States. In fact, Joseph is buried in a church crypt. Andy Tripp shared a photo he took of the explanatory marble tablet. It can be seen at the following web site: [history.mmuus.org/crypt.html](http://history.mmuus.org/crypt.html). Finally, his sister, Abigail (see the above photo), was the wife of Transcendentalist, [Amos Bronson Alcott](#), and their daughter was Louisa May Alcott who authored *Little Women* and many other books. Sam obviously led an interesting life, including the time he spent in Syracuse with our congregation.



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### **Sam May and His Evolving Views on Slavery**

27. (4/2/07)



[Father Roy Bourgeois'](#) (see his photo above) April 1<sup>st</sup> Sam May day presentation on his ongoing work to bring about closure of the United States' shameful School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, was most meaningful. He said many things that conjured up connections to our history. Obviously, we all

feel tremendous pride in the sacrifices Nick Cardell, Dan Sage, Doris Sage, and several others from Syracuse and throughout New York made directly related to the SOA watch, but there are other historical connections.

Quite early Rev. Bourgeois said, “our greatest enemy is ignorance.” Sam May is remembered for his important work in abolition and his foundational efforts in the eventual repealing of the dreaded Fugitive Slave Act. However, what many don’t know is that Sam overcame some initial ignorance about slavery to reach these crucial efforts. Sam preached his first sermon on the evils of slavery in 1820. In 1829 he became an active member of the Windham County Colonization Society. The colonization movement’s goal was to ship all slaves and even “free Negroes” from America to Liberia as a believed humane way of ridding the country of various related social and political problems.

It was William Lloyd Garrison who helped Sam overcome his ignorance about the injustice of the Colonization Society’s approach. After hearing an October 15, 1830, speech by Garrison, Sam and others talked for hours with him and Sam had what he later called his “midnight conversion.” He said “that night my soul was baptized in his spirit, and ever since I have been a disciple and fellow-laborer of William Lloyd Garrison.” Fortunately, out of that initial ignorance grew a leader who became so important in helping to rid the country of slavery.

There have been many others in May Memorial’s history that followed Father Bourgeois’ words, “the truth cannot be silenced.” Think of the three past MMUUS ministers who marched in support of Civil Rights (Cardell, Fuller, and Papandrew). Think of Lilian Reiner’s relentless pursuit of eliminating the death penalty. Think of the courageous church leaders who turned MMUUS into a safe haven for El Salvadorian refugees, even at the risk of criminal prosecution had the government decided to pursue such action. Think of the current Thursday morning church members who are creating such history by holding vigil against the Iraq war. There have been many other examples in our history, but space limitations means such information is saved for later articles. Suffice to say, there is much for which we can be proud that echo Rev. Bourgeois’ words, “not in our name.”



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### **Sam May and Prudence Crandall**

28. (4/14/07)



The story of Sam May and [Prudence Crandall](#) (see her photo above), a Quaker, is a forerunner of his advocacy both for education and abolition while in Syracuse. Prudence opened a Female Boarding School in 1833 in Canterbury, CT, near Brooklyn, CT, Sam's first ministry. Within a few weeks Prudence enrolled Sarah Harris, daughter of a black farmer. The entire village soon was in an uproar and several leaders demanded she dismiss Sarah. She courageously refused and community members began pulling out their children. Sam heard about it and wrote Sarah offering to help in any way he could.

She found solace and courage in his encouragement, making it known her school would be opened to "young ladies and little misses of color." The community's uproar became even more intense and she wrote to Sam requesting assistance. He quickly came to Canterbury and found much about which to be concerned. He returned to Brooklyn and rallied others to provide her support. She asked Sam and Calvin Philleo, who later became her husband, to represent her as attorneys at a Canterbury town meeting. Sam and Calvin were vilified there and even physically threatened.

Prudence eventually had several black students, but there was much harassment by community members, including physical damage to the school and her home. The Connecticut state legislature even enacted a "Black Law" which forbid the establishment of any black school unless approved by school district voters. However, Prudence kept her school open, was then arrested, and jailed. She was brought to trial in August, 1833, and the state's Supreme Court eventually overturned a sentence. Unfortunately, the community continued tormenting Prudence and the students, almost succeeding in burning down the school. Prudence finally closed it out of fear for their safety. Sam May was the one to tell students the school was closing and later stated how much agony he felt: "I felt ashamed of Canterbury, ashamed of Connecticut, ashamed of my country, ashamed of my color." This all is a sad reminder of how little we have changed during the past 175 years.

Three quick notes: (a) Photos of Sam and Lucretia May's headstones are at [www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-headstone.html](http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-headstone.html); photos of headstones for our third minister, Sam Calthrop, and his family are at [history.mmuus.org/calthropfamily.html](http://history.mmuus.org/calthropfamily.html); (b) Betsy Fuller recently shared a delightful book, *Letters of Love and War: A World War II Correspondence*, by Helen Dann Stringer – Helen lives at the Nottingham and was active at May Memorial years ago – the book beautifully displays 575 letters exchanged between Helen and her husband, Syd, an army doctor during WWII (May Memorial and Rev. Romig are mentioned a few times); and (c) We need any church mementos you might be willing to donate to our archives such as *Lillian Reiner*, *Gutsy Lady*, Sam May's *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict*, any other books written by or about church members, etc.





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## **Biographies on Samuel Calthrop and Sam May**

29. (5/3/07)



I was delighted a few months ago to discover in our archives an 83 page manuscript written in 1939 by Edith Calthrop Bump, Rev. Sam Calthrop's daughter. It is a biography of Sam's early years, including when he lived in England and then into his first several years in the U.S. Edith donated it to our archives where it has languished for these past several decades. Lyn Coyle recently volunteered to word process it and I added numerous links so that it now serves as a way of getting to know Sam better, but at the same time provides an historical journey through England and the United States for several decades beginning in 1829. This delightful read is at [history.mmuus.org/SamCalthropBoyhoodStory.html](http://history.mmuus.org/SamCalthropBoyhoodStory.html)

For example, read about his very early years, including his time at a boarding school. Gain some insight into why he became such an incredible thinker, how he developed an interest in science, and the process by which he became such a talented athlete. Read about his skill development as a chess player, including descriptions of how he defeated several older opponents. Experience his growing skills as a teacher.

In terms of this web page as a history guide, see how he came to know William Henry Waddington, a school mate, who eventually became a French Prime Minister. Learn when Robert E. Lee asked him to teach West Point cadets how to play cricket. Enjoy the first time he met such notables as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Julia Ward Howe. He even preached for several months in Theodore Parker's (a famous early Unitarian minister) church in Boston before coming to Syracuse. An enjoyable chapter is Edith's description of how her father invented and patented the "Air Resisting Train."

Another delightful experience (archivists have all the fun) was discovering in our archives several weeks ago a 380 page unpublished manuscript that is a biography of Sam May. Authored by Professor W. Freeman Galpin (a long-time SU history professor until his death in 1963 – see his photo above), it provides a wonderful new glimpse into Rev. May's life. I gained a much deeper understanding of Sam by reading it. The good news is that it can soon be shared with everyone. I

obtained permission from his daughter to include it on our web page: [history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html](http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html).



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### **Reflecting on Attitudes about War**

30. (6/4/07)



Several things came together compelling this article: (a) Feeling so gladdened by Paul Darmody-Latham's safe return from Afghanistan; (b) hearing John's powerful Memorial Day sermon; (c) our weekly anti-war vigiling efforts; (d) viewing *The Ground Truth*, about the struggles many U.S. men and women face after returning from Iraq; and (e) thinking about Michael and Mariah Dillon's daughter currently in the military as we all hope she stays out of harm's way.

The angst many of us feel about war, patriotism, and political wrangling is real, but not new in our church history. Sam May experienced much personal conflict throughout life regarding people's suffering because of war, slavery, gender discrimination, and many other issues. He was especially torn as the Civil War approached. Sam felt deeply that war was a sin but also believed that any peace built on continuing slavery was a bigger sin. From his diary in July, 1862: "Nothing but slavery seems to be so bad as war." He finally came to the agonizing decision that the war must be fought to end slavery.

This type of agonizing has existed for May Memorial parishioners and leaders for decades. Several of our past church members served in the military, with many war-related deaths in World Wars I and II. Rev. John Applebee (minister from 1911-1929) so agonized over WWI that he received a leave of absence to work with the Red Cross overseas for several months. Rev. Nick Cardell (minister from 1974-1995) was a prisoner-of-war during the second world war. Nick Cardell, Dan and Doris Sage (see their photo above), and others in the Syracuse community even served prison time after protesting this government's training of South American military leaders who, in turn, brutally suppress people in their own country.

It is, of course, naïve to assume that such agonizing will ever cease. Our inability to get along with others seems a constant, and new generations usually repeat the errors of the past. Perhaps the cries for peace, justice, and good will that

reach us down through the history of May Memorial will sustain us in our own efforts to work together even more successfully through our new Covenant of Right Relations.

Ending on a brighter note, June Card was pleasantly surprised in leafing through 1947 Beacon Press *The Church Across the Street* by Reginald Manwell and Sophia Fahs to find a photo (p. 285) of the minister in the church where she attended as a young person. He also came out of retirement to officiate at her wedding to Howard. Finally, two new web page tributes are available: one to Sam May at [history.mmuus.org/maytribute.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/maytribute.pdf) and one to our church buildings at [history.mmuus.org/churchtribute.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/churchtribute.pdf)



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### **Sam May's Farewell Sermon**

31. (7/16/07)

#### **A brief account of his ministry**

*given in a discourse, preached to the Church of the Messiah, in Syracuse, N.Y., September 15th, 1867*

by Samuel J. May

I've recently read what has been on my "to do" list for some time, a sermon preached by Sam May to our predecessors on Sunday, September 15, 1867. By my reckoning, it must have been nearly two hours in length, but, wow, was it revealing. Entitled "A Discourse," it turned out to be Rev. May's resignation sermon. It no doubt caught many parishioners by surprise, but the energy, compassion, and retrospective insights he packed into what was eventually labeled as "A Brief Account of His Ministry," must have kept the audience captivated throughout.

Fortunately, as often happened during that time period, a power packed sermon deemed worthy of historical capture immediately resulted in several church leaders formally requesting by letter that Rev. May make his copy available. Then a group placed his hand written message into a publishable form and disseminated it. A copy survived and was included with Sam's papers donated to Cornell University after his death. You can read this fascinating account of his life as a minister at [dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/index.htm](http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/index.htm) Then click on "Search the Collection," next click on "Search" within the text description of the collection, and, finally, type in "a brief account of his ministry" within the "Find" box and hit "Search."

Read about Sam's views on the rise of Unitarianism, how he became involved with abolition, education, intemperance, Native American conditions,

pacifism, the deplorable conditions of "canal boys" and other orphans, and women's rights. Sam was revered throughout his life and after his death as a person consistent in his beliefs and one who truly lived by a firm mental and moral discipline. He was referred to by many as God's Chore boy and reading this discourse you really come to understand why. I heartily recommend this moving sermon and am confident you will obtain a greater understanding of our namesake. (The biography of Sam entitled *God's Chore Boy*, by W. Freeman Galpin. It, too, makes for great reading: [history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html](http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html))

Finally, the History Committee will be coordinating the Sunday Service on August 12. We'll take a walk down memory lane regarding our past church buildings with slides, narration, and reflections by several church members who were part of our church community bridging across the former James St. church to our current site. We hope you can join us. Immediately following the service there will be a formal dedication of permanent photos of our past ministers in the Memorial Room. Join us there, too.



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### A potpourri of History Items

32. (8/19/07)

Harsey Leonard and I, assisted by other History Committee members conducted the August 12 Sunday Service (see the order of service at [history.mmuus.org/aug12oos.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/aug12oos.pdf) the). Slide cover page is shown to the right). Slide shows supplemented the "sermon" presentations (see this web site: [history.mmuus.org/churchbuilding.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/churchbuilding.pdf)) as well as a handout (shown at this site: [history.mmuus.org/buildinghistory.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/buildinghistory.pdf)). We were gratified by a large summer attendance and appreciated the support of Doug Aird, Malcolm Clark, Hank Manwell, and Al Obrist as they shared some memories. This was followed by a dedication service for our past ministers' photos

#### REFLECTIONS ON OUR CHURCH HOMES

1839 to 1964



"Here may no one be a stranger."

DEAF MEMORIAL UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

now hanging in a permanent “memories” display on the east wall of the Memorial Room. See [history.mmuus.org/dedicationprogram.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/dedicationprogram.pdf) to examine the related material and see the photos when next you are in church.

A few weeks ago I learned that the SU Special Collections had purchased 12 letters (eight by Sam May), written 1852-1858, on Sam’s efforts to develop a school for youth on the Onondaga Reservation. Reading them was enjoyable and I’d recommend the experience. See [history.mmuus.org/sammayletters.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/sammayletters.pdf) for more information. About the same time President Fred Fiske shared with me a new Beacon Press book. Titled *Beacon Press and the Pentagon Papers*, it is a fairly quick read but excellent discussion of Beacon Press’ courageous decision to publish the Pentagon Papers in the early 1970s and the legal entanglements that followed. The book is chilling in many ways and as one reviewer noted, it is a message for our own time.

I was recently doing research on Sam Calthrop and came across a fascinating description of him in *The Craftsman*, an October, 1905, publication by Gustov Stickley. It is worth examining just to see the neat ads of Stickley furniture. You can read it at [digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?id=DLDecArts.hdv09n01](http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?id=DLDecArts.hdv09n01)

Finally, here is a bit of MMUUS history trivia. Why did Rev. W. W. W. Argow have so many names? He was a fifth generation minister and his parents may have expected he, too, would go into the ministry. His first name, Wendelin, was for the father of Transcendental philosophy, German scholar Wendelin Meyer. The second name, Waldemar, was for the bishop of West Goths, who in 390 A.D. brought Christianity to the pagans of the Teutonic woods. His third name, Weiland, stood for the father of spiritualistic or idealistic poetry as noted in our early church history, *A Backward Glance O’er Traveled Roads*.



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**John Brown**

33. (9/05/07)



My wife, Janet, and I recently visited the John Brown farm and grave in North Alba, New York ([www.nyhistory.com/gerritsmith/nelba.htm](http://www.nyhistory.com/gerritsmith/nelba.htm)), near the Lake Placid Olympic ski jumping complex. We are both reading Russell Bank’s *Cloudsplitter*, a recounting of abolitionist John Brown’s life, including the

legendary raid on the Harpers Ferry armory, so the visit seemed appropriate. It was a wonderful experience and I highly recommend both the visit and the book.

We had a wonderful guide, whose great, great grandmother helped John's wife, Mary Ann, when John was gone because of his abolitionist activities. The guide provided an excellent tour of the home and regaled us with many facts and stories. It was clear that Mary Ann, like many spouses of abolitionists, had to carry a very heavy load just to keep the family afloat, as John was away from home more than he was there. John's death, as well of the deaths of several sons during the raid, was a tremendous blow to be endured throughout the remainder of her life.

It reminded me of the huge load Lucretia May had to carry when Sam was so heavily involved in abolitionist activities and away from his family for many weeks at a time. In one letter Lucretia said, "I have counted the days and shall begin to count the hours till your longed for return; don't disappoint us, but come, come speedily to warm hearts if not wise heads." A more telling lament was in a later letter: "You have been gone four weeks tomorrow and perhaps are beginning to be weaned from us. I should not be at all surprised if you were, you must have so much more peace and quietness than when subjected to the . . . interruptions caused by wife and children. But my greater wonder is that we ever marry at all, especially those who intend to be world reformers and pass their time at a distance from the families. It would seem to me more wise and more judicious as well as more kind to avoid such entanglements and such burdens altogether." Wow! (See [history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html](http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html) for more insight into Sam and Lucretia's lives.)

No doubt John Brown, Sam May, and the many others who chose to be away from family for long stretches of time thought about what was being left behind and lamented, too, about the sacrifices. Obviously, this still happens today and those of us fortunate enough to be able to spend quality time with family can count our blessings.



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### **Samuel Calthrop's Many Interests and Skills**

34. (9/20/07)



MMUUS will host the Samuel Calthrop Chess Championship on December 1. It is a chance for us to showcase Rev. Calthrop and an opportunity for chess players in the area to become acquainted with our church. Perhaps some readers of this newsletter will consider participating. At Anton Ninno's urging, I developed an informational piece for the media with some of his highlights.

Our beloved minister for 43 years, the longest pastorate in our history and one of the longest in the history of Unitarianism, Sam made many contributions to Syracuse. He started the Syracuse Boy's Club and gave lectures and offered classes to church members as well as others on a wide range of subjects, including botany, philosophy, poetry, geology, and astronomy. His skill in predicting the weather by studying sun spots led Syracuse newspapers to rely on his forecasts. He even grew the first tomatoes ever shown at the State Fair.

Rev. Calthrop was a gifted athlete, too, excelling in numerous sports during his lifetime, including billiards, cricket, crew, tennis, rugby, and boxing. He made local news one night when he discovered a prowler in his house and dropped the poor man to the floor with a left to the chin. When he awoke, the burglar found the police ready to take him to jail. Sam's athletic prowess made him much desired as a coach and during his time in the U.S. he coached crew teams for Yale, Cornell, and Syracuse Universities. He also coached the West Point cadet cricket team.

One of his biggest loves, however, was chess. Having learned as a youngster, he grew in skill and began playing some of England's best in his teens. He continued his passion for chess in the U.S. He was one of 16 players invited to the first American Chess Congress held in New York City in 1857. After moving to Syracuse he accomplished more chess feats, winning the [New York State Championship in 1880 and 1883](#) (see the photo above of Sam Calthrop as he looked in 1880). When chess genius Harry N. Pillsbury once played ten simultaneous games of chess while blindfolded, his only loss was to Sam Calthrop. Sam, too, loved to play blindfolded and also play several games simultaneous. Among Syracuse friends with whom he played regularly were a rabbi, priest, and Presbyterian minister. Ah, Sam, our renaissance pastor.



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**Sam May Hit the Ground Running**

35. (10-3-07)



I could write every newsletter article about Sam May for years to come and only begin to scratch the surface of his complexity. I anticipate that in many ways he thought of himself as no one unusual, just committed to things in which he believed. But, oh, there were so many things! In this article I provide a brief chronology of just his first three years in Syracuse where only a few of his many activities, endeavors, and interests give some insight into his varied life.

- 1845: April, arrives in Syracuse; July, delivers a speech on the evils of war; July, delivers a principal address at the , among 170 Unitarian ministers to sign a protest to American Slavery; November, preaches a sermon in our church on what will become his famous “Rights and Conditions of Women” (<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28rbnewsan2749div0%29%29>)
- 1846: June 1, writes an anti-war (Mexican-American war) letter to be published in the *Syracuse Star* and is publically called a traitor by the editor; June 18, petition of protest in *Syracuse Star* has 110 names (including many from our church); June 24, Sam’s letter appear in the *Star*; August, delivers a lecture “The Education of the Faculties and Proper Employment of Young Children” (it is published the following year); chosen a member of the Board of Managers of the State Temperance Society
- 1847: August, present at the founding of the Free Soil party (opposed to an extension of slavery into the U.S. territories newly acquired from Mexico) in Buffalo; September, Sam May and Frederick Douglas are leading speakers in a Syracuse abolition meeting; September, Sam attends the Syracuse meeting of the Liberty Party (anti-slavery in focus) and is selected as a delegate to the national meeting.

Sam also was devoted to our church and seldom missed a Sunday service. He also found the time and means to minister to his “flock,” even though he frequently had to travel within New York and beyond. No doubt his time with his family was not what he wanted it to be, but Lucretia bravely kept the home fires burning. What little time he could spend with her and his children was precious indeed as he noted in his diary and in letters home.

For those who want more insight into his hectic but important life, and he kept up the pace hinted at above throughout his adult years, here are some selected web sites: *Heretic in Syracuse* ([www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-heretic-in-syracuse.html](http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-heretic-in-syracuse.html)); *Saint Before His Time* ([www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/covert-may-thesis.html](http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/covert-may-thesis.html)); and *God’s Chore Boy* ([history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html](http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html)).





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## **Reflecting on our Interesting Church History**

36. (10-28-07)



Our district Executive, Rev. Dr. Thomas Chulak (see his photo above), took many of us through an interesting exercise Friday evening, October 27. He helped us recall and reflect on how we came to be who we are as a church community. For example, after several Unitarian families had moved to Syracuse in the 1830s, they invited Unitarian ministers from the east to come for rare but welcome visits. After formally organizing in 1838, a small chapel was built in time for our first minister, Rev. John Storer, who was called and arrived in 1839. The congregation immediately began to outgrow the chapel and Rev. Storer worked tirelessly to raise funds for a larger building. His success led to construction of the Church of the Messiah on Burnett Street in 1843.

The arrival of our second minister, Rev. Samuel May, in 1845, resulted in the strong ministry known by many of us that lasted until 1868. Rev. May's various efforts in abolition, women's rights, education, and other areas began the commitment to social justice that continues as a hallmark today. He was followed by Rev. Sam Calthrop, who was our minister for 43 years. An intellect, scientist, athlete, and educator, Rev. Calthrop set a standard for a commitment to a church and community that also has continued within our church. During these initial years, church leaders were mainly men of wealth who made patriarchal decisions.

In more recent times, our ninth minister, Rev. John Fuller (1961-1973), brought a strong sense of involvement within the Syracuse community, a commitment to social justice, and an ability to create invigorating Sunday services. Church leadership was changing, too, reflecting the times, as women became more involved and decisions were made more democratically. He was followed by Rev. Nick Cardell (1974-1995), who became involved within the Syracuse community, facilitated new energy and excitement among church members, served the UUA in various ways, and made personal commitments to social justice that resulted in personal hardships.

During Rev. Cardell's ministry, our first settled female minister, Rev. Elizabeth Strong, was called as our Minister of Religious Education. She served from 1988 to 2001, bringing a professional sense to May Memorial's educational efforts for youth and adults. Rev. Scott Tayler's ministry (1997-2004) brought a

stress on personal spiritual development and changes in ministerial style characteristic of the times.

Better understanding this history and how we came to be who we are today through the skill of Rev. Chulak's facilitation was a helpful exercise. He ended by asking us to reflect on how the nature of church leadership and ministry have changed during the past 170 years, how females have played an increasingly larger role, and on why we called Rev. Jean Wahlstrom. The overall impact of the evening was an opportunity for everyone to understand how history informs us as we move to our future.



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### **Sam May's Cold Water Army**

37. (11-05-07)



Sam May's influence was wide and long-lasting. You probably know this well in terms of our church name and various physical objects we have honoring Sam. However, he influenced people outside our church and community in many ways. Betsy Fuller recently loaned me a book that illustrates this. The book is about *Walter D. Edmonds: Storeteller* by Lionel D. Wyld. Edmond's mother descended from the May family, with his great grandfather being Rev. May. He introduced Sam in one of his early novels as "a Reverend Mr. May from Syracuse," a liberal minister who runs a branch of the Underground Railroad and who preaches sermons about "Universal Brotherhood." Sam no doubt influenced his niece, author Louisa May Alcott (*Little Women*), too, as she became an abolitionist and supporter of women's rights in her later years.

Even though Sam influenced many people during his lifetime, throughout it he was simply a wonderful person who truly believed in universal brother and sisterhood. Just before his death he donated over 10,000 items from his personal library to Cornell University for what is now known as the Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection. When Sam died, his friend Andrew D. White, then president of Cornell, spoke of him as "the best man, the most truly Christian man, I have ever known."

Here is a section for young people so, parents, please read this part to your young children or ask the older ones to read it themselves. A few weeks ago RE Director, Jennifer Hamlin-Navias, during the first part of a church service,

gathered our youth around her and told the interesting history of Sunday Schools. Many years ago they served to help young people, often children from nearby neighborhoods who did not have many opportunities to attend regular schools, come to a safe place, at least on Sundays, and learn something about reading and writing. This helped me to remember one way that Rev. Samuel May worked with young people in his church and community.

When Rev. May was minister of the South Scituate (Massachusetts) Unitarian church (his second church as minister) in 1838 he was very much against the use of liquor because he believed it ruined peoples' lives. He recruited the youth in his church and community into what he called the *Cold Water Army* (see the Cold Water Army pledge cartoon above). He sometimes would lead as many as 500 area children in parades throughout the community in which banners were flown and chants were chanted and even barrels of liquor were smashed open with an axe. He and the children's actions were successful as all the liquor shops in the community eventually closed. Now that is Kid Power and shows what you can do when gathering old batteries, collecting money for good causes, helping to feed adults in community and church events, and in many other ways. Keep up your great work!



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### **Love Was In The Air**

38. (11-23-07)



Rev. Sam May and his family lived at 941 James Street. During this time in the 1800s, that part of James Street was considered out in the country. Dr. May collected wood in a nearby forest to build a summer house in the back of the property and a porch at the front of the house. It was under this porch, a regular stop on the Underground Railroad, that escaped slaves from the south found shelter in their travels toward freedom in Canada. Because of his many actions to shelter, save, and even help break slaves out of jail, many in the South reviled our Sam.

Keep this sentiment in mind when you read about the romance and the marriage that could have been. [Winnie Davis](#) (see her photo above), daughter of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, came to visit friends in Syracuse during the summer after the war ended. She

met Fred Wilkinson, the grandson of Sam May. He was described in various sources as tall and handsome.

He wooed her that summer and they fell in love. Unfortunately, what could have been a wonderful and even ironic love story was put to a screeching stop. When Winnie returned home and her father and her friends, actually many in the south, found out about the romance, there was a rebellion once again between the North and South in terms of feelings. Very quickly all thoughts of a wedding had to be forgotten.

Can't you just imagine the possibilities? Fred and Winnie walking down the aisle of our Church of the Messiah, Jefferson in his old West Point uniform giving her away, Sam conducting the wedding, and years later the progeny--possibly a young Jefferson May Wilkinson--being ordained a Unitarian minister..... Oh well, we can dream can't we?



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### **The Samuel May Medallion**

39. (12-04-07)



This is the time of year when we grab a chance to stand in front of the fireplace in our church foyer if there is a blazing fire. The next time you stand there or even pass by, look up at the lovely sculptured marble medallion under glass and in the wooden frame that is just above it (see the photo above). It honors Rev. Samuel May and has a wonderful history.

On Wednesday, October 20, 1898, there was a celebration in our James Street church in memory and honor of the one hundredth anniversary of Sam May's birth. During the afternoon service there were several things of note. One was an address by Susan B. Anthony that will serve as the focus of a later History Corner article. Another was the presentation of that beautiful work of art over our fireplace.

Rev. Ezekiel W. Mundy (initially a Baptist minister who was befriended by Sam May and who later became head librarian of the Syracuse Public Library) presented the medallion during the last part of the celebration. During the earlier part of the celebration, it was covered on an easel. I can only imagine the gasps of wonder as Rev. Mundy uncovered it and described its origin. The medallion was a gift from John J. May, Sam May's cousin. It was the work of Mr. Alexander Pope,

Jr., a famous sporting artist who specialized in animal and still life paintings but who also produced sculptures throughout much of his career. He made two copies; one for the American Unitarian Association in Boston and one that came to us.

Some may know where the medallion resided in the James Street church, but that is not recorded in our archives. We are fortunate, however, to have it in a place of honor over the flames that keep us warm in our cold months. I believe Sam would be pleased, if not humbled, to know he looks out at the entrance to our sanctuary. So, the next time you pass by, give him a glance and say “hi.”

On another topic, former member Joanne Ashley sends this interesting suggestion from her home in Bismarck, ND. Those interested in early church history might want to consider self-study courses on *Emerson, Thoreau, and the Transcendentalist Movement* from “[The Teaching Company](#),” including lectures on Sam May’s brother-in-law and niece, Amos Bronson and Louise May Alcott.



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**Susan B. Anthony and Sam May**  
40. (12-17-07)



As was mentioned in the last newsletter, Susan B. Anthony (see her photo above) was part of the ceremonies in 1898 at our former church celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sam May’s birth. Susan had first become acquainted with Sam when she was a youth and Rev. May would occasionally travel to Rochester to exchange pulpits in the Universalist church. Susan and her family, who were Quakers, would travel to hear Sam as Susan’s father believed he was an inspired minister.

Her first involvement with Sam as an adult was at an anti-slavery meeting in 1851. The following year she was part of the Daughters of Temperance delegation in Albany that attempted to participate in the Sons of Temperance meeting. All women were blocked from speaking as the chairman said that women were to look, listen, but not speak. All women then left and found a place to meet by themselves. Soon Sam May came to their meeting to counsel them on how to organize themselves. He was the only man there.

Then in the fall there was a Woman’s Rights Convention in Syracuse. Susan was there, as were other women leaders like Matilda Gage and Lucretia Mott. However, Susan noted that women were still unused to running meetings and

speaking in front of a large group. She said that many women would read a paper in voices that were hardly audible even three seats away. At that point Rev. May rose to the occasion and said to all delegates that every person there could make themselves heard if they were asking children who were outside to come in for a meal. He noted “Now what you want to do here, my dear sisters, is to feel and act as you would if you were at the front door of your own home.” He said to fix their eyes on the remotest person in the audience and “your voice will adjust itself to the distance.”

At the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremonies, Susan said, “Was that not beautiful? I shall always remember Mr. May for giving us that lesson as to how to be heard. And that is a sample of the way he helped us women to grow into a knowledge of how to do and how not to do. He would take us by the hand and lift us up.”

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### History Factoids!

41. (1-19-08)



It has been a history filled past several weeks. Mariah Dillon and Jennifer Hamlin-Navias provided me with the names of two people who know much about MMUUS’ past and I am in the process of gathering some of those memories. Mariah and Jill Evans gave me photocopies of different items about our history. I also had five wonderful weeks as an RE guide conducting, with the help of other guides, history scavenger hunts around our church. Ask your children who participated about some of the history facts they remember.

Speaking of history facts, it is always fun for me to gather little factoids about our church and past ministers or leaders. Here are a few of them. Many of you know about the Franklin cars (see the photo above) and may even have seen Hank Manwell drive to church in his Franklin on some warm day. What you may not know, though, is that John Wilkinson, grandson of the John Wilkinson who came up with the name of Syracuse for our community in 1819 (it had been called Cossit’s Corners until then) designed the first Franklin motor car with an air-cooled engine in 1901. All the Wilkinsons were stalwart members of May Memorial.

That first John, also the first postmaster of Syracuse, was a member of the committee that traveled to Lexington, Massachusetts, to call Sam May to our church. Therefore, it was fitting that when Sam and his family moved to Syracuse, John and his young son, Alfred, met that train. Thus, one of the first people Sam's only daughter, Charlotte, met when she disembarked was Alfred, her future husband.

Many years later Sam May joined in efforts to establish what became St. Joseph Hospital. A gold headed, ebony cane was to be raffled off and given to the most popular clergyman in Syracuse as one of the fund raising activities. Sam coaxed many in his congregation to buy raffle tickets and vote for his good friend Father O'Hara of St. Mary's. However, Father O'Hara had a similar idea and convinced many in his much larger congregation to vote for Sam. That cane was one of Sam's prized possessions for the remainder of his life.

Back to his daughter, Charlotte. After Lucretia died and as his health began to wane, he spent his remaining years living with Charlotte and Alfred. The night before he died on July 1, 1871, Charlotte came into his bedroom and gave him a kiss and good night wishes. That kiss was his last contact with life.



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### Latter-Day Fraters

42. (2-03-08)



Rev. Wahlstrom loaned me a brief history of the Fraters of the Wayside Inn (see a photo of the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, MA, above) after 1971 written by Rev. Charles Howe, former FUUS minister. The Fraters actually began in 1903 as an annual retreat for Universalist ministers in the Boston area to promote spiritual growth, intellectual stimulation, and interpersonal bonding. "Unitarians" were admitted into membership in the late 1970s and female ministers began attending in the late 1980s. Nick Cardell first attended in 1979, even served as Prior (annual organizer) in 1998. Jean Wahlstrom became a member in 2003, and presented papers on more than one occasion, including 2008.

In 1990, Rev. Cardell presented a paper at the Frater's annual meeting that resides in our archives. It is entitled, *The Ministry: What Keeps Us In It and At It?* Nick noted that one factor for him was our Flaming Chalice as it symbolized a search for truths, a freedom to be one's self, a challenge to grow, a welcoming

inclusiveness, and a caring community. It is easy to see how the opening words he used each Sunday Service evolved. These are words Jean repeated on a recent Sunday.

Later in the paper, Nick talked about a need to be involved in creative contributions to a civilized and humane world as part of his reasons for remaining in the ministry: “I suspect it is a need, at least similar to that, that leads people into all of the helping professions. But I discovered that there were more specific and personal needs finding expression in my ministry. Emerson once said something to the effect that ‘The preacher deals out his life to the people, life passed through the fires of thoughts.’ To the extent that I have been able to do that, I have learned much about myself. And that must be listed as one of the things that keeps me at it.”

As Rev. Wahlstrom passes through the installation formalities into years of service with us at May Memorial, it is as though through the bonds of Frater comradeship, Nick provides those words above to help guide her efforts. I believe I can speak for all MMUUS members in saying that through love and fellowship we will do all we can, Jean, to keep you “at it” here in Syracuse for many years to come.



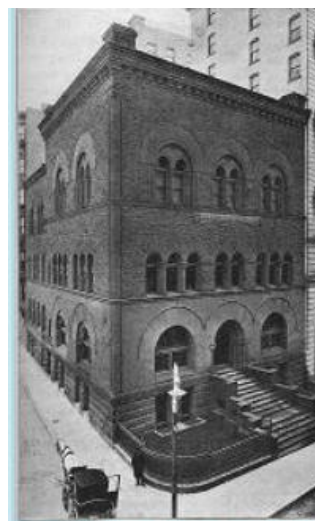
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### **Turmoil Among Unitarians!**

43. (2-11-08)

To begin with, I had a delightful interview with Mr. and Mrs. Charles "Ted" Tracy at the Nottingham recently. Ted turns 97 soon and is the youngest son of James and Florida Tracy.

James was church president from 1929-1931 and Florida was involved in maintaining our church history for many years. I have mentioned Florida several times in past articles. Ted had many delightful memories and remembered Rev. Applebee and Rev. Argow quite well. At some future point we will make several of our interviews available so that interested people can also delight in such wonderful recollections. Speaking of past newsletter articles on our history, you can now read them online at [history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf).



American Unitarian Association



Now to that notion of turmoil mentioned above. Sam May was among a few leading Unitarian ministers more than 150 years ago who worked diligently to convince leaders of the American Unitarian Association (AUA – It even had its own building in Boston as shown in the photo above) to take a strong and decisive stance in support of abolition, but in vain. In his *Recollections* book he stated the following: “The Unitarians as a body dealt with the question of slavery in any but an impartial, courageous, and Christian way” (p. 336). Dr. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, a leading abolitionist of the time, noted that Unitarians as a body were “as rotten as ever” on the topic of slavery (this comes from a paper entitled “[Abolitionist Minister: Samuel J. May Opposes the Fugitive Slave Law](#)” written by Rev. Armida Alexander, minister of the Glacier Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Kalispell, Montana). A number of Unitarian ministers actually lost their positions due to their antislavery activities, including our Sam May’s nephew, Rev. Samuel May, Jr.

It was mainly through the efforts of abolitionists like Samuel Joseph May that the AUA was forced to redefine its relationship to all Unitarian ministers. But in Sam’s mind, the change was very slow to come as most Unitarian ministers wanted calm and stability in their churches because, after all, many leading politicians, business owners, and community leaders were often in their pews and they did not want to rock the boat. Sam expected more of his colleagues and in his *Recollections* he said this about the power and duty of the pulpit to effect change: “The pulpit has no higher function than to expound, assert, and maintain the rights of man” (p. 358). He believed that when the pulpit was “false to its charge,” there were horrible consequences throughout society. He was very disappointed, too, in national leaders like former friend, Daniel Webster, and President Millard Fillmore, a Unitarian, who supported the Fugitive Slave Law.

But Sam, like a few other Unitarian ministers, kept up the fight. After the President of the Syracuse and Utica Railroad heard one of Sam’s antislavery sermons, he ordered his employees that if they ever saw any recaptured fugitive slave on his train they were to stop it, remove the irons, and set the person free. And, of course, the famous Jerry Rescue helped to mobilize people in New York and beyond, beginning a true wave of repulsion against the Fugitive Slave Act. Unfortunately, it wasn’t until 1889 that the AUA began efforts to reconcile the many differences among its members. I’m sure that Sam would have been happy to know it eventually happened.



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## **The Infamous Fugitive Slave Act and Jerry McHenry's Rescue**

44. (3-1-08).

Information in this article was inspired from the material written by Rev. Armida Alexander, the UU minister mentioned last time. We all can be proud to know that when the infamous Fugitive Slave Act was signed into law in September of 1850, many people in Syracuse were outraged. As news about the Act and its implications became known, concerned people in our community gathered in City Hall with the Mayor even presiding. Several resolutions denouncing the law were passed and protection was promised for anyone who might be affected. Sam May quickly organized a group (including several in our own church) who pledged to help financially anyone arrested for opposing the law. Perhaps most important, a Vigilance Committee was formed (including Sam) and they quickly established a rendezvous location and a signal (church bells ringing – including our own) for whenever action was needed.

About a year later in October, 1851, the clarion call came when William (Jerry) McHenry, a cooper (maker of barrels, tubs, etc.), was detained by slave hunters and some federal marshals. Sam, already seasoned in facing much opposition pertaining to abolitionism, was ready for this incident. He had long preached on the evils of slavery, had faced angry mobs of people in various locations when he talked about such evil, and counseled resistance to the Law. In one of his sermons at our church in late October, 1850, he noted the following:

A law of the land requiring you, as the Fugitive Slave Law does, to disobey the Golden Rule is, indeed, a far more grievous encroachment upon your liberty of conscience than a law prescribing to your faith any creed, or any rites and ceremonies by which you must worship God. . . . I declare that you are, every one of you, under the highest obligation to disobey this law, – nay, oppose to utmost the execution of it. (May, *Recollections*, 1869)

So typical of Sam, those fiery words with which he challenged our May Memorial ancestors were put to personal action when he was part of the group that



helped Jerry escape from jail and eventually arrive safely in Canada through the Underground Railroad. Most readers of this newsletter know the Jerry Rescue (see the photo above) story. More about it can be found on our web page. Suffice to say, Sam personified the selfless courage so needed to resist those who practiced injustice. We all need to find ways of embracing such courage in resisting the injustices we still see today.



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**Sam May's Impact on  
William Ellery Channing**

45. (3-11-08).



I recently was reading in a file on the 2003 Sam May Day service in which Rev. Dr. Frank Carpenter, minister of the Cincinnati church, delivered a sermon on Dr. William Ellery Channing (see the photo above), an important and influential Unitarian minister in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Our 9<sup>th</sup> minister, Rev. John Channing Fuller, was related to Dr. Channing. Dr Channing served somewhat as a mentor to Sam May early in Sam's training and ministry. For those who may remember that 2003 Sam May Day, it was a remarkable sermon.

Dr. Channing actually had an interesting take on slavery, including what must have been some confusion and conflict as he grew to manhood. On the Channing side, some relatives were involved with the slave trade and his father was decidedly pro-slavery. His angst was no doubt created on the Ellery side, as his mother's father, William Ellery (with whom he was quite close), was a Customs Collector in Rhode Island who commanded searches and even seizures of suspected slave vessels. Thus, Rev. Channing began developing a few antislavery essays and sermons in the early 1830s.

However, people like William Lloyd Garrison and Sam May believed that he was too mild in such efforts. Dr. Channing, in turn, thought that the abolitionist were too intolerant, too abusive in their language, and too confrontational in their approaches. Sam eventually moved beyond thinking of Dr. Channing as a mentor to that of frustration as he believed the famed Unitarian leader was not using his voice to further the antislavery cause.

Sam eventually confronted Dr. Channing and recalls in his *Recollections* (1869, p. 174) saying the following: "Why, sir, have you not spoken to the nation

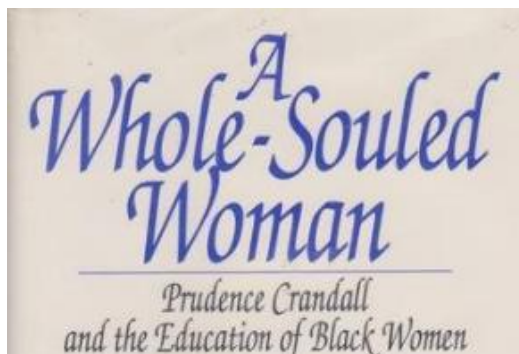
long ago, as you, better than any other one, could have spoken?" After a long and embarrassing silence, Dr. Channing finally replied in a kind voice: "Brother May, I acknowledge the justice of your reproof. I have been silent too long." That began Dr. Channing's turn around as a more direct and vocal critic of slavery. It helped make a difference in our country's struggle with slavery. Way to go, Sam, once again!



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### **The Tenacious Prudence Crandall**

46. (4-2-08)



About a year ago I wrote about one of the true heroines who interacted with Sam May, Prudence Crandall. As a young woman, this plucky lady opened a female boarding school in 1833. It was in Canterbury, CT, a community near Brooklyn, CT, where Sam had his first ministry. Prudence soon enrolled Sarah Harris, a very able daughter of a Black farmer. An uproar began almost immediately because of the inherent prejudice within the community. Leaders demanded she dismiss Sarah. Instead, she not only refused, but soon enrolled additional Black girls whom she believed warranted a good education. Even though Sam was one of the first to offer her help and tried to work with community officials, she and her Black students were harassed so badly psychologically and physically, that she eventually had to close the school out of fear for their safety and probably her own.

She left the community and the story might have ended there. However, I have learned from the material written by Rev. Armida Alexander (I've mentioned her previously and her work will soon be available on the Internet), that Prudence eventually was recognized by community members for the positive work she had tried to do.

Prudence soon married and moved west where she opened another school, raised two stepchildren, and, according to Susan Strane (*A whole-souled woman: Prudence Crandall and the education of Black women*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), continued to be both independent and forward thinking in what she did.

Although it did take awhile, in 1866 voters in Windham County, in which Canterbury and Brooklyn both existed, cast a vote in favor of Negro suffrage. The citizens of Canterbury finally repented their behavior in regard to Prudence and her

school. Some twenty years after the Civil War, they petitioned the Connecticut legislature to recognize the wrong done to Prudence and, after a few more years, she was granted a small monthly stipend from the state of Connecticut. In this way, Canterbury publicly recognized that Prudence had had a right to run a school for Black children in Connecticut. Prudence is another example of the courageous women who made a real difference in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.



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### Nick Cardell's Treasure Trove

47. (4-19-08)

Regular readers of this column have heard me say before that historians get all the fun. Well, it has certainly happened again. Through the assistance of Kathy Cardell and Vicky Schipper, I have been going through some file folders representing Rev. Nick Cardell's ministry at May Memorial, as well as earlier in his career. This opportunity to gain some new insight into Nick's thinking, sermon preparation, and work as a minister is both satisfying and awe inspiring. Although I've only examined a small percentage of these folders, I certainly look forward to viewing the remainder.

As an example, Nick kept his treasure trove of materials in either labeled folders or thematic collections. I loved how he built his folders with actual finished products and some of the inspirational material he gathered to help him create them. He also had several folders with such intriguing names as "sermon ideas," "gestating sermons," "future sermons," and "seasonal sermons." I even discovered one folder that provided lists of sermons by titles and dates for several years. This will be very helpful as the History Committee works to compile as comprehensive a collection as possible of his work, especially during his time at May Memorial.

Just as an example of how his mind may have worked, he had a folder that described his work on what he called the four tyrannies. This resulted in a sermon (you can join in the fun, too, as above you will see a portion of Nick's handwritten sermon) he delivered at the Barneveld church in 1964 long before he came to May

### The Four Tyrannies

While it is a distinct pleasure to be invited to ~~to~~ address such a gathering of Uni-Unis, it poses certain difficulties in the choice of a subject. If my subject is too specific I may find myself talking to a small percentage of you because of differing interests or because we don't know each other & each others assumptions. If my subject is too general I may wind up wasting your time (and my valuable opportunity - a ~~single~~ <sup>different</sup> captive audience). I don't want to be in the position of the preacher whose sermon on sin was summed up by an old-timer with the words "He's agin it!" So are we all. In an effort to avoid this dilemma I want to talk to you about one thing I know we all have in common - our institutional expression of liberal religion.

Memorial. From that idea seed years later he gestated four individual sermons, some of which long time May members may have heard: *The Tyranny of Freedom*, *The Tyranny of Peace*, *The Tyranny of Perfection*, and *The Tyranny of Words*. I even found later sermons where he went further with this “tyranny” notion.

Thus, it is the History Committee’s long-range plan to organize this treasure trove and make some of it available to scholars and others interested in Nick’s work. We anticipate a portion of the material will be housed at Syracuse University, some in our own church, and some on the Internet. Nick, like all of our past ministers, left us with much information to help us understand the growth of liberal religion in Syracuse. We are all that much richer because of it.



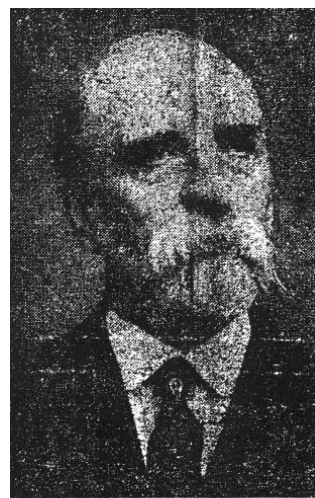
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### **Sam May – The Consummate Educator**

48. (5-3-08)

We know Sam as an outstanding minister, a tenacious abolitionist, and a long time supporter of human rights. We also know a bit about his involvement as an educator throughout his adult life, including the work he did in Syracuse with the School Board during his later years. However, I keep discovering new material by Rev. May, and am especially fascinated by a speech he gave at a meeting of The Normal (Teacher’s) Association in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, August 8, 1855. Entitled “[The Revival of Education](#),” this 153 year old speech has much relevance for educators today.

In his presentation, which must have been at least two hours in length, Sam initially provided a very learned history of youth education throughout Europe and into the United States. I thought I knew a little about this history, but there was much information new to me. Sam also described how he became involved with adult education, my particular field of interest. As a young man he met Josiah Holbrook, the founder of the American Lyceum movement, a system for providing popular lectures, performances, and debates throughout this burgeoning country on various topics by outstanding orators in the 1820s up until the Civil War. Sam worked with Josiah to establish Lyceum opportunities in New England and gave numerous lectures over several years.



MR. JOSIAH HOLBROOK

Then he launched into a part of his presentation meant to inspire the many teachers in attendance, especially the younger ones. He spoke words that would fit right in with today's emphases on learning how to learn and helping learners take responsibility for their own learning. He noted, "The office of a teacher is second only in its importance and sacredness to that of a parent . . . The first duty of a teacher is to lead his [*sic*] pupils *to think*, to observe and reflect on what they observe . . . Children should be led to use their own powers and opportunities for the acquisition of all knowledge . . . The teacher should be to his pupils . . . not so much a dictator as a guide."

It is the History Committee's intent to place this presentation, as well as several other little known publications and little read presentations authored by Sam, on the Web in the near future. The more you find out about Sam, the more appreciative you become of his depth, breadth, and passion for improving life on earth.



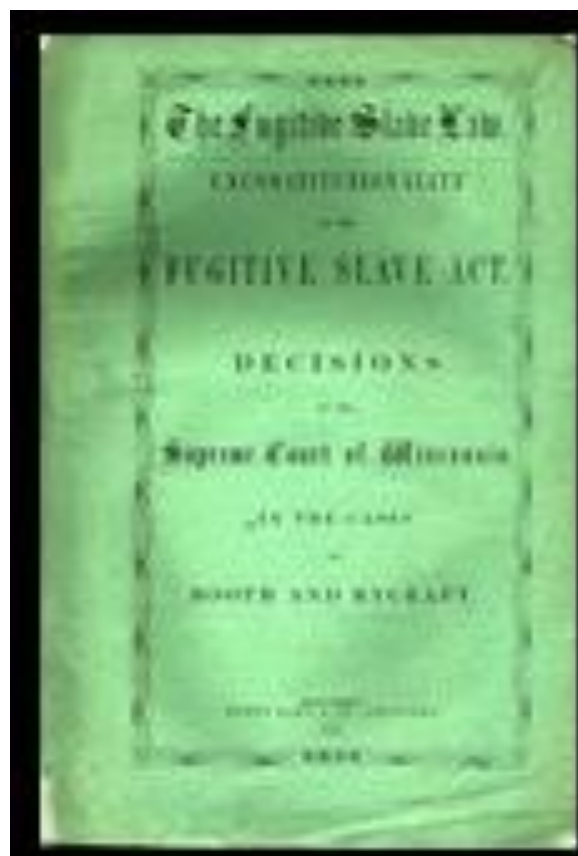
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### **Sam May's Demeanor Could Change**

49. (5-20-08)

Almost everything you read about Sam indicates he was quite "Saintly" in demeanor. He was kind, respectful of others, and even-handed in the way he dealt with people. Terms like "Peaceful Warrior," "Christ-like," and "brother to all" were commonly used to describe Sam. Yes, he supported passionately many social causes and fought vigorously to right the many societal wrongs he saw, but he did so in a way that people still respected and often loved him even in disagreements.

However, Sam finally reached an end to his tolerance level when the Fugitive Slave Act was passed. It allowed slave holders to send hired "gun men" into the "free" states for purposes of capturing escaped or presumed former slaves. He was especially irked with some fellow Unitarians who did not stand up to fight



the related injustices. From one of his publications he stated, “The Unitarians as a body dealt with the question of slavery in any but an impartial, courageous, and Christian way.” The American Unitarian Association (AUA) tried and failed to deal with the Fugitive Slave Law at its October, 1850, convention. Sam, the following year, having been so appalled that many prominent Unitarian ministers had actually supported the Law, proposed that the AUA condemn both the Fugitive Slave Law and these prominent leaders. He named such people, calling them “unsound” and obedient to the law of not upsetting their wealthy parishioners.

Unfortunately, the resolution failed to carry by three votes. Rev. May expected more because he believed in the power and duty of the pulpit to effect change. He said, “The pulpit has no higher function than to expound, assert, and maintain the rights of man.” He felt that when the pulpit is “false to its charge,” the societal consequences are huge and horrible. In essence, what we all can learn by Sam’s example is that there are times when you simply must stand up for what you believe. It is no wonder, then, that at Sam’s funeral in 1871, Black people in Syracuse put on mourning badges and lowered their flags to half-mast. At his funeral Blacks, whites, and Native Americans sat side by side, a microcosm of integration that took many, many decades to achieve in our country.

As a closing note, I am pleased to announce the outstanding unpublished biography of Sam May that we discovered in our archives is finally all online. It was written in 1947 by SU Professor W. F. Galpin. I heartily recommend it as there is much more to learn about Sam. It is long, but well worth the time. You can read it at [history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html](http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html)



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### **Two Past Ministers**

50. (5-31-08)



I have enjoyed a recent opportunity to look through several archival files new to me. I have learned much and will share some of it through this newsletter format. To begin with, I discovered what appears to be all the material related to a wonderful sermon given by Rev. Nick Cardell on October 12, 1997. Entitled *Judas By Proxy*, in it Nick talks about the School of Assassins (SOA) at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and the terrible toll visited on people in many Latin American countries by graduates of that school. He mentions both Father Roy Bourgeois, who



organized the SOA Watch in 1990, an annual vigil outside the Ft. Benning gates, and Syracuse's own Ed Kinane. Both Father Roy and Ed had been arrested and subsequently jailed for crossing those gates. The church was honored to award the Samuel J. May Citation for Community Action to Ed in 1997. In addition, Father Bourgeois was our Sam May Day speaker April 1, 2007. You can read Nick's sermon at [history.mmuus.org/judasbyproxy.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/judasbyproxy.pdf).

His words were an almost eerie precursor to what followed. At some point during that service Nick said one way we could use our "response-ability" in closing the SOA was to join him, Dan Sage, Doris Sage, and Ann Tiffany at Ft. Benning on November 13-16, 1997. Many will know that subsequently they all crossed through those gates, were arrested, and eventually served several months in jail because of their convictions. Such courage so epitomizes what May Memorial membership means. For those who never saw it, I encourage you to read Nick's *Notes from Camp Allenwood* at this web site: [www.uuworld.org/1999/0799feat3.html](http://www.uuworld.org/1999/0799feat3.html)

The second set of files pertains to Rev. Ron Clark (see his photo above) who served this church as Associate Minister from 1968-1971. Ron is remembered fondly for the many innovative programs he brought to our Religious Education program. Ron went on to be a minister at two other Unitarian churches and worked several years with the UUA. Sadly, Rev. Clark died nearly two years ago at the age of 70. Here is a site that provides more information, some photos of Ron and his family, and a link to one of his sermons: [history.mmuus.org/ronclark.html](http://history.mmuus.org/ronclark.html).

I end on a personal note of gratitude to the many readers of this column during the past two plus years who have mentioned how much they appreciate it and learn about our church's marvelous history. I truly enjoy writing these articles and have to come to appreciate even more this church I love. I feel so proud to be a member. Here is a reminder that you can read past newsletter articles in an online archival repository: [history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf)



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### **Fund Raising Throughout Our History**

51. (6-19-08)

At our annual meeting on June 1 we learned that a committee would be formed whose purpose will be fund raising. As we all know, history repeats itself,

in that our church has had financial ups and downs throughout its existence and special efforts to raise funds dot our historical landscape. Here are a few efforts that this committee might find instructive where members as well as interested community members contributed through entrance fees, purchases, and donations:

- The Laymen's League sponsored lectures by the famous minister John Haynes Holmes, a prominent Unitarian minister, pacifist, and anti-war activist.
- The Women's Alliance presented a Pageant of Shawls with a program of ethnic dancing at the art museum.
- The Alliance coordinated programs for church and community children put on by the Clare Tree Children's Theatre Troupe
- Church members, including children, put on plays, theatrical performances, and musicals.
- Garden parties were held at the homes of prominent church members.
- One of the money raising events was called the Department Store and in 1905 it brought in a record sum of \$256.52.
- The women of the church put on an annual two-day May Faire that used the church and church grounds to raise funds through such activities as an antique sale, bazaar, business men's lunch, carnival corner, flea market, food sale, game room, garden shop, gourmet shop, pancake lunch, pony rides, puppet show, salad bar, sidewalk art show, and even a stamp and coin booth. [If you would like to see a poster of one of these fund-raising events, see [history.mmuus.org/mayfaireposter.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/mayfaireposter.pdf) – see a preview of the poster below.]
- The society raised money with a series of roast beef dinners, cooked by John Fuller, that were open the public.
- The Christmas tree sale organized by forestry professor Gerry Lanier became a popular annual fund-raising event involving many church involved a majority of members.

So think creatively when you are asked for ideas on how we best can raise funds in this coming year. There are many ways similar to those above that might be tried, but many wonderful possibilities exist in your minds and experiences.





Marvelous  
History  
Corner

## Marvelous Women in our History

52. (7-12-08)



Even venturing down the road implied by the above title is a perilous one, especially for someone of the male gender. I no doubt will miss many deserving women, some of whom may be your own favorites. However, here are some of the terrific women who have been associated with May Memorial. You can Google many of them to find more information.

I start with [Harriet May Mills](#) (see the photo above) who was born in 1857 and named after Sam May. After graduation from Cornell in 1879, she was influenced by Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone and began active work in the campaign for woman's suffrage. She later ran for Secretary of State in NY, the first woman to run for a state-wide office. Blanche Weaver Baxter, who was a niece of Matilda Joslyn Gage, had a 30 year career on Broadway and, upon her retirement, returned to Syracuse and worked tirelessly with youth in the arts, even founding the Syracuse Little Theater. Rev. Elizabeth Padgham, whom I have written about before, a successful Unitarian minister who grew up in our church and returned here after retirement to serve our church in many ways.

Dora G. Sedgwick, married to Frederick Hazard, was daughter of abolitionist Charles B. Sedgwick. Dora was an early proponent of family planning and helped develop programs for young Black people (which evolved into the Dunbar Center). The Hazard Branch of the OCPL contains a memorial plaque recalling her public service. The middle of the last century saw RE leaders like Elizabeth Manwell and Jo Gould who not only served this church but also had a national impact.

I can't forget Verah Johnson, our church's first woman president, so many leaders of our Woman's Alliance throughout much of the past century, RE leaders Pat Hoertdoefer and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong, both of whom spent the latter part of their terrific careers working for the UUA in Boston, and current RE Director, Jennifer Hamlin-Navias.

You can see I have left out so many, but I can beg off because of space constraints. However, I must end with our current church leader, Rev. Jean Wahlstrom. Check out her photo in the Memorial Room. Thank you Jean for adorning our Memory Wall and gracing our sacred Hall.



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## The Sam May and Luther Lee Debate

53. (8-5-08)



It was Tuesday evening, February 28, 1854, in downtown Syracuse. The day had warmed a bit, a little snow remained, but it had turned windy and cooler as 7 pm approached. City Hall was filled to capacity with an anticipatory crowd and hundreds more thronging the building unable to get in but straining to hear what they could. This began eleven such evening debates, ending on March 23, regarding what became the famous [Lee-May theological debate](#) regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Lee and May were friends, but very different in their views of theology.

Rev. Lee, a local Wesleyan (Methodist) minister, believed and supported the notion of a Trinity, i.e., (a) God, (b) Jesus as a manifestation of God, and (c) the ever present Holy Spirit. This was a basis for his religious views and what he called “three persons in unity of the Godhead” (from page 4 of *Discussion of the Trinity*, Wesleyan Book Room, Syracuse, NY, 1854, available at SU’s Special Collections unit). Rev. May, our minister, believed in a “God,” and notions of an historical Jesus as a “manifestation of God to men and that God’s Holy Spirit which was so fully manifested in Christ is ever present, the spirit of truth, purity, and mercy” (p. 6).

Subtle, perhaps, but very real differences. Rev. Lee spun out his convictions over the eleven debates fervently believing and defending notions that the bible provided all the evidence needed to support such views. Rev. May, on the other hand, providing support for his views, including many quotations from the bible, that would find much acceptance in our pew today other than views of an everlasting “God” which may differ from many of our own. He disavowed the notion that ministers must believe in the doctrine of Trinity to be legitimate ministers and was convinced that interpretations made by philosophers and religious leaders two and three centuries after the birth of Christ were both incorrect and leading to Trinitarian beliefs still held today.

Debates held in 1854 may have been less contentious than today’s political debates, for example, and we can guess that both Rev. Lee and Rev. May were

polite, but passionate, in the defenses they made of their beliefs. At the conclusion of the debates, Sam said, “And here, Brother Lee, after all our disputing, is my right hand of fellowship if you are willing to receive it.” I envision them clasping right hands as Rev. Lee said “I take your hand, and fellowship you as a man and a philanthropist, but I have no fellowship with your theology.” Sam seems to then have had the last word as he concluded with, “Nor I with yours! I suppose that your theology is just as unlike to mine, as mine is to yours” (p. 160).

Those lucky enough to have heard these brilliant men describing their beliefs were no doubt awed, and some may even have changed their personal views one way or the other. Interestingly, the steadfast adherence to a literal translation of the bible today by many continues to lead to misunderstandings and even violent clashes. Now we just need to find a way to have those who disagree with each other clasp hands in friendship and agree to disagree, but in loving ways.



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**Ric Masten –  
A Unitarian-Universalist Original**

54. (9-7-08)



Sadly, the Fall, 2008, issue of the *UU World*, announced the passing of Rev. Ric Masten, a true original, after a long and courageous battle with prostate cancer. You can find a chronicling of his battle with this terrible disease on the web simply by goggling his name. Ric was known as the “troubadour minister,” because he performed for years with music and poetry before many UU congregations across this country. Although he attended several colleges, he never received a degree as he struggled with dyslexia and a troublesome hearing impairment. He probably was the only fellowshipped UU minister who never graduated from college or a seminary, being ordained in 1971 at the UU church in Arlington, Virginia.

Ric had a long history with May Memorial, having appeared here several times in the 70s and 80s, usually with a 12 string guitar in tow, his wonderfully animated voice, and a large repertoire of poetry and song. His first appearance here may have been in 1971, at least that is the first mention of him in the archives. To see a photo of that visit, go to [history.mmuus.org/ricmasten.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/ricmasten.pdf). To see a more recent photo during the period of his struggle with cancer go to [history.mmuus.org/RicMasten2.jpg](http://history.mmuus.org/RicMasten2.jpg).

I was fortunate to see him in the early 80s in what may have been his last visit to May Memorial. I remember being enthralled and he certainly seemed to captivate all of us in attendance. He talked openly about the problems he had faced in life, including the marital struggles he was undergoing. If memory serves me correctly, his wife, Billie Barbara Masten, poet, author, and actress, performed with him that evening. I seem to remember them talking together about the struggles of staying married with his and their hectic travel schedules when she went with him. They even split at one point, remarried, and then maintained a ritual of reaffirming their marriage with stated vows each year, an activity that Billie insisted upon until the end.

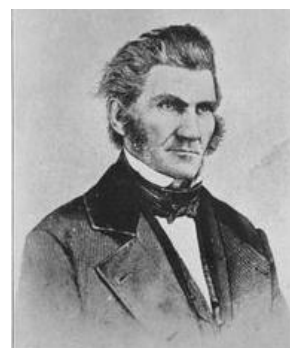
A winner of many honors, in his last award ceremony this past January he told the crowd in attendance, “All you have to do is catch a fatal disease and the awards just fall out of the trees like apples.” His ashes were spread on a steep dirt road leading to his California home as per his wishes so he could “leave behind a little winter traction for his neighbors.” His passing is very sad, but he left behind a legacy of quirky (he was even a quick-draw artist with a pistol) but beloved troubadouring.



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### **Heroes – Past and Present**

55. (10-15-08)



Many past May Memorial heroes have been mentioned in this newsletter, but many have been missed. This month and next month, that will be somewhat rectified. If you know of others who should be mentioned, please let me know. Many of the names contained in these two articles also have important historical connections to the Syracuse community.

- Right from our beginning in the 1830s, we were persecuted because of the beliefs by many that Unitarians were non-Christians or even heathens. This meant our forbearers had to be strong, courageous, and quiet heroes, such as our church initiators Stephen Abbott, Dr. Hiram Hoyt (see his photo above), Joel Owen, and Elisha Walter.
- Many know of the Jerry Rescue history in 1871, when Sam May helped break out of the Syracuse jail a former slave who was illegally placed there. However, there were many Unitarians also involved in various ways,

including George Barnes, Oliver Burt, Dr. Lyman Clary, Captain Hiram Putnam, and Charles B. Sedgwick.

- Our church finances were finally put into the plus column in the late 1890s through the ability of Amos Padgham, long-time clerk and treasurer, and father of Elizabeth Padgham who became a well-know Unitarian minister and then a long time supporter of May Memorial after her retirement. About this same time Mary Redfield Bagg created a graded course of religious study for youth that was introduced at May Memorial and eventually adopted by many other Unitarian churches.
- In the 1920s, Dora Sedgwick Hazard and her sister Kitty Burlingame worked with Black community leaders to organize a youth recreation program at the AME Zion Church (this eventually because the Dunbar Society).
- A few years later in the early 1930's when unemployed Syracuse men had no place to go for recreation of any kind, reading and social rooms were provided for them at our church, with Mrs. Frederick R. Hazard taking the lead to supply them with refreshments, games, and reading material. Give a passing thanks and hearty congratulations to these wonderful people.



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### **From Prisoner of War to Prisoner of Conscience**

56. (11-15-08)

Those who have read this column for awhile know that I feel the privilege is all mine in being able to pour over our archives. There is so much to learn, I gain so much inspiration from our past leaders, and my awe on what has already been accomplished by May Memorial people over the years continues to grow. This remains so true as I now go through the material of Rev. Dr. Nicholas C. Cardell, Jr., our 10<sup>th</sup> minister (1974-1995).

Many readers know that Nick spent time in prison on two occasions. Once was as a Prisoner of War during WWII and 54 years later as a Prisoner of Conscience when he served time in a Federal Prison Camp, joined by active members Dan and Doris Sage, for their demonstrations against the School of the Americas. You can read more about the despicable background of the U.S.'s

School of the Americas at <http://history.mmuus.org/judasbyproxy.pdf> in a sermon by Nick in the fall of 1997. Several months years later Dan, Doris, and Nick's prison terms began. Go here to read some about his experiences: <http://www.uuworld.org/1999/0799feat3.html>. Such commitments based on conscience establish a role modeling atmosphere explaining so well why I am a Unitarian Universalist and why I so love this church. I encourage parents with young children to talk about this with them and read some of Nick's words.

I recently discovered an undated sermon by Nick entitled *From POW to POC*. It was written sometime in 1999. You can see a preview below and the full sermon at <http://history.mmuus.org/From%20POW%20to%20POC.pdf>. It, too, is well worth reading. Nick talked about the feelings people have when they do something that is truly based on their conscience and knowing that they know how to distinguish right from wrong in terms of the way you deal with others: "There is a joyful exhilaration in risking something with others for the sake of some deep-down fundamental conviction that has to do, I think, with belonging and caring—with loving. It is a spiritual experience." In essence, I believe Nick was describing how spirituality comes about in so many different ways.

#### From POW to POC

Fifty-four years ago on the third day of January I was captured just outside of Bastogne, Belgium and sent to a German labor camp. One year go on the twenty-second day of January, having been tried on a misdemeanor charge I was found guilty and sentenced to serve time in a Federal Prison Camp. Was it not for those intervening fifty-four years, comparing my three months as a Prisoner of War with my six months as a Prisoner of Conscience, I might have said the latter "was a piece of cake." But that would be going too far.

"From POW to POC" is an apt even serendipitous assignment. The first words in my presentence statement to the court and the Judge a year ago were: "Strange as it may sound, today began for me in WWII. As a Prisoner of War in Germany, I often witnessed the suffering warfare inadvertently inflicts on innocent people. On one occasion after a long day's march I stumbled on the body of a tiny girl no more

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**Our Holtkamp Organ**

57. (1-15-09)





As the May Memorial congregation began exploring a new building in the late 1950's, there was a parallel conversation about a suitable organ for the new structure. The organ in the James Street Church was built in 1911 by the Hutchings Organ Company of Boston. By 1959 the instrument was stylistically dated, and in poor repair, although it has been rumored that the condition might have been exaggerated in the hopes for a new installation.

The Organ Committee, with Dr. Howland Auchincloss as chair, soon decided that rebuilding the old organ would not be the best choice, both artistically and financially. Instead, they found four builders for a new instrument, with the Holtkamp Organ Company of Cleveland, Ohio, at the top of the list. Walter Holtkamp, Sr., had built organs for Syracuse University with the concert instrument in Crouse College finished in 1950. This organ was built for Professor Arthur Poister, and is one of Holtkamp's most impressive and most famous creations. May Memorial hired Dr. Poister as a consultant, and with the influence of then Director of Music Frank Macomber, a Syracuse University professor, it's easy to see the influence the Crouse organ had on May Memorial's choice.

One major setback was the death of Walter Holtkamp, Sr. in 1962, several hours after a phone conversation with the May Memorial committee. (No connection between his death and the Music Committee!) The firm became controlled by his son, Walter "Chick" Holtkamp, Jr. (see his photo above). After checking the health of the company, and the expertise of Chick Holtkamp, May decided to stay with their first choice. (Chick Holtkamp has since retired, and the company is being run by his son, Christian.)

Cost was also an issue but after a generous gift by the late Sarah Auchincloss, the church signed a contract for the larger of the two designs, for a total of \$31,380.00. The organ has 27 ranks, or sets, of pipes, and was delivered in April, 1965. Current replacement cost is approximately \$700,000.00, almost twice the original cost of the entire building. Chick Holtkamp worked closely with architect Dean Pietro Belluschi, especially in regard to the woods he used, and overall look. The organ does seem to grow out of the room in a unified way that is rarely seen in organ installations.

The people that have presided over the instrument as Music Director are only four. Frank Macomber came from the James Street Church. He was followed by Rob Kerner, cofounder of the Kerner/Merchant Organ Company that still maintains the organ. Rob left to become Curator of Organs for the Eastman School of Music. Dr Allison Evans Henry then served for five years, leaving for the First Presbyterian Church of Syracuse. I accepted the position in 1992, after being the musician for First Universalist on Waring Road in the 1980's. A very quick 17 years it has been!

Our Holtkamp has been a source of great delight to me over my tenure. Come hear it once again in recital on Sunday, March 22 at 4:00 pm, as I celebrate my 50th birthday with a concert of some of my favorite works. Everyone is invited! [Authored by *Glenn Kime, Music Director*]



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### **Church School Reflections**

58. (2-15-09)



While exploring the files in the church archives, I came across some interesting Religious Education historical items. There were three religious education pamphlets – from 1916, 1963 and 1964.

The first was a “Prospectus for 1916 – 1917 of the May Memorial Sunday School”. There was a motto: “Be Faithful” and a good photo of the James Street church on the cover. The program description on the inside indicated four departments covering ages 4 through 17. Each department handled four school grades, with two grades taught in each of the two groups in the department. Each group taught two courses – one each year. Courses included God the Loving Father, Jesus’ Way of Love and Service, Old and New Testament stories, Paul of Tarsus, Work of the Apostles and more. The program also included an emphasis on service, with contributions to The Syracuse Boys Club and the Syracuse Women’s and Children’s Hospital. In addition, each class undertook some actual work of service. During 1916-17 they also maintained a scholarship at Tuskegee. The stated hope of the May Memorial Sunday School was to “train the spirit, the mind, the heart.”

Next came a pamphlet from the 1963 – 64 May Memorial Unitarian Church, School of Religion. The church was still at 472 James Street, with the Church School office at 466 James Street. Mr. Robert Burdick was chairman of the Religious Education Committee, and Mrs. (Mary) Burdick was a member of the committee (see Bob and Mary’s photos above). William Chaffee, MD is listed as the doctor for the school. Mrs. Lawrence was listed as the School Director, Bob Coye was a fifth grade teacher and Mrs. John Fuller was in charge of worship. There was a class for every grade from Nursery 3’s through 10<sup>th</sup> grade and a special class for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th graders. The Beacon Press book series was extensively used.

The following year was the first year in our new building at 3800 E. Genesee St. The 1964-65 May Memorial Unitarian Church School of Religion pamphlet included a nice drawing of the new church by Miss Joanne Ashley. In addition to describing the courses, it also shows a floor plan of the original Sunday School room assignments. Grade 9 and the class for grades 11-12 met on the upper level. The Beacon Press series was apparently only used through grade 5.

It is interesting to note the changes in Religious Education over the years. Some of the changes parallel changes in the attitudes and beliefs of the congregation. Other changes result from changes in curriculum and teaching philosophy and changes in youth perceptions. In spite of these continuing changes the statement about “our new building” in the 1964-65 pamphlet still holds true today: “Here young and old will gather as a family under one roof. The arrangement of space and the simplicity of adornment permit emphasis upon the process of becoming which is education. Here we establish anew, for ourselves and for our children, a church that shall be a house of friendship ... of freedom ... of truth seeking ...of beauty ... a cradle for our dreams and a workshop for our learning and doing together.” [Authored by *George Adams, Guest Contributor, History Committee Member*]



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### **Oral History Project**

59. (3-15-09)



David and Helen Ashley, Interviewees

One of the projects of the MMUUS History Committee, under the leadership of Rog Hiemstra, involves interviewing and recording long-time members and friends of May Memorial. This project was undertaken with the following purposes in mind: “to preserve oral histories and personal memories of the church; to obtain personal insights and perspectives on what has taken place in the life of the church; and to help in obtaining an overall picture of various church-related events, experiences and activities.”

As a first step, Roger purchased a small digital audio recorder with history committee funds, and we generated an extensive list of people to be interviewed, starting with more senior members of the congregation. The history committee also developed a set of questions covering several areas, such as early experiences with church/religious education, involvement with the Unitarian Universalist religion in

general, and with May Memorial in particular, memorable events in the life of the church, and hopes for the future of MMUUS. Each interview is structured around these areas and questions. This will make it easier to excerpt information on certain topics from the interviews and, if desired, to put short audio clips on our website. (The use of digital technology makes this process more manageable and also allows us to save each interview on more than one computer hard drive and compact disk.)

One of the interview questions concerns what brought the individual to the Unitarian/Universalist church, and specifically to May Memorial. It is interesting to note that some of the reasons given by people who came to MMUUS 40 years ago are remarkably similar to those we hear today. For example, interviewees have talked about the desire to find a religious home where they could explore their own spirituality and discover their own religious path, as well as the desire to find a strong religious education program for their children.

Thus far we have recorded about a dozen interviews. This is a good start, but given the number of members and friends to be recorded, it is important to get more people involved. We hope that this column will raise awareness of the oral history project and interest some of you in participating. No special skills are required; all that is needed is an interest in listening to the stories and memories of some of our long-time members, a willingness to try something new, and a little free time. If you would like to learn more, please send an email to [mledward@twcny.rr.com](mailto:mledward@twcny.rr.com). The history committee would welcome your participation in this interesting and gratifying oral history project. [Authored by *Mary Louise Edwards, Guest Contributor, History Committee Member*]



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### **Our Wonderful Organ**

60. (4-15-09)



Glenn Kime

I begin with a huge thanks to Glenn Kime, George Adams, and Mary Louise Edwards who contributed wonderful articles during the time I was away. I know they were enjoyed by many.

Janet and I got home from our trip just in time to enjoy Glenn's wonderful 50th birthday celebration with a masterful organ recital on March 15. Well, when Glenn was just about 4 years old, and perhaps before he had decided on becoming

a professional organist, many forces were in movement that eventually resulted in the acquisition of our organ.

In 1963 when the building of our current church was underway, Howland Auchincloss (then Chair of the Music Committee) was working hard on plans for an organ. Cooperating closely with Frank Macomber (then church organist) and Dr. Arthur Poister (music director at Syracuse University's Hendricks Chapel from 1948 to 1965 and organ professor from 1948 to 1967), Howland had contracted with Walter Holtkamp (Holtkamp Organ Company) to come up with designs for an organ. Costs, of course, were an issue with the better organ some \$3,000 more. To help with the decision making process, Howland brought a committee of people from May Memorial to Crouse College on the SU campus where a Holtkamp organ already existed. Dr. Poister, by manipulating stops, played several compositions as they would approximately sound on the two organs. The unanimous verdict from the committee was that the more expensive organ was identifiably different and preferable with a larger, fuller, and more satisfying sound.

Howland then argued clearly and concisely in a December 3, 1963, letter to Henry Mertens, chair of the new building's oversight committee, for the better organ. Henry and the overall committee members were convinced and they recommended its purchase in a report to the Board of Trustees. A positive decision was made and we now have this fantastic instrument.

But wait, there is more (as the TV ad people often say)! A generous contribution by Dr. Wilbur Le Page in 1965 enabled Howland to accept a recommendation from Walter Holtkamp to add 32 Chalumeau Pipes. This enhanced our organ's sound. Be sure to ask Howland's for his recollections regarding this story and thank Glenn once again for making the most of our instrument.



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### **A Peak at the Past**

61. (5-8-09)

Before peaking at the past, I need to provide some updates. To begin with (and thanks to someone who told me but I forgot who), it was reported that Lucretia Coffin May's headstone was in need of some repair (go here to see a

picture: <http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-headstone.html>). I recently checked them both and each needs to be anchored more firmly back to their pedestals before they fall over and become broken. I reported this to the Oakwood Cemetery officials; they will do an assessment and report back to me.

Some wonderful new additions have been made to the web page (<http://history.mmuus.org/>): (a) A recent find in one of the Nick Cardell archival boxes is a delightful sermon by John Fuller entitled *Slavery, Dr. May, & Jerry*, delivered September 30, 1962 (look below for a sneak preview); (b) a beautiful engraving of the Church of The Messiah building from the 1873 Syracuse city directory (look under MMUUS – Our Buildings); (c) an absolutely wonderful book published by David Ashley’s Mom, Dorothy (a terrific portrait painter), entitled *Some Portrait Adventures* (you will not be disappointed taking time to look at this book under Miscellaneous Information); (d) a church yearbook for 1897-1898, including wonderful addresses by Susan B. Anthony, Rev. C. D. B. Mills, and Lewis Douglas (Frederick’s son) – in addition, look at the membership list toward the end, a who’s who of prominent families in Syracuse (look under Miscellaneous Information; and (e) the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on April 26, 1903, of Rev. Calthrop’s installation at May Memorial with delightful pieces on his general influence, as an interpreter of science, and his impact on our church (look under Rev. Calthrop’s section).

**SLAVERY, DR. MAY & JERRY**

September 30, 1962  
The Reverend John C. Fuller  
May Memorial Church, Syracuse, New York

This weekend in Mississippi there is a roaring crisis in race relations. A Negro American, the first in that state's history, is seeking admission to the University. The Governor of Mississippi is personally blocking his registration. The federal judiciary has twice ordered the governor to desist. He has refused to receive the court's orders and now is under a third order to purge himself of contempt.

Tension is mounting and time is running out. Segregationists in the South have offered to come into Mississippi to support the governor's civil disobedience. The applicant for admission has been provided protection of U. S. Marshalls. Federal troops are now alerted to enforce the federal orders. Anything can happen.

Now for that peak at the past, here are a few handwritten Board of Trustees notes tucked into an archival folder and copied from various board minutes some 35 years ago. Someone no doubt had a delightful time culling out these gems:

- 4/9/74 Nick Cardell to candidate for 8 days, April 28-May 5 “very nearly fitting the ideal candidate for our new minister.”
- 5/5/74 – 128 of those present voted to call Nick C. as minister.
- 6/4/74 – Bob Holmes (then our interim minister) suggested that the congregation move out beyond ourselves for social application of our religious convictions. He warned that so much self-awareness can cause the loss of sight of our outer dimensions of life. President Mal Clark followed up by saying let’s come out of our introspection and reestablish our church as a strong religious force in the community.
- 8/13/74 – The BOT voted to install a soda machine.
- 1/14/75 – Canvass was \$49,000 from 289 pledges, \$7,000 short of the budget needs (to put that in perspective in terms of our current budget problems, it represented a 12.5% shortfall).
- 5/13/75 – The budget deficit was hoped to be overcome by 2 or 3 large fundraisers and 4 small ones (gee, does that sound familiar?)

[And the beat goes on.....]



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### **Nick and the Unitarian Universalist Merger**

62. (6-10-09)



*It happened at Syracuse*

A 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE:

*Celebrating the Birth and Growth of Unitarian Universalism*

October 30-31, 2009, Syracuse, New York



“It Happened in Syracuse,” a conference to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the meeting held in Syracuse resulting in a merger between the Unitarians and the Universalists will be held on October 30 and 31 at the Hotel Syracuse. You will be reading more about that event in future newsletters. Long before he ever thought about coming to May Memorial, Nick Cardell played an role in that activity that should not be forgotten.

When he was a minister at the Unitarian church in Plainfield, NJ. Nick was a ministerial delegate to the meeting. His main role was helping to deal with the conflicts between Unitarians and Universalist on the stated principles and purposes. For example, the Universalists were concerned about how language associated with Jesus could or should be included in written material and the Unitarians were not concerned with that aspect. There was some heated discussions and Nick pleaded for a more moderate position. From an interview he

had with Jean Hofer in 1986 he remembered saying this to fellow Unitarians: “Is it going to hurt us to include something that is going to make them feel more comfortable.” We don’t know what the responses were, but can speculate that Nick’s plea for moderation had an impact.

Nick spent most of his time at the War Memorial for the intense discussions taking place there. He only got to the May Memorial building on James Street one time for a service. He also talked about how the communication between Unitarians and Universalists (who were meeting elsewhere – Nick remembered they met at the Universalist church) by telephone as the discussions continued on were very important.

So come to the October 31 meeting to hear more, see some associated displays and photos, and obtain a better understanding of that important meeting. The birth and growth of Unitarian Universalism was its result.



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### **Responding to Crises**

63. (7-10-09)



I recently returned from Knoxville, TN, where I taught in the University of Tennessee’s summer session. While there I attended the Tennessee Valley UU church, site of the two murders and wounding of others by a crazed shooter one year ago. I’m not sure what I expected to see; I guess visible reminders of the tragedy, memorials, and flowers, but it all seemed quite ordinary, a busy church with many things going on that reminded me of MMUUS. Sure, there probably were and are many related reminders that our friends at Tennessee Valley deal with all the time, but it got me thinking about how our own church has dealt with past crises or tragedies.

Perhaps the most talked about crisis was the Jerry Rescue in October, 1851. Jerry McHenry, a former slave was “an athletic mulatto, who had resided in Syracuse for a number of years . . . as a cooper,” (Sam May, *Some recollections of our antislavery conflict*, Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869, p. 375) was arrested under the infamous and despicable Fugitive Slave Law. This must have been most disconcerting to our church ancestors, and because Sam May was right in the middle of an ultimate rescue of Jerry from jail and the illegal transporting of him to Canada, it no doubt put some church members in a quandary about Rev. May’s



actions. However, parishioners continued to shower him with love, concern for his health, and tolerance for his continued work on behalf of abolition. Of course, as we all know they named the church after Sam upon his death in 1868.

Our church experienced a very real tragedy in the winter of 1852 when it was destroyed "by a hurricane which struck the spire; threw it directly upon the ridge pole, crushed down the whole roof, burst out the side and end walls, . . . [demolishing] the entire building excepting the front and the foundation" (*May No One Be A Stranger*, <http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html>, p. 10) After recovering from realizing their church had been destroyed in a few moments, members quickly organized themselves, began holding church services in City Hall, and initiated the process of not only rebuilding the church but also the house next door that had been destroyed by our falling debris. Our church was rebuilt and rededicated in the spring of 1853.

There are several other instances in our history when church members have responded to wars, community tragedies, community problems, and even world conflicts with quiet courage and determination. However, here is one more in recent times that describes how the current "we" dealt with trauma as did our ancestors. In 1998, Dan and Doris Sage as well as long time minister, Nick Cardell, spent several months incarcerated as prisoners of conscience for their active demonstrations against the atrocious School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia (Chronology of SOA Prisoners of Conscience, <http://www.soaw.org/article.php?id=339>). As a church we addressed these heroic acts of courage by showering Dan, Doris, and Nick with love, correspondence, and even Unitarian Universalist "prayers" during their sentences. After their return this recognition continued and they were honored along with two colleagues by receiving the 1998 Samuel Joseph May Citations for Community Action Award Recipients. Our response reminders are not always immediately visual either, but they are heartfelt and indicative of what we are as a community.



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### **Bravery Can Be Misunderstood**

64. (8-12-09)



I begin by encouraging you to read John Allen's "Going Green" article in this newsletter. I am so pleased to play a role in [Rick Weinstein](#) (Rick got a B.S.

from ESF and now teaches at the University of Tennessee – see his photo above) speaking at May Memorial on September 20. I really encourage you to attend as his updated information about climate change is such an eye opener and very sobering. Second, I am pleased to announce that there are two new additions to the MMUUS History Page. One is a beautiful story Doris Sage wrote for her grandchildren before she went to prison. The second includes the testimonies from Doris and 24 other people during their trials. Six of the 25 people were from the Syracuse area: Nick Cardell, Ed Kinane, Megan Rice, Dan Sage, Doris Sage, and Ann Tiffany. Their bravery and convictions, although misunderstood by the U.S. legal system, is to be forever honored. Go to <http://history.mmuus.org/> and find those two links at the bottom of the page.

Their bravery was similar to those of our church ancestors relative to stances they took against slavery. This has been mentioned in various ways before, the most famous being Sam May's work in abolition and with the Jerry Rescue. Unfortunately, and obviously my biases and naiveté in understanding the law are showing in this article, those efforts also were misunderstood within the legal system. Daniel Webster, a well known figure in U.S. history, was a part of this misunderstanding or, perhaps, it was a misappropriation of the legal system for political reasons. I have spoken before about Sam's disgust with what had happened to his onetime hero Webster, who became increasingly more conservative as he grew older.

In the spring of 1851 former Senator Daniel Webster was barnstorming the country in defense of the despicable Fugitive Slave Law. On May 26 he arrived in Syracuse upon the invitation of the local Whig party (somewhat equivalent to today's conservative wing of the Republican party) to speak in the old Frazee Hall (located at Washington and Montgomery Streets). He began talking to a large crowd about the Constitution and the sanctity of law and turned to the Fugitive Slave Law. Here are some of his remarks as noted by W. Freeman Galpin (*The Jerry Rescue, New York History, XXVI, January, 1945, pp. 19-34*):

I am a lawyer . . . and I tell you if men get together and declare a law of Congress shall not be executed in any case and assemble in numbers to prevent the execution of such a law, they are traitors and are guilty of treason and bring upon themselves the penalty of the law . . . It is treason! treason! TREASON! and nothing else . . . Depend upon it the law will be executed in all great cities, here in Syracuse . . . if the occasion shall arise.

That Law was soon to be tested in Syracuse by the imprisonment of Jerry and his subsequent rescue and transportation to Canada – most of you know that history. If you read the testimonies of Doris, Dan, Nick, and all the others, there are chilling similarities between 1851 and 1997 at least in how some lawyers and judges interpreted the letter of the law versus what was right and just. Given the

sometimes ugly tones presented today in many cities in what should be civil discussion of issues, it suggests that from 1851 to 2009 some things have not changed, and perhaps they never will. Sad to contemplate isn't it?



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### **The Other Side of the History Door**

65. (9-14-09)



Two years ago I wrote about the almost marriage of Fred Wilkinson (see the drawing above), grandson of Sam May, to Winnie Davis, a daughter of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. This article was written primarily from the viewpoint of Fred, as best I could capture it from an historical viewpoint. My colleague, Karen Dau, NYSCU and First Universalist Church of Rochester Historian, subsequently sent me some information that gives the same story from Winnie's viewpoint. This information comes from *Crowns of Thorns and Glory* by Gerry Van Der Heuvel (NY: E. P. Dutton, 1988).

When Winnie and Fred fell in love in 1888 after she had visited friends in Syracuse, they both knew there would be problems with their respective parents, especially Jefferson Davis and his wife Varina, who were still smarting over the loss of the Civil War and his imprisonment for a period. Because Sam May, who had died in 1868 three years after the war ended, was still known throughout much of the south as one of those "abolitionists" who had been thought responsible, in part, for causing the war, they were none too happy about this romance. Jefferson was very much against it and let her know it. She had been born in 1864, in Richmond, Virginia, in the "White House" of the confederacy and was actually known throughout the south as the "daughter of the confederacy," so there was much at stake here. Winnie was so distraught over all the disagreement that she became very thin and run-down. Jefferson then convinced her to go with friends on a cruise to Europe. Unfortunately, when she was in Paris in December of 1889, her father died. Her resulting grief added to the depression she felt over the unfortunate love affair.

Varina then decided that she did not want to sacrifice her daughter's happiness because of past Confederacy issues and actually announced their engagement in April of 1890. The furor in the southern newspapers was actually

much greater than anyone had even anticipated. About this time inquiries were made by some of her family members into Fred's circumstances and the word came back that he would have trouble supporting a wife and eventual family. As a consequence, Fred learned of these inquiries, became angry, and wrote Winnie a fairly heated letter. One thing led to another and Varina used the newspapers once again to say the wedding was postponed. By the fall of that year the engagement was finally broken off.

It is difficult to know how much that broken engagement affected her. She did go on to become somewhat fairly well known as an author, but her health never regained its full vigor. She died in September of 1898 at the age of 34. She was buried with full military honors. Standing in the back of the church during the services was none other than a very saddened Fred Wilkinson. What could have been was never to be.



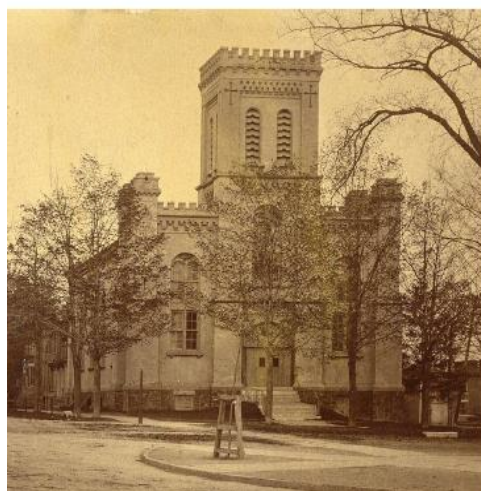
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### **Our Church Buildings – From Genesee St. to Genesee St.**

66. (10-13-09)

The history of our church buildings has an interesting twist. Our first church building was on Genesee St., but close to downtown. Our current church, also on Genesee St., is about five miles east of that first building. In essence, it took 125 years to move those five miles.

After meeting in homes, an unoccupied schoolhouse, and even an old Baptist Church on West Genesee St. from 1836 through 1838, our first church building was a small wooden structure not much bigger than our current Memorial Room. It was built for \$607 and the first service was conducted in January of 1839. Our first minister, Rev. John Storer, arrived in 1839, too, and after taking his first look at the church building, he called it his "Little Tabernacle," as it barely held the 40 members usually in attendance each Sunday. Today much of that location is occupied by the Hiscock and Barclay building. Its founder, Judge Frank Hiscock, was an active leader in our church during the early part of the last century. An important note: Where our building stood would have been on part of what is today a parking lot.



That little building served us well for only five years as our membership grew steadily. Standing room only constraints on parishioners resulted in the construction of our second church building at the corner of Burnett and Lock (now State) Street, very near the Erie Canal. The building several times larger than the first one, was completed in the fall of 1843 for the price of \$5000. Named the Church of the Messiah (see the photo above), it was an imposing structure. To see photos of all church buildings, go to this Internet site: <http://history.mmuus.org/churchbuildings.pdf>. Today that building is gone, and in its place, you guessed it, a parking lot.

Unfortunately, a railroad track was laid down quite near the Church of the Messiah, and the resulting noise overpowered services, meetings, and even weddings. Thus our next building, named in honor of our second minister, was called May Memorial church, a name we still hold today. It was built at 472 James St. for the cost of \$50,000. This beautiful church served us very well from 1985 through 1964. Unfortunately, we eventually outgrew it and had our current church constructed. Would it surprise you to know that today 472 James St. is a parking lot?

Our 3800 E. Genesee St. church was built for \$447,000 and was dedicated on October 10, 1964. It, too, has served us very well for these past 45 years and we do have a fairly large parking lot!



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### **Path to Peace**

67. (11-15-09)



As President Obama struggles with a possible path for peace in the Middle East, I thought about Sam May's own path to his work with peace. Growing up he would have been introduced to such ancients as Homer, Plutarch, Ovid, and Seneca who all argued for peace. There are, of course, comments about peace and avoiding war in both the Old and New Testaments, but Sam's early connections with religion would have shown that this was a bit hypocritical with Popes, Kings, and the Crusaders frequently using war as a means of settling various differences.

His actual involvement with peace probably began when he heard of Rev. William Channing's (see his photo above) sermons or it may have been when as a Harvard student he became aware of the recently established Massachusetts Peace

Society. He father, Joseph May, a member of that Society in 1816, when Sam was studying at Harvard and thinking about many things and becoming acquainted with many people. One was a college friend, Gorham Parsons, who was a neighbor of Rev. Noah Worcester. Noah printed around the same time a famous peace tract entitled, *The Solemn Review of the Custom of War*. Upon being introduced to Rev. Worcester during a visit to Gorham's home, Sam later talked about how inspired he was during this meeting and thus began a long friendship with Rev. Worcester.

Soon after Sam became an officer in the Windham County Peace Society and within a short time published his very first of what would be many tracts, entitled the *Exposition of the Sentiments and Purposes of the Windham County Peace Society*. From that point he began accelerating his work through publications, attendance at peace movement meetings, and various sermons in his first pastorate. These latter created some problems for him as many in that congregation objected to a minister who was so vocal on a complicated issue.

Thus began the ridicule that Sam was to face throughout most of his remaining life for his strong stands on societal issues. Not only did he face criticism within his own church, but within his community of Brooklyn, Connecticut, and increasingly throughout much of the east. His views on peace were greatly enhanced when in 1827 he met William Ladd, who was known at the time as the "Apostle of Peace." William then enlisted Sam to help form a national peace organization, what would become the American Peace Society.

That beginning led naturally to Sam's work with injustice of any sort and the abolitionist movement. When he was considering the move to Syracuse, he let our ancestors know exactly what his views were on peace, slavery, and the injustices he saw even in his initial visits to our community. Knowing all of this, our forbearers eagerly invited him to continue his ministry here and the rest is history. It is no wonder that May Memorial has had such a long and rich involvement with social justice issues. Thanks, Sam! To read more about Sam's path read the biography, *God's Chore Boy* at <http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html>



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**Oh, Tiffany of Ours**

68. (12-15-09)



You may have read in the *Post Standard* recently that a Baptist church in Vermont is selling its Tiffany stained glass window that has hung there for almost 100 years to raise much needed cash. The highest bid so far is \$75,000. In our former James Street church we had a beautiful Tiffany stained glass window honoring our first church president of record, Edward Judson, who died in 1902. What it is worth today is priceless in terms of our church history. Named the *Tiffany Palms* and designed by the famous Louis Comfort Tiffany, it was known as the “New Jerusalem.” A photo of this window as it stood in our old church is shown above or go to this link: <http://history.mmuus.org/windows.html>.

When the James Street church was being razed, it is the only one of the 10 stained glass windows saved and it has hung in the Everson Art Museum for many years. Many May Memorial parishioners and thousands of others have enjoyed its beauty over the years when visiting the Museum. Nancy Pease recently visited the museum and was surprised when looking for it to note its absence and asked officials there where it was. She mentioned this to me and here is the wonderful and honorific story of its current journey.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has organized in collaboration with the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond a touring exhibit of Tiffany Glass. This exhibition is one of the most significant ever mounted of Tiffany’s works and celebrates this renowned designer who achieved original and spectacular effects in hand-blown glass vessels, leaded glass windows and lamps, and other decorative objects. The exhibition’s curators are from the Montreal museum, the NYC Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Rutgers University. In addition to choosing pieces from the collaborating museums, the curators visited several venues where Tiffany pieces are housed, including the Everson. From all the Everson Tiffany pieces they chose our window. Everson Registrar, Karen Convertino, even travelled to Paris for its installation there.

The exhibition’s approximately 170 objects includes blown-glass vessels, lamps, leaded-glass windows, and other decorative objects. Currently, in its first 12-week exhibition at the Paris museum until the end of December, it is known as “Tiffany Glass: A Passion for Colour” (Couleurs et Lumière). Starting mid February for another 12 weeks it will be at the Montreal museum where it will be known as the “Fusion of Colour: The Glass of Louis C. Tiffany.” Its final 12 week exhibit will begin at the end of May in the Richmond museum where it will be known as “Tiffany: Color and Light.” Anyone game for a trip to Paris, Montreal, or Richmond for a wonderful experience and seeing in person how our window has complemented this exhibition? If you do visit, take photos.

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### More on Our Traveling Tiffany

69. (1-15-10)



In the last newsletter article I described how the stained glass window from our former James St. church, normally on display at the Everson, was on a new journey to three locations. I ended by hoping that someone could travel to one of these locations and see it in person. Fortunately, Harsey and Joyce Leonard for their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary spent time in France for the holidays. They were able to see “New Jerusalem” at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris (shown in the photo above). They brought back photos, mementos, and first hand stories not only about the Tiffany exhibit, but how our window was clearly the best piece in the show (I might have added that last comment). I recently added to the web page more information about that window and its journey with a couple of new photos: [http://history.mmuus.org/ NewJerusalem.htm](http://history.mmuus.org/NewJerusalem.htm). Harsey and Joyce did say our window was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in the exhibit and with some backlighting using foil to reflect the light, it really was a beauty to see. One of the mementos was a 72 page booklet showing the exhibit pieces. All these mementos will go into our archives.

Some may have read the wonderful article about our window’s journey by Dick Case in the *Post Standard* on [January 12](#). He described his conversation with Deb Ryan, the Everson’s senior curator, who explained how the window was taken apart and packed carefully in three separate wooden crates. Deb will fly to Paris as “New Jerusalem” is taken down and crated for the trip to Montreal. Now, is there anyone taking a trip to Montreal?

Several History Committee members have completed recorded interviews of 24 long time or past church parishioners. We’ve learned much about our history. Here are only three of the many interesting factoids from these conversations:

- More than 70 years ago a large room in the James Street church used for religious education classes had movable dividers with opaque glass to create the appearance of rooms for a certain amount of privacy.



- In the James Street church there were many nooks and crannies where a clever and knowledgeable child could hide from parents and teachers if they so desired, sometimes for long periods of time.
- When the current church was built, children had to be at least three years old to attend because of concerns with communicable diseases, such as polio.

With more than 40 hours of taped conversation we have gained much such knowledge. Forty more people have been identified whom we hope to interview over the next several months. If you would like to do some interviewing or any of scanning, inventorying, and other tasks the committee undertakes, we would love to have you join us.

Finally, an interesting history-related update. On January 22 Harsey Leonard and I met with Mr. Peter Wilkinson Bragdon, Exeter, NH, great grandson of Sam May. He presented to the church two bibles at one time owned by Sam May and passed down through the family. It was a wonderful occasion and the bibles will soon be on display. See <http://history.mmuus.org/bibles.html> for more information.



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### **Lucretia Flagge Coffin May**

70. (2-15-10)

Much of the past History Corner information has centered on Sam May, but not much has been said about his wife, Lucretia. As she played such an important part in his life, I want to devote at least one article to her. She was born in 1802, the daughter of Peter Coffin, a Portsmouth, NY, merchant who later moved to Boston thereby setting history's wheels in motion so she and Sam could meet. Sam was already a minister at the Brooklyn, CT, church when on a trip back to Boston in 1824 to visit friends and family he met Lucretia. It appears to have been love at first sight and increasingly more frequent visits from Brooklyn to Boston resulted in their June 1, 1825 marriage.

She appears to have taken to being a minister's wife easily, even accepting the difficulties of raising a growing family in the small Brooklyn community on his meager salary. She seemed to have never found fault when Sam took money from that salary to help the unfortunate or support some cause related to his growing involvement with the abolitionist movement. She did have her own views and



convictions and spoke of them frequently to Sam, but he relished the intellectual exchanges they had.

Beside her involvement with the church as a minister's wife, her daily routine involved, of course, caring for the children and their house, but she also enjoyed such activities as pickling and canning fruits and vegetables from their garden. She was a frequent letter writer, too, and read extensively. It appears that she read the several daily and weekly papers to which Sam subscribed, enabling her knowledge of current events and the many activities in which Sam was involved to grow. She also read widely in the fields of history, literature, and religion. She read French throughout her life and eventually acquired a mastery of Italian. Sam respected her mind and frequently asked for her opinion on various subjects.

When Sam accepted the pastorate in Syracuse in 1845, even though she would leave behind many friends and family, she seemed delighted with the prospects of living in a city much bigger than Brooklyn, CT. By all reports, she was a beloved and respected woman during the Syracuse ministry until her death in 1865. Sam made a wise choice in a marriage partner. On some warm day, venture to Oakwood cemetery and stand by her headstone to marvel at a wonderful woman who helped to complete Sam's life. For more information on Lucretia, read W. Freeman Galpin's biography of Sam at <http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html>. A photo of Lucretia's headstone is shown above or go to the following web site: <http://www.mmuus.org/who-we-are/history/may-headstone.html>. Better yet, visit Lucretia and Sam May's headstones at Oakwood Cemetery near the SU campus.



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### **An Historian's Treasure Trove**

71. (3-13-10)



Joyce Leonard and Leslie Dendy recently emptied out a safe deposit box that the church maintained at HSBC. It contained a number of documents of historical significance that were subsequently turned over for inclusion in our historical archives. What a great moment for me to examine these materials and think about our church's long history. With the permission and assistance of a member of the History Committee, any of these documents are available for viewing.

Most were deeds and related documents pertaining to past church property and to the house and property acquired by the Cardells when the old parsonage was sold. Much legal terminology exists among the documents, but there also was some interesting historical information. One document was a copy of our certificate of incorporation written in beautiful, flowing penmanship, and recorded on March 12, 1845 (a month before Rev. Sam May arrived to begin his ministry), with the Village of Syracuse and Onondaga County offices. It makes for splendid reading and I include some of it below pertaining to our early leaders below (ellipses are used when included legal terminology is not needed for comprehension or words could not be deciphered).

*Be it remembered, that at a meeting of the male members of the Unitarian Congregational Society in Syracuse, authorized by law to vote for trustees, held at the meeting house of the said society, known as the Church of the Messiah (the church was dedicated in November, 1843), on the eleventh day of March, 1845, pursuant to due public notice, according to the act entitled, "an act to provide for the incorporation of Religious Societies, . . . the late minister of the society, the Rev. John P. B. Storer, having died (he died a year earlier), and there being now no minister of the said society, Parley Bassett & James L. Bagg, two of the members of the said church or society, . . . duly nominated by a majority of the members of the society present, to preside at the election so noticed to be held . . . the said members of the society authorized by law to vote, thereupon proceeded to elect three trustees and Hiram Putnam, John Wilkinson (Syracuse's first Postmaster), and Charles F. Williston (later Mayor of Syracuse), were unanimously chosen.*

*It was further resolved, that the said Society shall continue to be known by the name and title of "The Unitarian Congregational Society in Syracuse," and that the said Trustees and their successors shall forever hereafter be known by the name and title of "The Trustees of the Unitarian Congregational Society in Syracuse.*

For more information of this nature on our early years examine two of our church history books: *A Backward Glance O'er Traveled Roads* (<http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html>) and *May No One Be a Stranger* (<http://history.mmuus.org/stranger.html>).



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## Syracuse and the Louisa May Alcott Connection

72. (4-6-10)

Louisa May Alcott's own parents and three sisters were the inspiration for her novel, *Little Women*. Although they lived much of their lives in and around Concord, Mass., the family had strong ties to Syracuse. Alcott's mother, Abigail, was the sister of Syracuse minister, the Rev. Samuel J. May. Samuel and his family lived on James Street. His modest home often hosted members of the Alcott family during the 1850s and 1860s. The two families also regularly exchanged correspondence.

The Alcott family frequently had financial struggles and Uncle Samuel tried to assist them. Sometimes he loaned them money. Then as Alcott's sisters came of age, Sam reached out to find them employment opportunities in Syracuse, generally teaching positions. Both Anna (the inspiration for Meg in *Little Women*) and May (the model for Amy) worked at different times as teachers in the New York State Asylum on the western edge of Syracuse. This was a model institution for the treatment of children with mental problems, run by the reformist Dr. Hervey B. Wilbur. Reverend May was a supporter of its progressive approaches, ones that emphasized education rather than simple incarceration.

Louisa's letters to her "dear" Uncle Samuel were affectionate. In one from January 22, 1869, she remarked that she had used many of "the stories you gave me" as inspiration in her writings. She also noted that the recently published *Little Women* had allowed her to pay off some family debts.

In October of 1875, Alcott was once more in Syracuse attending a Woman's Congress convention at the Wieting Opera House with her Syracuse cousin, Charlotte, Sam's daughter. Alcott was mobbed by a number of young girls clamoring to see her and obtain an autograph. The author of *Little Women* had become a celebrity (as she would be today, too).

[Reprinted by permission from Dennis Connors, Curator of History, Onondaga Historical Association. This article was originally printed in a March issue of the Scotsman Press *Pennysaver*, and was part of the OHA display at Syracuse Stage's production of *Little Women* this past fall.]



Louisa May Alcott at about age 25



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## May Memorial's Involvement with the Syracuse Inter-Racial Group 60 Years Ago

73. (5-12-10)



Hank and Sally Manwell (see their photo above) recently contributed to our archives a wonderful little document entitled, *Highlights of Negro History in Syracuse, NY*. It was issued under the auspices of the Syracuse Inter-Racial Group in 1947. It is a very enlightening document to read and you can find it at [http://history.mmuus.org/ NegroHistorySyracuse.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/NegroHistorySyracuse.pdf). Some May Memorial names are mentioned in the document and we can be very proud of our hard working ancestors.

The various contributors to this history speak of the “awakening” of Syracuse’s liberal minded people in the early 1940s to the long-term plight of Blacks in Syracuse. Our minister at that time, Robert Romig, was elected first president of the newly formed Federation of Inter-Racial Groups, and contributed one of the brief chapters in the document. Professor Freeman Galpin provides a brief description of the Jerry Rescue that involved Sam May. This was right during the time he was working on his unpublished [autobiography of Sam](#).

A long time member of May Memorial, Ernest Bowden, wrote a brief piece on what churches have tried to do to enhance the progress of Blacks in Syracuse. Emily Eaton describes how the Dunbar Center came into being in our community. Helen Murphy ends this 20-page document with a description of the progress that Blacks had made in Syracuse by the 1940s with her hope for continued improving conditions. In many ways we have continued that progress in the past six decades, but we still have a long ways to go.

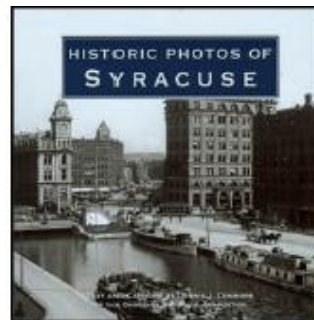
I end with a correction to last month’s article. I had mentioned my hope that a portion of the display at the Onondaga Historical Association dedicated to Louisa May Alcott and her family could come to May Memorial for a period of time. Unfortunately, that did not work out but if you visit the OHA you can see the display there.



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## May Memorial's Place in Syracuse History

74. (6-1-10)



Doug Igelsrud loaned me a library book he had entitled, *Historic Photos of Syracuse* (Dennis J. Connors, 2008, Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing). It contains over 200 photos and with minimal but adequate narrative such that together they tell a wonderful and fascinating history of Syracuse from 1850 to 1980. I highly recommend it. Most fascinating to me was the discovery of how our May Memorial ancestors played a role in that history through several photos. Thus another newsletter article wrote itself. I highly recommend you look at the web page I created with the photos described below: <http://history.mmuus.org/SyracuseHistory.pdf>.

The first photo and the one that caught Doug's eye was of a 52 year old Sam May marrying church members George Barnes and Rebecca Heermans (p. 26). George had immigrated to America in 1844 at the age of 17 and became a wealthy man in Syracuse through his involvement with railroads, manufacturing, and banking. His home eventually became the Corinthian Club on James Street. In addition to generous support of May Memorial for many years, he helped put up much of the bail when Sam May was arrested after the Jerry Rescue.

The next one of interest was of Rev. Elizabeth Padgham as a young girl (p. 36). Elizabeth grew up in our church and was an accomplished musician. At age 5 she was known throughout Syracuse as Baby Padgham, with a strong voice and as a thoroughly self-possessed little performer. Rev. Samuel Calthrop served as her role model and was the impetus for her becoming a Unitarian minister. After her retirement she moved back to the family home in Syracuse and served our church in various leadership roles for many years. See the church supplemental history web page for more information on Elizabeth: <http://history.mmuus.org/>.

The third photo was one I could not resist including as a treat for long time church member, Hank Manwell. The famous Franklin cars were made in Syracuse for many years and if you are lucky you occasionally will see Hank drive up to church in his antique Franklin. This photo (p. 60) is of a special model that executive H. H. Franklin had built for himself in 1909. His nickname for it was the "Torpedo." It had no radiator, but used air vents on top of the hood for cooling.

Photo number four (p. 97) is of May Memorial's leader in the women's suffrage movement as well as other social and educational reform efforts, Dora Hazard (grandmother of long time member Sarah Auchincloss—Howland's wife—whom many current members will remember well). The photo is of Dora and a large group of hospital volunteers that she organized to travel to London in 1918 to work with wounded WWI soldiers.

The last photo (p. 98) depicts U.S. Army soldiers training at a base established on the State Fairgrounds during WWI. May Memorial served as a sort of USO for these soldiers six days a week. Showers for them were installed in the James Street church basement, a movie projector was placed in the church auditorium for featured films, various areas were set aside as game rooms and gathering places, and church women provided free cafeteria service. Church member, Irving Merrill, taught them literacy and arithmetic classes. Reading through this book was a real delight but finding May Memorial's role made it extra special.



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### **John Wilkinson and the Franklin Car Saga**

75. (7-6-10)

I really appreciate the several comments I received about last month's article regarding May Memorial's place in Syracuse history. Hank Manwell, for example, gave me more information about the Franklin car company of Syracuse and how the John Wilkinson family became associated with that automobile. The first John Wilkinson was not only an important person in the early history of Syracuse and a vital member of our congregation, eventually he had a grandson, also named John Wilkinson, who developed the original Franklin Car. Here is that interesting story.

It began in the late 1800s. Herbert (Bert or H. H.) Franklin was born in 1866 on a small farm near Lisle in Broom County. He knew at a young age that he was not cut out for farming and as a young adult became involved in the newspaper business. Soon, however, he became involved with industry and in 1893



established a die casting business in Syracuse that quickly became very successful financially. In the meantime, the grandson, John Wilkinson (see the photo above of John and Edith Wilkinson), who had been born in 1868, was described as handsome, outgoing, and athletic. He obtained an honors degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell where he was a star in four sports, later becoming a champion bicycle racer. After graduation he began working for a bicycle manufacturer in Syracuse in 1899.

His engineering background led to an interest in internal combustion engines and automobiles. He built two prototype automobiles and after meeting Bert Franklin in 1901 a partnership was formed with Franklin as CEO and John as Chief Engineer. John's 3<sup>rd</sup> prototype became the first Franklin car sold in 1902, holding the distinction as the first four-cylinder automobile produced in the United States. H. H. ran the business side of the company but John made all the engineering and manufacturing decisions.

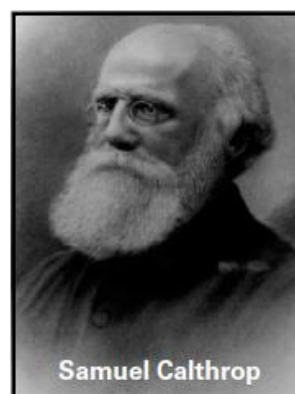
This business combination, though, does not have a real happy ending. John took all his manufacturing responsibilities very seriously, set high standards, and by all accounts was loved by the growing number of Franklin employees. John believed in air-cooled engines, flexible wooden chassis frames, and aluminum bodies. He wanted a lighter car that got good gas mileage, and that gave a comfortable ride. Unfortunately, in 1924 H. H. and some others in the company believed that sales were being hurt because the Franklin did not have the traditional "radiator look" of other cars. This was because a radiator wasn't required in an air-cooled engine (as shown in one of those photos for which I provided an Internet link in the last newsletter article). A new model designed by another engineer had a false radiator and grille look and was approved by H.H. and production on it began. Wilkinson hated the look and the concept and left the company on principle. Although related only through the marriage of his daughter, Charlotte, to another Wilkinson, Alfred, I believe that Sam May would have been proud of John for carrying through with his beliefs.



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History  
Corner

**Samuel Calthrop – Liberal Faith Herald**

76. (8-1-10)



Samuel Calthrop



I came across a wonderful online resource (*Heralds of a Liberal Faith*, 4 volumes edited by Samuel Eliot in 1910 and published in Boston by the American Unitarian Association) that included a great piece written by our 4<sup>th</sup> minister, John Applebee, about our 3<sup>rd</sup> minister, Samuel Calthrop. I am including a synopsis of his work in this newsletter issue.

Samuel R. Calthrop was one of the most unique and vital personalities in the Unitarian Fellowship during the latter half of the nineteenth and the first years of the twentieth centuries. Born on October 9, 1829, at Swineshead Abbey, Lincolnshire, he came of sturdy English stock. He received his early education at home and when he was nine entered St. Paul's School, London. There he was a natural-born student and took high rank. He was as good on the playing fields as in the classroom. He had early in life felt the call to preach, and he hoped to prepare himself for the ministry in the Church of England. But this was not to be. He completed the five years' course in Trinity College with honors and prizes, but refused to graduate. At that time no degrees were given at Cambridge unless the recipient signed the Church of England's Thirty-nine Articles. He could not conscientiously sign them because of their very traditional religious language.

He came to America and New York in 1853. While he was in the very act of delivering a letter of introduction to a family friend there, word was received that a church in Long Island was without a preacher for the next Sunday. He preached in Southold that Sunday and wound up preaching there for three months. Obviously preaching was to be his vocation, but he felt that he could not preach effectively to Americans until he knew them better. Many parents had already noted his unusual gifts as a teacher and, at their solicitation, he opened a boys' school in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In 1857 he married Elizabeth Primrose, whom he had met in Canada. Three daughters and two sons were added to a cheerful and hospitable family circle.

After teaching boys for six years, in 1860 he was ordained to the Unitarian ministry and accepted a call to Marblehead, Massachusetts. In 1868 he was called to succeed Samuel J. May in the Unitarian Church of Syracuse and for 43 years was our active minister. It was the time of the bitter theological controversies following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. Dr. Calthrop was a leader among the Unitarian ministers who accepted the newly discovered truth gladly and showed that far from destroying religion it deepened and broadened religion by giving it firmer foundations. Technically he was minister of May Memorial, but actually the whole community was his parish. He became an institution of the city. In his old age he was known as "The Grand Old Man of Syracuse." His home on Primrose Hill, named after his beloved wife, and overlooking the beautiful Onondaga valley, became the intellectual and spiritual center of the city. There he would give freely to groups of eager listeners of his

wisdom and knowledge of people and things, brightened by touches of kindly humor and flashes of sparkling wit. He also organized and fostered the Syracuse Boys' Club and was instrumental in establishing the first playgrounds of the city.

He wrote three books, *God and His World*, *The Supreme Reality*, and a little volume of poems revealing his love for nature and the beauty of his religious faith. He died quietly on May 11, 1917



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### **Leaders in Women's Suffrage**

77. (9-1-10)



Marie Jenney Howe

We can be very proud of many MMUUS ancestors. Two were leaders in efforts to improve the outlook for women more than 100 years ago. They were Marie Jenney Howe (born in 1870) and Julia Jenny. The Jenny sisters were active in the church and had as parents, Edwin Sherman Jenney and Marie Regula Jenney, who also were activists in Syracuse. Both Marie and Julia were involved in the women's movement and also active in the theatre. They had two brothers, Alexander and William.

Marie helped form and initially lead May Memorial's very active Women's Alliance that operated in the church for more than 80 years. Marie was another young lady inspired by Rev. Samuel Calthrop and decided on the ministry. In 1893, she attended the Unitarian Theological Seminary in Meadville. During her ministerial studies Marie wrote one of the first accounts of women in the Unitarian ministry that was published in *The Meadville Portfolio* in 1894. As could happen at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, she was cursed with good looks. Because of her beauty the townspeople in Meadville could not take her ambition to become a minister seriously. One observer of that time related it in this somewhat sexist way: "There were other women studying at the school, but Miss Jenney was different. She was too beautiful to be a minister. Only a man could explain such a beautiful girl at a theological seminary. Women did not go in for such careers and saving souls was a man's job. It seemed absurd for her to go into the ministry."

However, she persevered and after her 1898 ordination in the May Memorial church as one of the very early female Unitarian ministers, she served in two Iowa churches. She married activist Frederick Howe in 1904 and left the ministry, but rekindled her work in woman suffrage, fought abusive child labor, and was active

in the Consumers' League. An accomplished author, Marie also wrote several plays, including a stint in Hollywood. Her two most famous plays were *The Perfect Lady* where she contrasted Mrs. Fluff Duff, a self-absorbed lady with Mrs. Brown, a suffragist. The other was the satirical *Some Must Wash the Dishes*, published by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (precursor of the League of Women Voters). It is worth reading at this link: [http://michelelarue.com/show\\_dishes.html](http://michelelarue.com/show_dishes.html). She also organized a theater group in New York City. She died in March, 1934.

Although not as well known nationally, her sister, Julia, also loved her own involvement with amateur dramatics. She was the first woman lawyer in Central New York. In the early 1920's she became the first woman Deputy Attorney General of New York State. She also served her community well. She organized the Legal Relief Society, the Syracuse Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Professional Women's League, as well as being involved with May Memorial's Women's Alliance for many years.

What another wonderful heritage we inherit from these two inspiring ancestors.



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### **What Brought the Holtkamp Organ to May Memorial?**

78. (10-15-10)



I archive on the Internet the past History Corner articles and occasionally receive comments from people who stumble across them (<http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf>). One article was written about our Holtkamp organ by Glenn Kime nearly two years ago when I was out of the country. A man who recently emailed me had read that article and enjoyed it as he knew both Walter Holtkamp (senior) and Arthur Poister well when he was a younger man. I thought another article about the organ was due.

I recently looked through some archived folders about the decision-making process that went into selecting the Holtkamp organ for our church and learned a great deal. Howland Auchincloss accepted the role as chair of the Music Committee (whose role was designated primarily for helping with the decisions regarding an organ for our church) on August 6, 1961. Howland wasted little time

and soon had a 12 person committee working hard over the next several months to gather information, visit nearby churches to listen to organs, and begin to formulate a recommendation. They deliberated over such factors as whether to select a pipe or electronic organ, the best manufacturers, acoustics, and even how large an area should be built for the organ and a choir. Our organist at that time, Frank Macomber, Arthur Poister (appointed in 1948 as University Organist, Professor of Organ, and Director of Music in Hendricks chapel at Syracuse University), and, eventually, Walter Holtkamp, provided advice.

After much deliberation and considerable input from church members who were not on the committee, a decision was made to go with the Holtkamp Organ Company. The amount of money available for an organ was, of course, a problem and it came down to a decision between an organ that would cost just over \$28,000 versus one that would run just over \$31,000. Even though that was lots of money in the early 1960s, to put this figure in perspective, Glenn said the following: “Current costs to replace our beautiful instrument today could run to near three quarters of a million dollars.” So think about those figures whenever you are enjoying a piece played by Glenn.

To help in the decision-making process, on November 14, 1963, the music committee, our minister at the time (Rev. John Fuller), and the overall chair of the Building Committee (Henry Mertens) gathered at the Crouse College auditorium on the SU campus to hear Frank Macomber demonstrate the approximate difference between the two instruments. By using only certain stops on the Holtkamp organ there, he played portions of several compositions as they would approximately sound on the two organs. The unanimous consensus of those in attendance was that the more expensive instrument provided a larger, fuller, and more satisfying sound.

Thus, the decision to purchase the more expensive organ was submitted to the Building Committee and the price difference was made known within the congregation. A subsequent generous gift from Sarah Auchincloss helped cement the final decision and today we all are the beneficiaries of such leadership and generosity nearly 50 years ago.



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### **The Rescue of Jerry McHenry**

79. (11-10-10)



Most readers of the column know the basic story of Jerry (William) McHenry, a mulatto who had lived and thrived in Syracuse for several years. Known and liked by most in Syracuse, on October 1, 1851, he was apprehended under the infamous Fugitive Slave Law, jailed, then broken out of prison by several people (including Sam May). After ten days of hiding in barns in Oswego County, he was on a boat carrying wheat across Lake Ontario to Kingston. There he married and led a comfortable life, until he died of Tuberculosis a few years later.

This famous story became known far and wide and resulted in a Syracuse site being renamed the Jerry Rescue building. Since demolished, it was replaced by the *Jerry Rescue* statue in Clinton Square near his incarceration site (see the poignant part of the statue showing his rescue by several others). For more information, check these web sites: <http://www.nyhistory.com/jerryrescue/> and <http://library.syr.edu/digital/exhibits/u/undergroundrr/case3.htm>. Here are some facts behind the scenes.

Daniel Webster may have been the unwitting instigator for this historical incident. Webster's life was a rags to riches story. Growing up on a small farm with many siblings, he became a lawyer and career politician who served both in the House and Senate. He also was Secretary of State for three presidents. Early in his career he was a role model for Sam May. Sam noted in his 1869 book, *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict*, that his own resolution to combat slavery was first inspired by Daniel. In 1820, he heard him deliver a famous oration in which he invoked ministers to not be silent about slave trade injustices. However, years later Webster dreamed of being President and political expediency took over when he began touting the Fugitive Slave Law to win support from the South. In May, 1850, he spoke in Syracuse where he proclaimed that the law "will be executed ... here in Syracuse in the midst of the next Anti-Slavery Convention, if the occasion shall arise." Sam May and other abolitionists were furious. This led to meetings, denunciations of Webster, and the formation of a Vigilance Committee in which a plan involving church bells was devised to free anyone captured under the law. So on October 1, 1851, while the anti-slavery Liberty Party was holding its convention in Syracuse, that occasion arose when Jerry was captured, arrested, and jailed.

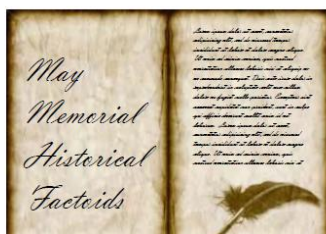
Word of the arrest quickly reached Convention attendees and church bells began ringing. An immediate effort to free the prisoner was unsuccessful, and though he escaped to the street in irons, he was rapidly recaptured on the Lock Street Bridge near the Weighlock Building (currently part of the Erie Canal Museum and about 3 blocks from our second church, the Church of the Messiah).

Later he was broken out of jail and his flight to freedom became the legend we all know.

Besides the people in Syracuse and Onondaga County participating in the rescue and escape, abolitionists in Oswego County were very involved, many of them proudly remembered for their involvement. There were no doubt many more in Onondaga, Oswego, and other Upstate New York counties involved in the Jerry rescue and escape, as well as many other Underground Railroad heroes, but the majority participated out of their strong sense of what was right to do and never revealed their identity. In historical communion we salute the efforts of all such people.



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### **Potpourri of Historical Factoids**

80. (12-3-10)

As we all begin to think about 2011, the *History Corner* winds up the year with several short pieces of May Memorial history facts.

A couple of anniversaries of note start this potpourri. One is that the May Memorial Worship Committee turns 40 in January. Formed in 1971, the Committee has involved many people in those four decades in planning, coordinating, and even doing worship services throughout each year. Say congratulations and thanks to any current or even past Committee members when next you see them.

It is fitting, too, that May Memorial's involvement with interns began in 1971. Some may remember some of our early interns, including Mark Ahlstrom (involved with Unitarian Universalism in Australia), Alida DeCoster (Minister for the UUA Social Justice Internship Program), and John Baros-Johnson (served as the UU minister of the Halifax Nova Scotia, church for several years). I suspect someone will write about the wonderful exploits of current intern, Kelly Kilmer Hall, in another three or so decades.

I know we talk about the two Sams in our history, but I was struck recently in going through our archives about how many people in our church history have had "John" as part of their name. Ministers John Storer, John Applebee, and John Fuller quickly come to mind. There also have been interim ministers John Papandrea and John Marsh. One of the initial 15 members to "sign our

membership book” in 1838 was John White. There was early church and Syracuse community leader, John Wilkinson. We also have had past presidents John Monague (1917-1919), John Chamberlin (1960-1962 and 1966-67), and we can't forget Verah “John”son (our first female president from 1967-1968). Should we consider renaming ourselves the John Memorial Unitarian-Universalist society? ☺

Members of the History Committee have been scanning the annual reports and placing them on the web page. They make for very interesting reading. We are not through yet, but there are nearly 40 years' worth available. You can find them at <http://history.mmuus.org/annuals.html>. I chuckled in reading a portion of Nick Cardell's first year ministerial report in 1975 and pictured the people he mentioned. I leave you with a portion of that report: “Breaking in a new minister is not, I realize, a simple task. You have all gone about it with consideration, tact, and support. This is especially true of Helen Obrist and the Board; Frank Decker and the finance committee; Gerry Lanier and his canvass organization; Bob Burdick, Pat Corson, and company who have not just maintained, but enhanced our church school program; Jean Hoefler who tolerated and transcended my eccentricities and still managed to edit our weekly newsletter; Joyce Ball who never let me depart too far from local tradition without serious reflection; Mary Burdick, Mary-Lib Kronman, and Sarah Auchincloss, who aided and abetted, counseled, and encouraged me in a variety of ways; Joanne Ashley who made sure that you at least had something beautiful to look at each week if the sermon failed to hold your attention or inspire you; and Frank Macomber and choir who were so easy to work with and added so much to our Sunday services.”

In a postscript, I should note that the History Corner articles are archived on our web page at <http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf>. Have a wonderful 2011.

2011



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**More Memories of Rev. May**  
81. (1-3-11)



In looking through some archival materials I came across several wonderful memories of Rev. May and Sam's father, Joseph May. It was written in 1958 by Sam's granddaughter, Katherine Wilkinson.

Joseph May led a colorful and interesting life living in Boston. He was a judge in some trials of Salem witches, a part of his past that he always regretted. He had a hole bored in the footboard of his King's Chapel (the first Unitarian church in the U.S.) pew for his cane. As a young man he was chosen for his good looks to lead George Washington's horse in a triumphal procession through Boston after the Revolutionary War. In later life he was very prominent in many civic activities in Boston, including being one of founders of the Massachusetts General Hospital. He was a supporter of and leader in the King's Chapel for many years. He was so well thought of that his family was allowed to bury him in a crypt within the church. A photo of the crypt is at [history.mmuus.org/crypt.html](http://history.mmuus.org/crypt.html).

It was therefore probably fitting that Rev. May's first church in Brooklyn, Connecticut, was the first Unitarian church in that state. When Sam and his family first moved to Syracuse in 1845 they lived downtown on East Onondaga Street. However, as soon as they could, they moved out to what was country at that time, up on a hilly rise on Foot (later called James) Street to the northeast of downtown. An 1834 map shows that it was even outside the Syracuse village limits, although those limits soon moved further east. Of course, Sam is perhaps most well-known outside of his church circles for the Jerry Rescue, but he also demanded of the city and state that the terrible living conditions of the young boys working on the Erie and Oswego Canals be improved (and they were). He also was deeply involved with the Native Americans on the Onondaga Reservation and they often sought him out at his church or home for advice. In addition, as many readers of this column know he attended the very first Woman Suffrage Convention in Seneca Falls (in 1848). His nearby neighbor and good friend, Andrew White, who was the first president of Cornell College, sought advice from Sam on various issues and that is why Katherine gave all his Anti-Slavery material to the Cornell Library where they can now be easily [viewed online](#).

One passion he carried forth from his father, was trying to improve Syracuse's hospital facilities. To help establish a new hospital he joined with his good friend Father O'Hara of St. Mary's Catholic Church. A story that Katherine remembers is that of a young priest who said to Father O'Hara, what will become of Dr. May upon his death (referring to the afterlife). Father O'Hara was heard to reply, "Oh, a way will be found for Dr. May." Another passion was the promotion of reading by all and he was an insistent promoter of the first public library in Syracuse being established on the ground floor of the new high school that was just built on West Genesee Street (he also was involved in helping to have that school built). At age 70, in 1867, when Sam finally resigned from the Unitarian church pastorate, he continued to serve on the Syracuse School Board, frequently demanding improved conditions in the schools. Sam certainly carried the notion of social action beyond his very busy pastoral duties. Syracuse is certainly a better



community because of his advocacy. We have so much to be proud and in awe of our church's namesake.



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### **Mystery of Another Stained Glass Window!** (An Extra Column in January)

82 (1-15-11)

Recently I was contacted by a local contractor who has an interest in church history. He was doing some work for a woman who lived in Erie Village (East of Syracuse) several weeks ago. She was having work done prior to selling her home and moving away. He noticed a beautiful stained glass window she had in her home and asked about it. She said that she was the daughter of the contractor who demolished our James Street church and that the window came from it. Her father told her it had resided over our front door and that he saved the window from destruction as no one wanted any of the stained glass windows other than the Tiffany that went to the Everson. As she was soon moving, he acquired the window and has it in his home.

He was curious about it from an historical viewpoint and did some research, eventually leading to me as church historian. He wonders if any of us knows more about it. Two of his photos are included, one showing it in its full size and one a closer view showing the alpha and omega symbols with a crown and cross in the middle. Please let me know ([rogerhiemstra@gmail.com](mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com)) if you believe it once resided in the James Street church. There are dates of 1820-1888 on it, perhaps representing the birth and death dates of some prominent parishioner for whom it may have honored. Should we attempt to purchase it for our current church?





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FROM THE MMUUS  
ARCHIVES

## 1941 Religious Education plans

83. (2-15-11)

It is always enjoyable looking through the church archival materials. I recently read through the church's 1941-42 religious education plans. The delightful photo above was on the cover. For those who have been members for many years, do you recognize any of the faces? I think that Hank Manwell is standing front and center, but I am not positive. Perhaps Hank from his winter abode in Florida will let us know. Note, too, that they are standing on the front steps of the James Street church.



I love some of the goals for the year (slightly adapted and abstracted below):

- To develop in each child a feeling of security and pleasure in the world in which he (or she) lives.
- To enable each student feel that he (or she) is one of a company of boys and girls with whom he (or she) will share through the years fellowship as conscientious Unitarians.
- To help each student deepen his (or her) appreciation of beauty as an adjunct of religion.
- To cultivate gradually appreciations of the privileges and right use of freedom.

Remembering the time period and that our nation was concerned about WWII, our potential involvement in it, and worldwide shortages of many things, there was no doubt a concern for health and disease. The youngest children, up to four years, were inspected by a nurse upon arrival at church. Probably they were sent home if contagion was considered a possibility. Here are some of the themes and wonderful titles for the year's study efforts: "We Discover Lights" (dealing with the sun, moon, stars, rainbows, candles, torches, and electric bulb); "Animal Babies" (dealing with stories and activities about the wonder of birth, growth, development, and the responsibilities of growing older); and "How Miracles

Abound” (dealing with the tree, the lima bean, the petunia, the gold fish, and the human hand).

The staff positions of the school in terms their titles were also interesting. In addition to many that we would recognize today, here were some of those titles:

- Advisor in Art Education
- Advisor in Dramatics
- Advisor in Music

There also were adult forums, parent education groups, and special groups for young adults. There is so much interesting information in our archives regarding our religious education programs and various other church organizations and activities. This information will serve as the focus of future newsletter articles.



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### **The Religion for Which We Built Our Church**

84. (3-10-11)

The title above is an adaptation of a sermon by Rev. John Fuller, our ninth minister, loaned to me recently by Betsy Fuller. This was the house warming sermon delivered by John on on October 4, 1964, two weeks after we moved into our current church building from the James Street church. As a caring, thoughtful, and dedicated committee currently contemplates upgrades to our building, some reflections on that sermon are in order. [I have added parenthetic words so that the 1964 language is more inclusive.]

John’s second paragraph set the theme for his sermon:

The design of a House of Worship . . . comes closer to being pure Art, defined as an expression of the human spirit, than almost any other field of architecture. In a church, practical considerations are important but not



paramount; what is paramount is the quality and drama of the space it contains. It is a visual Art therefore that church architecture more than any other mirrors a civilization and its religious climate. [Later he quotes our architect.] . . . No less than religion at its best, architecture at its best is witness and custodian of the spirit of modern men (and women).

– Pietro Belluschi in *The Importance of Simplicity in Church Design*.

Later in his sermon he talked about the plus and minus aspects of moving from a downtown, inner city area closer to the suburbs. He described why he believed we built our new church:

I do not think we have built this house – complete with cedar walls and cedar ceilings – for our own comfortable, affluent flourishing. I pray to all the gods of men (and women) we have not. We have built our house, I insist, for that religion which invites us to the fountain-heads of love and justice, or morality and right. We have built our beautiful house the better we do not yet see or know about. But we have made it at last. The new structure is ours.

John concluded this lovely sermon with some words of wisdom that all of us can take forward as we consider a future for our wonderful building:

I hope we shall always stand in fear of being irrelevant to and unconcerned with the despairs and joys, the sufferings and struggles of our fellowmen (and fellow women). Beauty must ever be of a piece with truth and goodness, lest it be shameful. And I hope, in this new house and in our name as a church, we shall keep alive and intact the memory of Samuel Joseph May – especially his passionate concern for justice, right and mercy. It is for this ethically religious quality we have built this house. . . . Creativeness, freedom, universality, beauty, and justice – it is for the religion which stresses these that we have built our new church. May the gods of truth bless us, and may our house be, as the mystic says, not an anchor, but a mast.

For those interested in the process of creating our current church and seeing a few photos, visit <http://history.mmuus.org/churchbuilding.pdf>. In addition, one of our ancestors took photos of the 1963-64 construction process and left us a set of slides. Thanks to Harsey Leonard's digitization efforts, go here to see this wonderful slide show: <http://history.mmuus.org/Constructing.pdf>. The photos shown with this article were others taken when the church was in its brand new, pristine condition. Finally, I urge everyone to read that entire wonderful sermon delivered by John as noted above. It will be well worth your effort. It can be found at [http:// history.mmuus.org/Housewarming.pdf](http://history.mmuus.org/Housewarming.pdf). If anyone who reads it was present that day, please let me know what you remember about the service.



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## Sam May and the Children's Cold Water Army

85. (4-6-11)

Betsy Fuller recently loaned me *A Narrative of South Scituate & Norwell 1849-1963* by Samuel Olson. Betsy grew up in South Scituate (later named Norwell), Massachusetts, as did our former interim minister, Rev. John Marsh. Our Rev. Sam May was a minister in the Unitarian church there from 1836-1842. To find out more about that ministry, look at this web site: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;rgn=main;view=text;idno=ABJ1200.0001.001>, beginning on page 163.



As many readers of this column know, Sam was interested in several reform issues of the day, such as antislavery, public education, and world peace. In addition, he was committed to temperance and became instrumental in reducing drunkenness and the amount of liquor consumed in South Scituate. He did this by organizing his Sunday school children to help with the efforts. His Sunday school group became the catalyst for an eventual formation of 500 youth into what was called in those days a *Cold Water Army*. This large group of children carrying big, colorful temperance banners made by Sam, paraded periodically around South Scituate accompanied by musicians. At times they shouted out in unison the following: So here we pledge perpetual hate to all that can intoxicate. They may have sung, too, part of a popular temperance song of the time to the tune of Yankee Doodle:

*Cold water is the drink for me,  
Of all the drinks, the best sir;  
Your grog, of whate'er name it be  
I dare not for to taste, sir.*

*But I'll not touch the poisonous stuff,  
Since all the brooks are free, sir;  
Give me cold water, 'tis enough,  
That cannot injure me, sir.*

Check out this web site for an idea of how these parading youth may have appeared to townspeople: <http://www.scripophily.net/cowaarplco.html>. The cold water army efforts paid off as five of six rum dealers in town went out of business fairly quickly with the remaining dealer doing the same a short time later. Sam then drove to a large field near his home with some rum containers and as the children cheered him on, he split the barrels with an ax. This wonderful story reminds me of what Gavroche sang in *Les Miserables*: This only goes to show what little people can do!

Betsy also mentioned in a note to me that when her family moved there in 1934 the house in which Rev. May had lived later belonged to a man who ran the local dairy that was called the May Elms Farm. Betsy's brother was fond of cows so their Dad and the dairy owner provided a calf for her brother to raise. Her brother named it May Queen. Thus, when Betsy first moved to Syracuse in 1961 she had fun teasing May Memorial people that the family cow had been named for Sam May.



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### **What Our Current Building Has Seen!**

86. (5-16-11)



As a great committee works on the capital improvement plan for updating our 47 year old building, this column presents only a few of the wonderful things that have taken place at 3800 E. Genesee Street. Write down your own memories so I can include them in a later newsletter. Drop them in the History Committee box at church, mail them to me in care of the church (Syracuse, NY 13214), or email me ([rogerhiemstra@gmail.com](mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com)).

- On October 4, 1964, when the first service was held congregants sat in rented chairs as pews had not yet been installed. The musical accompaniment came via a huge Steinway piano, a loan from the Calthrop family, that was in the choir loft as the creation of our wonderful Holtkamp organ had not yet been completed.
- After a year making arrangements, a formal building dedication took place on Sunday, October 10. Our design architect, Dean Pietro Belluschi, was there as was the organ builder, Walter Holtkamp, Jr. After the service two church leaders formally opened a time capsule that had been placed in the

cornerstone of the James Street church and people were excited to see 1884 newspapers, the old church building plans, and an 80 year old silver dollar. Later that day Dr. Arthur Poister, a well known professor and organist at Syracuse University, gave a Bach concert on our wonderful Holtkamp organ which had been delivered and installed earlier that spring.

- The Samuel J. May Citation for Community Action was instituted in 1967 to honor political and social action leaders. Thus, at that year's annual meeting attendees witnessed the first award presentation to Eleanor Rosebrugh, a long-time member and social activist. Since then, church members have witnessed the citation being presented to 31 people and representatives from four organizations.
- In 1970 the Board of Trustees established what was called then the Galley Committee to mount museum quality art displays in our Social Hall. We have all been the lucky viewers of these periodic displays for the past four decades.
- Many will remember the Friday night Pub, a popular social activity that was also initiated in 1970 and lasted for more than a decade. Bingo nights, square dancing, talent nights, Folkus Project concerts, lay-led summer services, special music services or concerts by the choir and other musical groups, and our traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service are only a few of the additional ways we all have used this wonderful building for entertainment, socializing, and spiritual development.
- 1981 marked the beginning of our interest in refugees from war torn El Salvador. A Sanctuary Committee formed at May Memorial in 1983 led to a somewhat controversial decision to offer sanctuary to refugees from that country, unfortunately leading to a few members leaving the church. Thus, in October, 1984, a young couple who were refugees lived in May Memorial for two weeks before moving on to Canada. It was an exhilarating but tense time because of the negative legal repercussions hanging over the church. We made it through this period and all were strengthened by it.

There are many more things that can be said about what has happened at our church. Provide your memories for a later continuation of our building's glorious history.



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## May Memorial and the Post-Standard a Century Ago

87. (6-11-11)



As a person very interested in history, I often think about how May Memorial was depicted 100 years ago. We have very few photos of that time and our archives for then are limited to a few saved records, a paucity of written impressions, but many newspaper articles. How, then, did *The Post Standard* report about our church?

For example, in late 1909 arrangements began for long time minister, Rev. Dr. Samuel Calthrop to retire (which he did at the end of 1910 to become minister emeritus). Thus began a parade of potential candidates who periodically filled the pulpit. Thus, on January 29, 1910, the first person arrived in town and the paper noted it this way: “Rev. and Mrs. O. B. Hall of Germantown, Pennsylvania, arrived in this city today to be the guests of Rev. and Mrs. S. R. Calthrop and Sunday Morning Mr. Hall will preach at May Memorial Church. Monday evening Mr. Hall will address the first meeting of the Unitarian Men’s Club, which was recently organized. He will speak of ‘The Men of the World and of the Church’ (p. 7). The eventual next minister for May Memorial was a later speaker. Here is how the newspaper reported his first visit: “Rev. Dr. John Applebee (referred in the newspaper as Appleby) of Attleboro, Mass., one of the leading Unitarian ministers in the country, supplied for Dr. Samuel R. Calthrop at May Memorial Church in James Street yesterday morning. Despite the intense heat in the church, it was well filled to hear Dr. Applebee. He was entertained over Saturday night by Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Snow and at dinner yesterday by Judge and Mrs. Frank H. Hiscock. Dr. Applebee left yesterday afternoon for the West.” (July 4, 1910, p. 3) (Dr. Applebee became our minister in 1911.)

May Memorial women seemed to garner frequent mention in the paper (or at least there was an active public relations committee). Here are a few of them:

- The Solway Guild will hold an open meeting at 3 o’clock this afternoon for all women interested in the ‘social purity’ campaign which is being carried on by Rev. Dr. J. A. McCuaig in this city. . . Dr. John L. Heffron will read a paper on ‘The Moral Value of Studying Physiology and the Hygiene of Sex in the Public Schools.’ Mrs. Mary Gomar White, the



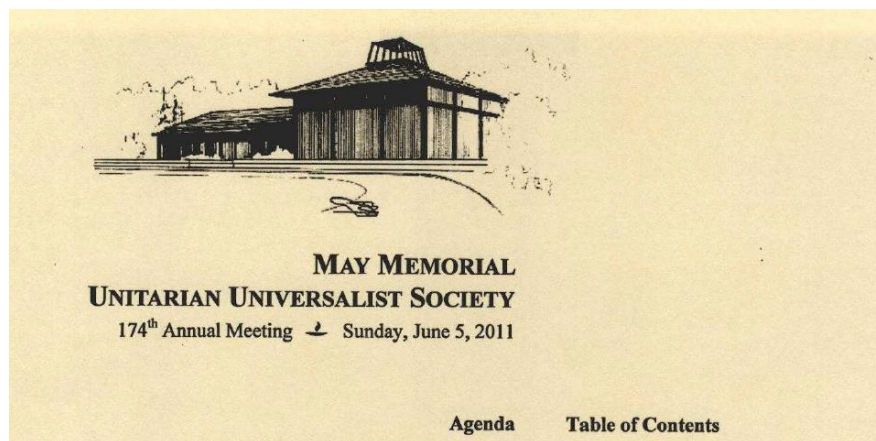
- Sunday school superintendent of the May Memorial Unitarian Church, will read a paper on 'Motherhood' (February 9, 1910, p. 5).
- Mrs. William G. Tracy gave a luncheon Wednesday for the visiting women of the various Unitarian alliances in this state who came to the guest day of the May Memorial Women's Alliance in this city (March 5, 1910, p. 14).
  - The Samuel R. Calthrop League of the May Memorial Unitarian Church (for young adults) has elected as its president Miss Mary E. Lewis; first vice-president and chairman of the Literature Committee, Miss Christine McLennan; second vice-president and chairman of the Social Committee, Miss Clara Poole (April 18, 1910, p. 5).
  - Miss Lillian I. Wangman, superintendent of the Y.W.C.A. gymnasium, has completed arrangements for the annual tournament of her department tomorrow evening . . . April 24 will be 'gymnasium day' . . . Mrs. Mary G. White, the assistant pastor [note the title change unless the church leaders had given Mary a new one by then] of the May Memorial Unitarian Church, will speak on the 'The Mental, Spiritual and Physical Development of the Working Woman' (April 21, 1910, p. 12).
  - A delightful afternoon was spent by the Women's Alliance of the May Memorial Unitarian Church yesterday afternoon in the church parlor. Mrs. Charles DB Mills entertained the members with recollections of noted men and women whom she has met. She spoke of Rev. Dr. Samuel J. May of this city, Gerrit Smith and his daughter, Mrs. Miller of Geneva, the Howlar family, and Theodore Parker, 'all ideal people,' she said, 'whose lives had done much good to their fellow men' (December 15, 1910, p. 8).



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### Our Annual Reports

88. (7-15-11)



An effort to locate and electronically scan (digitally preserve) our annual reports has been completed for now. They can be found online at <http://history.mmuus.org/annuals.html> (see the teaser for the 2011 annual report). Forty seven (partial or full) reports were included, covering the years 1963 through 2011. The hunt for more such reports will continue by the History Committee. They make for very interesting reading and I encourage history buffs or anyone interested in our development for the past five decades to peruse them. I have read or skimmed most of them. Not surprisingly, more often than not budgetary woes or constraints were mentioned. However, the number of people who have had some sort of committee, council, leadership, or volunteer role is staggering, emphasizing the continuing vitality of our church community. I provide several highlights from three reports, including mention of any current church members or friends, to give you a taste of this energy. Be sure to thank any current people mentioned for their long time service.

In 1963, we were in the last years of our James Street church, attempting to find a buyer for it, and planning for construction of our current church. Rev. John Fuller in his annual report mentioned several very active committees or groups: The Women's Alliance, Couples Club, Service Committee, Eliot Club, and Jefferson Club (the latter two involved young adults). That year a process was developed to process and revise our constitution and bylaws. Our very vibrant RE program had 53 people involved as part or full time staff members. Included, too, was a report from a fund raising group, the May Fair committee, devoted to raising funds for furnishings in our new church. The committee raised a very large amount for that time of \$3208. Helen Obrist on the Membership Committee; Bob Burdick was Head Usher, elected as a Board Trustee, and co-director of the fire patrol for the old church parish house (next door to the James Street church); and Malcolm Clark was also elected as a Board Trustee. The RE nursery was called a Baby Fold.

In 1975, Rev. Nick Cardell completing his first year, reported that 42 new members had joined. He started a mini-fellowship program that met on Monday evenings and recommended the formation of an RE Council. A serious financial shortfall related to the last year's budget was mentioned. Helen Obrist was president that year. Bob Burdick and Pat Corson were thanked for coordinating the year's RE efforts; Nick thanked Mary Burdick for her constant counsel and encouragement; June Card was thanked for her ongoing support of Nick's efforts. The Friday night Pub was mentioned.

Bob Coye was President during the 1985 church year. Irene Blakeslee and Vicky Schipper were members of the Board of Trustees and Alida DeCosta was a minister intern. Nan Gartner was thanked for her work as the church office secretary and Pat Hoertdorfer for her last year as Director of RE. In that year rental to the Growing Place began. The year was also important because we provided two

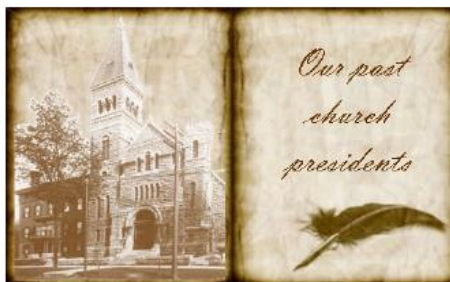
weeks of sanctuary to Pedro and Sylvia Ramos, El Salvador refugees. The Teen Room had been remodeled into a bedroom and sitting room for them. The Sanctuary Committee included Cathy Cardell, Betsy Fuller, Vicky Schipper, Ann Tiffany, and Adele Toney. Judy Antoine was one of the Spanish interpreters and Steve Ransford provided legal counsel. Other committees or councils mentioned were the following: The Aesthetics Committee, chaired by Bob Coye; Building Council including Peter Colman (as coordinator), Al Obrist, and Helen Obrist; Denominational Affairs with Jim Napierski as co-chair; Gallery Committee, chaired by Bob and Mary Burdick; Greeters Committee, chaired by Muriel Kirkpatrick; Hospitality Council with Joyce Droege as co-coordinator; Membership Council with Vicky Schipper as co-coordinator; Minister Intern Committee involved Judy Antoine and Malcolm Clark; Music Committee, involving Peter Black and Ernie Sibert; Personnel Committee including Gary Droege and Dick Pearson; Religious Services Council, Hank Manwell as co-coordinator; Social Responsibility Committee involving Irene Blakeslee and Lisa Obrist; and the Worship Committee included Mary Burdick and Hank Manwell.



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### **Our Past Church Presidents**

89. (8-15-11)



As Harsey Leonard moves into the church's presidency role, we know we are in capable hands. We have, of course, had many outstanding people serve in various leadership roles during the history of May Memorial. For example, we had such a wonderful group of presidents during the past several decades and I began thinking about that legacy. We've had a total of 56 people serve as president, including four married couples in different years, and 13 woman, all since Verah Johnson began her term in 1967. There have been 43 people who served as president for two or more year-long terms with Charles Snow the most at eight terms, followed by Salem Hyde with six terms, William Canough with five terms, and James Barnes, William Walsh, John Chamberlin, and Bob Coye with four terms.

Our first listed president (although there were many people assuming such a role years before it was called president) was Edward B. Judson in 1890. He was president of the First National Bank of Syracuse, having been in the lumber

business as a younger man and then serving in the State Assembly 1839-1842. Edward set a high standard right from the beginning, but he was followed by another outstanding individual, Charles W. Snow, in 1891 (who held the office of president seven additional times, but in scattered years). Charles, too, was a bank officer with First National, a pioneer druggist in Syracuse, and later operated a prosperous retail and wholesale drug business. The next president, T. J. Leach (1982 and 1983) was an officer in the Salt Springs National Bank.

The fourth president, William Brown Smith (1894), was a cattleman and very active in the Holstein-Friesian Cattle Association of America, president of the Smith and Powell Company, Vice President with the Syracuse Savings Bank, and president of the Oakwood Cemetery Association. The fifth president, George E. Dana, a Harvard graduate, was involved with manufacturing, served as a director in two Syracuse banks, and was financially involved in several other enterprises. The next person as a first time president, James Barnes, was involved with the Central City Railway. He was followed by first time president G. Lewis Merrell who with a partner started a company to can vegetables and discovered a way to make low-moisture marketable mincemeat from dry ingredients which became a national success. The company later produced powdered milk, too. They had factories in Franklin Square and Fayetteville and many other cities, employing 900 people. They were eventually bought by Borden, Inc. Other notable presidents 90 to 100 years ago were Salem Hyde (Salem Hyde Elementary School is named after him), John Montague who established the Engelberg Huller Manufacturing Company in Syracuse, A. W. Hudson, another banker, and E. C. Stearns, a manufacturer of tools and hardware.

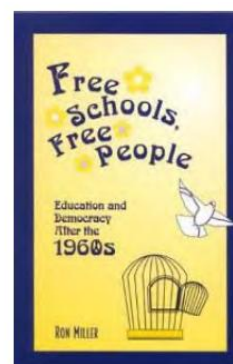
Thus, we can be very proud of the heritage established for May Memorial by outstanding leaders playing a role not only in the church, but in our community. Harsey, welcome into that heritage and we know you will continue that wonderful legacy of leadership. If you are interested in a listing of the past Church Presidents and the years they served, go to this link: <http://history.mmuus.org/presidents.html>.



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### **The Free School Denizens of May Memorial**

90. (9-15-11)



[Friend and former SU colleague Mary Beth Hinton and I recently chatted about her experiences with the Syracuse Free School. I have been working with Dr. Rick Posner, a colleague who wrote a wonderful book about his long experience with a free school in the Denver area (*Lives of Passion, School of Hope*), and Mary Beth was kind enough to write this guest article. Mary Beth is a daughter of long-time May Memorial member Marjorie Hinton. Ellen Fuller, daughter of member Betsy Fuller, also attended the school.—RH]

During the 1969–1970 school year, a group of about twenty apparently-truant high school-aged kids hung out in the basement of May Memorial. One might have seen them playing guitar, sketching each other, throwing paint just like Jackson Pollock, reclining on an old couch with a book, or conversing with intensity. Having repudiated mainstream education, these kids had started their own alternative high school. It was called Syracuse Free School, and it lasted not quite two years.

I was in ninth grade when my “radical friends” and I began to plan this school with a few adult mentors. Like similar groups around the country, we were influenced by the ideas of social critics like Paul Goodman and Ivan Illich. It was surprisingly easy to start a school. Under New York State law, a school had to provide an education equivalent to that offered by the public schools, and it had to have at least one certified teacher. As I recall, we drafted a curriculum for the local school board that was deemed acceptable, and we hired a public school English teacher/coordinator, Larry Knickerbocker, who was willing to live on a tiny income (whatever the students or their parents could contribute) for the sake of the enterprise. Fortunately, May Memorial agreed to give us room in their basement to hold classes. We attracted students—who could also be teachers—and some twenty volunteer teachers, including academics and ordinary citizens, through ads in the local newspapers.

We were serious about play. A 1970 handout on the school contains the following Q&A:

*Don't kids goof off all day when no one makes them study?*

Most newcomers goof off because they need time to recover from the imposed discipline of public school and develop self-discipline. Usually doing nothing becomes very boring in a month or two.\*

We were also serious about learning. The handout explains: “We believe that education is more than memorizing facts; that it . . . goes on twenty-four hours a day . . . not [just] from ages six to twenty-five; that education is change; that at best, education is ecstasy.” Here is a list of the classes taught that first year: French, German, Ecology, Regents Math, Fun Math (e.g., number theory), English, Modern Painting, Seminar in Human Concerns, Biology, Meditation, Games and

Improvisations, Contemporary Social Analysis, The Mafia/Prisons, Carpentry, Witchcraft, Ancient Philosophy, Seminar on Herman Hesse, Twentieth-Century American History, Creative Writing, Law, World History, Knitting and Macramé, and Figure Drawing. My education that year was exhilarating and rich, though chaotic.

In its second year, Syracuse Free School moved twice before closing for lack of funds. Some students went back to public school; some got into college; some continued to live outside the mainstream culture. But they were all changed radically—from the roots—by their Free School experience.

[Guest Contributor Mary Beth Hinton – Mary Beth is a freelance editor in Syracuse.]

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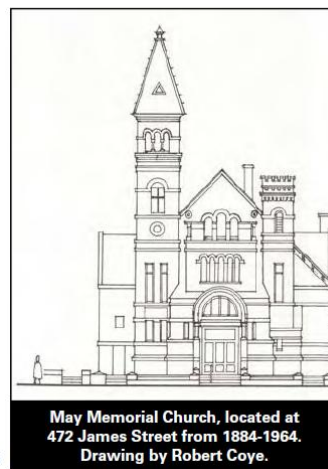
\* I believe that the text of the handout was written by student-participant David Horwitz.



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### Remembering the James Street Church

91. (10-3-11)



As we consider remodeling our current church, looking back at memories of the former James Street church provides some interesting context. Dr. Elizabeth Manwell (Hank's Mom) served as our Director of Religious Education from 1935 to 1949. She gave a wonderful talk at the farewell service for the James Street church on September 20, 1964, in which she reminisced about her years there. That talk serves as the basis for this article.

Having worshipped in that building for 34 years, she had wonderful memories. Her very first time in the building was for a church supper organized for the incoming minister, Dr. Wendelin Argow. It was a memorable evening and she and her husband, Reginald, decided it would become their church home. This began the Manwell family's journey at May Memorial. For example, in her reminiscence she mentioned some of the difficulties in heating the entire church, crammed with adults and children everywhere each Sunday, on bitter winter mornings. She noted that the church custodian, Mr. Richard Fuller, used to sleep overnight in the social room each Saturday and then would rise early Sunday

mornings to stoke the great coal furnace so the congregation would be warm when church service started.

She noted the devotion of such people as Grace Rockwood, Rosamond Praeger, and the many volunteers who collected tons of clothing which were mended, dry cleaned, and shipped to Europe for several years in the 40s and 50s after the ravages of WWII. She remembered one time that the piles of donated shoes were so high they completely blocked the church office's left door. Elizabeth also remembered four sentences from remarkable sermons delivered by past ministers that have poignancy even today:

Dr. Argow: "He [God] is the great creative force about and within all, and you are, each of you, your own God."

Rev. Romig: "Think not mainly of your immaturities, think of your strengths."

Rev. Canfield: "Cultivate the growing edge of your minds."

Dr. Zoerheide: "Seek to find the hidden loveliness that is in every human being."

Elizabeth noted that she did not vote to move from the James Street site, fearing the added expenses and that we would become too comfortable if we moved from close proximity to the inner city. However, as she worked with and through the building and upcoming moving experiences, she said the following that can serve all of us as we think to our own future: "I no longer fear the future. I rejoice now that we are moving. We will continue to comfort the distressed and to distress the comfortable." Elizabeth ended with this wonderful poem:

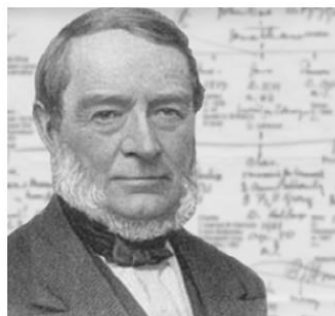
*The walls of May Memorial, or of any church, are not the church itself.  
Nor is the frame of the window the view,  
Nor the silver candlestick the flame,  
Nor the burning glass the sun,  
Nor the flower pot the flower,  
Nor the temporary banks of the brook the emerging great stream which  
flows through the years to the ocean itself.*



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### **Genealogy and Samuel Joseph May**

92. (11-9-11)



[Disclosure: This article has lots of genealogical information and relationships, so it may be confusing or even boring to some readers. Real history buffs should find it fascinating.]

It has been an interesting month surrounding the life of Rev. May. In October I presented on preserving church history at the annual NYSCU (New York State Convention of Universalists) conference at the Binghamton UU church. There I heard Dan McKanan, the Emerson UUA Chair at the Harvard Divinity School. He talked eloquently about the early Universalist leaders, many of whom were contemporaries and even friends of Sam, so I thought about our namesake a great deal during that presentation. We also had a scholar and author, [Eve LaPlante](#), who is a great-great granddaughter of Sam, in town. She is writing a biography on Abigail and Louisa May Alcott that will include considerable mention of Sam and Lucretia May. In doing her research she visited our church where she met with History Committee member George Adams and viewed several Sam May mementos. She also toured various related locations in Syracuse. Eve anticipates that her biography will draw much needed attention to these wonderful people associated with our history. Then George told me that recently he and Bev visited the Greensboro, NC, UU church. There they heard Rev. Wyman Rousseau, a retired minister. He had made use of the Harvard library to study about Ralph Waldo Emerson and gave a related sermon that also caused George to think about Sam May.

Some will remember, too, my mentioning in the January, 2010, article that Mr. Peter Wilkinson Bragdon, great grandson of Sam May, visited our church and presented us with two bibles. They were at one time owned by Sam May and passed down through the family. Eve interpreted the inscriptions in those bibles. They were initially given by Col. Joseph May (Sam's father) to his wife in 1834, then he gave them to his daughter-in-law, Lucretia (Sam's wife), in 1840, a year before his death. Sam then gave them to his daughter, Charlotte Wilkinson, in 1870. From that point the bibles were passed down to the Bragdon family through their relationship with the Wilkinson family.

When Peter was here he also presented us with a very large genealogy chart. Some day in the future that chart will be on display in the church. Here are a few of the highlights that interested me. The May male line can be traced back to John May who was born in 1590 in Maytown (I am sure there is a story there to be explored), Essex, England. Among other family information as Sam's heritage is traced included interesting historical names such as Davis, Deming, Gardiner, Gore, Howell, Quincy, Sewell, and Williams. As another fascinating historical factoid, the sister of Sam's grandmother, Elizabeth Quincy, was married to one of our country's founding fathers, John Hancock. I loved reading some of the first names, too, as it was like going back to our country's founding: Abraham, Daniel,



Ebenezer, Edmund, Hannah, Henry, Jacob, Lucretia, Peter, and Wendell. An interesting month, indeed, at least for someone who loves thinking about history.

[postscript: If any reader would like to see a history-related topic written about in a future *Marvelous History Corner* article, [please let me know](#)]



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### Some Reminiscences About our Church

93. (12-16-11)

(Note: an earlier version of some of the information in this article appeared in January, 2007)

Remember in the new year to step down to the Memorial Garden area and look at the Sam May marble tablet hanging on the outside east wall. It will take your breath away when you think that it first adorned a May Memorial church wall in 1885 and now it rests on an MMUUS church wall again. Go here for a look at all those who helped mount the tablet in 2006: <http://history.mmuus.org/tablethanging.pdf> and the tablet's dedication service: <http://www-distance.syr.edu/tablet.html>.

Dipping back into our historical archives, a committee headed by members from several decades ago, Mrs. Kenneth Kindelsperger and Polly Lape, gleaned some reminiscences about our church during its long history. Many of us love to see our young children gathered together for a story before they head downstairs. Well, Elizabeth Manwell (Hank's Mom), for example, remembered that for years in the James St. church there were "Children's Sundays" several times a year and eventually with so many children gathered that they actually encircled the entire congregation. She also recalled one Sunday right after the church school had been given a victrola (a wind up record player for those of you under 30). She placed it next to a curtain that separated the religious education area from the sanctuary altar. During the junior service that first week it was there she played a rousing record of an Indian Tribal Dance to illuminate a folk story they were studying, not thinking about how the sound would carry so well through the curtain. After the service, Rev. Dr. Argow asked her quite gently not to that again. Her music happened just as he began his prayer in the sanctuary; he thought it was coming from the organ and that the organist had missed his cue, so he kept on praying thinking the organist would figure out what was happening and stop playing. Dr.



Argow told her that he just kept on praying louder and louder thinking the organ would stop, but eventually he had to stop praying thinking the organ had won until he figured out from where the music was coming. Think about that the next time any of us hear some noise in the foyer during a Sunday service and find ourselves becoming slightly irritated.

Within that same committee, Florida Tracy talked with fondness about the wonderful work of the Women's Alliance (we have three file drawers in Room 8 filled with material from that very successful group). During the Rev. Calthrop and Rev. Applebee ministries right up until WWI, the Alliance annually gave a Christmas noontime dinner and entertainment to our church youth on a Saturday before Christmas. Eventually, the Alliance voted to include the poorest children in the two nearby elementary schools. This involved 75-100 children, ages 6-8, many of whom typically did not have much of a Christmas simply because their parents could not afford it. She talked about the heart warming sight of seeing the wide-eyed kids before a lighted tree and then again as they received food and gifts. She mentioned, too, that this notion of giving actually went all the way back to Rev. Sam May's era when church women made hospital clothing and bandages that were shipped to the Union front during the Civil War and later with the making of garments and bandages that the Red Cross used in WWI and WWII (some of our early social justice activities). They also made garments and sleepers for refugee infants during both wars. It certainly makes me proud to belong to a church that has such a wonderful and long social justice and action heritage.

NOTE: Remember to send me an email ([rogerhiemstra@gmail.com](mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com)) and describe those topics or remembrances that you have about which you would like me to write a Marvelous History column. I love doing the research.

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### Historical Artifacts Among Us

94. (1-15-12)

Many readers of this column see historical artifacts every time they come to church, but may not realize it nor even think about it. Some very visible ones are the two marble busts (one of past minister



*Old Church Grate* (fabric art wall hanging by Don Waterman)

Sam May and one of past minister Sam Calthrop – descriptions of the busts are on pages 17 and 24, respectively, in [\*May No One Be A Stranger\*](#)) and the old communion service serving utensils in the Memorial Room. Another is the large Sam May marble medallion that hangs over the fireplace in the foyer (the story of this medallion is no. 39 in this newsletter archive. However, there are several more that I will describe this month – corresponding photos of each one mentioned are on the church web page: <http://history.mmuus.org/artifactphotos.pdf>.

One is the pine cone wreath that hangs on the little wall right behind where Glenn sits when playing the organ. Mary Burdick places it there each holiday season. It was made by the Woman's Alliance when we were in the James Street church. Take a glance at it when next you have a chance and know now how much love and effort went into its construction, plus how well it has endured for more than 50 years.

Two more artifacts that you see infrequently are used when someone creating our weekly decorations at the front of the dais decides to use one or both of them. They are a set of two beautiful metal candelabras obtained by Betsy Fuller and friends when we were in the James Street church. They were created by Stone Quarry Hill Art Park founder and longtime church member Dorothy Riester (now residing at the Nottingham). Each candelabrum supports three candles of staggered heights several inches tall in their own stand.

Another artifact is the beautiful stylized stone sculpture, also by Dorothy, that is at the bottom of the stairs just before you go into the RE area. Entitled *Mother and Child*, and completed in 1951, with a bit of an artistic eye and imagination you can see a baby being held in the hands of the mother. Do take a look at it there or on our web page.

In Room 8 where our archival files reside, there is a beautiful photo by Bob Burdick of the amazing Louis Comfort Tiffany stained glass window that was saved from the James Street church; the window is now owned and exhibited in the Everson Museum. Originally called the *Tiffany Palms*, it was known by our ancestors as the New Jerusalem. It has been the focus of previous newsletter columns, shown in the newsletter archive, numbers 68 and 69.

Finally, hanging on the south wall of the sanctuary close to the stairs going to the choir loft is a very large wall hanging. Titled the *Old Church Grate*, it was created in 1965 by former member Don Waterman, a Syracuse University professor, who with his wife, Ann, owned Waterman Design. Created on printed textile, rayon/acetate, it uses the design of two long metal furnace grates going down the middle of two main aisles in the James Street church through which members warmed their feet and legs on cold winter days. It is appropriate to think about those grates during our winter months.



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## Glenn Kime – 20 Years Among Us

95. (2-12-12)

The first part of February involved some celebrating for the time that Glenn has been with us as organist and director of music. Besides accolades and well wishes from many of us,

Glenn celebrated in his own fashion with his delightful organ recital of Germanic music on February 5. We were all treated to the organ turned at an angle so we could better see him playing from the sanctuary. Of course, Glenn's delightful humor came through as he chatted between the various pieces of music. Then on February 12 we had a chance to provide more accolades during the service in somewhat of a surprise to Glenn as the morning service was rearranged so a few could talk about Glenn, there was surprise music from the chorus, and even our young people joined in as they and the chorus sang their "traveling music" to him before moving downstairs.

A multi-page tribute also was presented to Glenn with more accolades from several people. It was touching to read about all these memories and how much Glenn has meant to so many people. [When you get the opportunity ask Glenn to tell you about the time he discovered a man sleeping inside the trap door leading to the inside of the organ – a story revealed in this tribute.] The service ended with a big cake in the social hall in celebration of his 20 years.

Music has long been important to our church. From what the archives reveal it began in the 1840s when our ancestors moved to our second church building, called then the Church of the Messiah. It was located at the corner of State and Burnet, now a parking lot at the edge of 690. Our first organist was Ellsworth Phelps, a composer, builder of organs, a music teacher in the public schools, and an author. Later in the 1880s it was noted in the archives that we had an organist and a choir consisting of a paid quartet.

Our archives then go silent regarding music for some 40 years until a Dr. Oberlander was listed as choir director in the 1930s. The 1940s was a busy decade with Mrs. Warren B. Walsh as organist, followed by Mrs. Richard D. Green as organist and choir director, followed by Mrs. Harry L. Vibbard as organist. Certainly Mrs. Harry could have been the organist, but an Internet search revealed



a Mr. Harry L. Vibbard was listed as a professor, organist, and pianist at Syracuse University so could it have been a him rather than a her?

It is next known that Syracuse University professor Frank Macomber (now retired) was our organist and choir director from 1954-1974. Rob Kerner followed from 1975-1984 and Allison Evans Henry followed from 1985-1991. During the next interim period Rob Kerner commuted from Rochester to fill in for six months.

It was in early 1992 that we somehow enticed Glenn to become our organist and choir director. So Glenn is now officially the longest tenured organist and choir director in the history of our church. Congratulations, Glenn!

**p.s. Remember to wish Glenn a happy birthday on March 22.**



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### **Babyfold – May Memorial’s RE Nursery That Almost Wasn’t!**

96. (3-9-12)



I have seen the term “babyfold” mentioned in our archives and in [May No One Be a Stranger](#), but never really understood what it meant. Comments from Mary Burdick enticed me to do some research and it turns out to be a fascinating story.

In the early 1960s plans were developing that eventually resulted in a decision to build our current church. In addition to the former James Street church being old and expensive to maintain, continual growth in members made it increasingly difficult to accommodate everyone. We had been experiencing growth for some time and an increasing numbers of children resulted in purchasing an old house next door (known as the Parish House) in 1941 and eventually renting space in the old Everson Museum at the corner of James and North State streets to provide more space for RE and other uses. One long time member mentioned joining our church solely because of seeing long lines of children marching from the church to other locations each Sunday.

More families kept joining and by the beginning of the 1962-63 church year, there were 300 children registered for RE. Bob Burdick even organized a group of parents to keep a fire watch patrol in the Parish House during church school sessions because the building was considered unsafe. A special donation fund that

helped finance Sunday morning care for infants and toddlers ran out and a decision had to be made whether to continue it. As noted in *May No One Be a Stranger*, Elizabeth Manwell and Jo Gould (both served terms as RE Directors) opposed having the young parents' cooperative babyfold because they believed nursery care was detrimental for children under the age of three. Several church leaders felt the same way. There also were real fears among some that severe diseases like chicken pox, measles, whooping cough, and polio were spread more easily when young children were together and vaccinations were not as common as there are today. Continual pressure from parents forced the trustees to further study the issue and subsequently a decision was made to support the babyfold, but separate from the church school. It was placed in the church's social hall, but there were still concerns that hot liquids could be dropped on infants during coffee hour.

Thus, when plans were being finalized for our current church, space was included for a room where infants and toddlers could be placed but not as part of the RE program. Initially, the babyfold was in the basement of our current church, but the last area on the left at the east end where it was staffed on a rotating basis by parents until in a few years it was finally absorbed into the RE program. Such pressure from parents is why today we have a paid person in the nursery room, a decision made somewhat reluctantly by church leaders early on, that has enabled many parents of very young children to come to church over the years knowing their infants will be in a safe environment.

But the story doesn't end there. I was curious about where the term "babyfold" came from? Mary Burdick wondered, I think with a twinkle in her eye, if it could have referred to sheep. The Internet does define a sheepfold as a pen for sheep. However, a little more searching revealed an organization in Illinois known as the "Baby Fold." Beginning at the turn of the last century as an orphanage, it now serves children and families through adoption services, foster care, residential care, and special education. Their site notes that "baby fold" is a biblical reference to Jesus as the Good Shepherd (so perhaps there was a kissing cousin relationship to little sheep). It could be that the term our ancestors used came from that organization. The Runnymede United Church in Toronto also has a special room for newborns through two-year olds that they call the Babyfold room.

Still I can't end without returning to Mary's insight about sheep. In Orange, CA, there is an organization that began in 1979 for homeless, abused, and forsaken women with children. You guessed it; the official name is "The Sheepfold."



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### Ministerial Interns at May Memorial

97. (4-9-12)



Kelly Kilmer Hall

Most readers of this column have interacted with Kelly Kilmer Hall, ministerial intern, who is completing her second year with us. We have been enriched by Kelly's presence in so many ways and I believe that MMUUS has had a memorable impact on her growth as a minister. We will truly miss Kelly. Remember to give her your good wishes before she moves on to other pursuits and follows in the footsteps of the many other intern ministers mentioned below.

MMUUS has interacted with many student ministers in the past. I'm only aware of those I had contact with in some way, so if anyone knows of others, let me know. The first one I met was Rev. Laine Hawxhurst, an intern minister associated with us and a chaplain at Syracuse University in 1978-79. I met her when she returned in the early 80s as a guest minister. Laine is now retired from the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley in Bethlehem, PA. The next person was Ben Tousley, an intern minister associated with us and a chaplain at Syracuse University in 1979-80. Ben brought concerts and musical services to over 100 UU churches during the past three decades. He has produced six albums. In addition to his musical work, Ben has served as a chaplain to college students and the elderly, as a hospice bereavement coordinator, and as a homeless shelter volunteer coordinator. He teaches part-time at Springfield College in Boston and works part-time as a chaplain for Hospice of the North Shore in Danvers (MA). Rev. Geoff Drutchas was an intern minister associated with us and a chaplain at Syracuse University in 1980-81. He now is Senior Pastor at the St. Paul United Church of Christ in Taylor, Michigan. Dr. Rev. Mark Allstrom was a Syracuse University Chaplain intern and affiliated with us in 1983-84. He is now retired but had several positions including seven years as minister of the Unitarian Church of South Australia and as interim minister in the UU church in Ithaca.

In the early 80s we also were blessed as student ministers Irene Baros-Johnson and John Baros-Johnson became active church members, with John also serving as a Syracuse University campus chaplain. Irene was co-author of [\*May No One Be A Stranger\*](#) and John preached for us several times. Now the Rev. Dr., John served as minister of the UU Church of Halifax (Nova Scotia) for ten years.

Rev. Alida DeCoster was a ministerial intern with us during the 1984-85 year. She now is Minister to the UUA Internship Program. Rev. Beth Banks was a chaplain at Syracuse University in 1987-88 and affiliated with First Unitarian

Universalist, although she preached for us a couple of times. She is now Senior Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis (CA).

Finally, Rev. Raja (Thurairaja Mylvaganam) served as Intern Minister for us and an Intern Campus Minister at Syracuse University in 1988-90. Raja was born in Malaysia in 1949. After completing programs conducted by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, he worked as a Campus Minister and Chaplain in Austin, Texas. He now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark, with his spouse Geneviève Trintignac, and continues his research into the Unitarian mission in the wake of the enlightenment.



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### James Street Church Stained Glass Windows

98. (5-15-12)

I've been fascinated with the stained glass windows that adorned the James St. church since I discovered photos of them in the archives several years ago. It is not known when or by whom these photos were taken, but they offer a glimpse of the beauty our ancestors experienced each time they entered the sanctuary. Because the church faced south and there were buildings on each side, there was not really much direct sun, but Bob and Mary Burdick remember the windows as a colorful part of the subdued space making up the sanctuary. Malcolm Clark remembers not much sunlight ever coming in at sermon time on Sundays. To see these photos and their story, go here: <http://history.mmuus.org/windows.html>. Most of the windows had a Christian theme characteristic of the time they were installed.

In 1927 church members commissioned Mr. Henry Keck, owner of a stained glass studio in Syracuse, to estimate each window's value. Henry, who trained under Louis Tiffany, designed stained glass windows for use in the U.S. and Europe. Henry was brother of Charles Keck, a sculptor who had worked with famed sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. I include Henry's estimated values below as well as what those values would be in today's dollars.

Entering the church (via the James Street entrance) and walking through the vestibule, you would see first on the right hand side, a white robed angel standing near the edge of a stone terrace. It was installed in 1903 in honor of Dr. Lyman Clary, a longtime member of our church. The window's value in 1927 was estimated at \$1500 and today that would be approximately \$20,000. Opposite this





on the left hand side was a white robed Jesus seated on a stone under a tree talking to people. This was in honor of Amelia Bradbury, a well-known Syracuse teacher and longtime member of our church. In 1927 it was valued at \$500 or almost \$6600 today.

The next set of windows walking toward the alter included on the right the painted scene of a man and woman on a boat as it crosses some water. It honored church members Captain Hiram Putnam and his daughter via the Dudley Phelps family. It also was valued in 1927 at \$500. Across from it was another \$500 window honoring church member Dr. Nelson Powers.

The third set of windows included one on the right side that honored Sam May. It was a simple window with a motif of multicolored glass pieces. The large marble tablet adorning our outside west wall was located under this window. Henry Keck valued it at \$200 which would be roughly \$2700 today. The window across from it honored our first minister, Rev. John Storer. The center was a motif of an angel seated against a billowy cloud surrounded by red, green, and blue stained glass colorings. In 1927 it was valued at \$1500 or today about \$20,000.

The fourth set included a window on the right side honoring church members David Cogswell, his wife, Mary, their daughter, Cordelia, and Cordelia's husband George Dana. It was valued at \$500 in 1927 dollars. Across from it was a beautiful window with a tall blue cross in the center surrounded by wreaths of multicolored leaves. It was in memory of Elisha and Lydia Wallace, long term church members. Henry valued it at \$800; today it would be about \$10,600.

The final set of windows includes the crown jewel on the right, Tiffany Palms, designed by Louis Tiffany. Installed in 1903 to honor active church member and a close friend of Rev. Sam Calthrop, Edward Barker Judson. It now hangs in the Everson (for more information on it go to this site: <http://history.mmuus.org/NewJerusalem.htm>). It was valued in 1927 at \$4000 or nearly \$53,000 today. Across from it was another beautiful window honoring long time members James Tracy and his wife Sarah Osgood Tracy. It is of a white-robed angel sitting on an outcropping stone in a woodland nook. Henry estimated its value at \$1500. What a wonderful sight these windows were and I would love to have seen them.



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**A Treasure Found**

99. (6-15-12)



Regular readers of this column know how much I love it when an article topic just appears and the result almost writes itself. In May, Janet Hiemstra, Don MacKay, and Mardi Ninno engaged in a process of cleaning out the loft just off the Social Hall. They did a terrific job and more open space can be seen there now than in many past years. Give each of them a big thanks for their hard work. One of the things that happened was the discovery of many items for the historical archives that are now residing in Room 8.

One such find was a rolled up and yellowed piece of butcher block paper that when stretched out is almost 20 feet long. Although unsigned, I theorize that it is something that Jean Hoefler and Irene Baros Johnson created in 1986 or 87 to help them when they conceptualized and eventually wrote their wonderful 65 page book on the history of our church, *May No One Be A Stranger*. Published in 1988, the book provides great insight into the creation and ongoing work of May Memorial. That book and Jean and Irene's work has been mentioned many times before in this newsletter, but I finally was able to step inside their work and thought processes.

Using a timeline across the top that stretched from 1830 to 1930 and written on by at least two people, whoever worked on this effort carefully sketched out the important events and people in the life of our church, most of which were mentioned in some way in the book. It is thrilling to read this horizontal map of our church's existence and imagine the love and work that went into its creation. Sometime within the next few months, I will exhibit this document in the Social Hall after a church service.

Here are a few of the nuggets they included, many of which demonstrated some real insight into our existence and importance within the Syracuse community. Admire the efforts that went into creating this timeline.

- 1839 – Rev. Storer takes on missionary duties in neighboring towns; establishes ties to the Young Men's Literary Society.
- 1840 – Almost nightly, orthodox Christian ministers denounce Unitarian "Devils" (that was us).
- 1844 – Sam May accepts a unanimous calling to our church. During his candidacy he made sure we understood his commitment to peace, temperance, and especially abolition.
- 1846 – May and other prominent members publicly oppose the Mexican war. Subsequent peace meetings held in a public hall were broken up by "Warites."
- 1861 – Unitarians help victims of the Civil War as many young men enlisted in the Union Army.

- 1875 – An “envelope” system of voluntary pledging is put in place (Note: it did not work out very well).
- 1898 – Marie H. Jenney, the first female Unitarian minister from Syracuse, was ordained in our church.
- 1901 – Rev. Calthrop presented a new registry book to the congregation (it is the one still used today in which new members sign their name – click here to see the first 100 years worth of those names: <http://www-distance.syr.edu/members1st100yrs.html>).
- 1917 – May Memorial opened an Army Club in the church basement for WWI soldiers stationed at the State Fairgrounds (where they could take showers, play games, obtain refreshments, and relax).



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### Historical Treasures

100. (7-15-12)



This column contains historical nuggets from two items I recently come across in our basement archives. The first is from a 1907 church directory. During that year 435 people were listed, primarily from the Syracuse area, but nearly 20 were listed as out of the area. Think of 115 years ago when transportation was such that membership may have depended on both proximity and available transportation. Rev. Calthrop was our minister, Mr. James Barnes was church president, and there were eight trustees, and a combination clerk and treasurer. We had six church committees then, Finance, Repairs, Sexton, Sittings (does anyone know what the duties of that committee would be?), Hospitality, and Music. Our church sexton (responsible for church housekeeping and maintenance) was Mr. Harold King. There also was a very active women’s organization with many officers and members making up its executive board and eight active committees were noted.

I was especially interested in the listed Choir (I wonder if they were all paid?):

Mrs. F. L. Walrath, Organist  
Mrs. Charles W. Barnes, Soprano  
Mrs. G. Griffin Lewis, Alto  
Mr. Birney Petigrue, Tenor  
Mr. Philip Hensel, Bass

There were nearly 100 youth listed in the religious education roster, with 16 people shown as teachers, committee members, and administrators. Mr. Sidney B. Johnson was listed as Superintendent.

In addition, as I have mentioned before currently I am scanning several boxes of Nick Cardell's sermons (I'll be happy to send some of them electronically to anyone interested – send me an email – <mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com>). In a May 25, 1975, sermon honoring Memorial Day entitled “Reluctant Conscience of New England,” I was especially taken with his hand written meditation that fits even today. I will close with it:

This is a day of memory; the season of apple blossoms and lilacs and long thoughts of days that have flown. Memories of old wars, the marching feet of youth, banners in the sun and light of a dream shining in their eyes as old as time, of peace and friendship upon the earth.

Open wide the gate of memory! Bring back our own beloved dead: The eager youth who went out to war and never returned; the prophets, poets – until in a new springtime of the spirit, when the scent of apple blossoms is upon the air, at last shall raise the sunlit towers of peace.

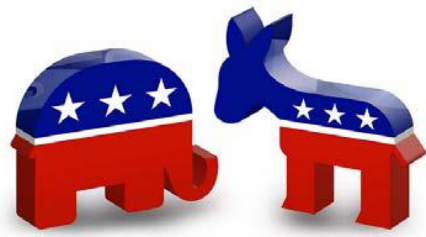
Let us dedicate our hearts and minds, hands and spirits anew to the never dying dream of peace.



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### Presidential Elections

101. (8-15-12)



[Note: Save October 28! After our service the History Committee will have a display in the Social Hall. It will include that chronology Jean Hoefer, Irene Baros Johnson, and others created in writing *May No One Be A Stranger*. We also will show several other artifacts, such as the two bibles owned by Sam May and a recently acquired surprise artifact that was owned by Sam and then his daughter, Charlotte. All three are at least 150 years old.]

I know my personal biases and predilections sometimes show up in these articles. I also am not a highly political person, but a few of my political biases will be apparent this time. I have been digitizing hundreds of Nick Cardell's sermons in

the past several months and some of them are really appealing, one of which informs this article. I'm writing this article just after Governor Romney selected Representative Ryan as his running mate, so many things will have happened by when you read it. However, it appears to me Governor Romney has made clearer the current partisan divide in the country and places much at stake in the upcoming presidential election.

Nearly 50 years ago on November 8, 1964, Rev. Cardell delivered a sermon, *Why Mr. Goldwater Was Defeated*, at the First UU Society of Albany where he was then the parish minister. It was just after the election in which President Johnson was reelected overwhelmingly. Reading it I found several similarities to our upcoming election. Thus, I quote words that struck me as important and **perhaps** as a harbinger of what I'd like to happen on November 6. If you would like to read the whole sermon, let me know ([rogerhiemstra@gmail.com](mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com)). The following, in italics, are direct quotes from the sermon. Any of my clarifying, explanatory, or editorial words will be in brackets and not in italics.

*The single, most formidable opponent of Senator Goldwater was Mr. Goldwater himself. Moderate Republicans are, I believe, correct if they argue that the conservative philosophy was not repudiated, but only Mr. Goldwater's unique brand of conservatism.... A thorough and intelligent debate of any one of these [campaign issues discussed] could have been educational and enlightening for us all; it could have made at this campaign a mature political confrontation instead of the senseless, smearing, spectacle that it was.... Barry Goldwater's generalities and details, when provided, were often so extreme that even that staunch conservative, the late Senator Robert Taft, looked rather moderate by comparison....*

*Concerning Social Welfare Taft wrote "I believe the Federal Government should aid education in those states in which the income per capita is less than the national average; that is should aid States to give free medical care to all those who are unable to pay for it; should assist local communities in eliminating slums and providing decent housing." Goldwater [however] said that "the government must begin to withdraw from a whole series of programs that are outside its constitutional mandate – from social welfare programs, education, public power, agriculture, public housing, [and] urban renewal [shades of Representative Ryan's ideas]. Some have argued that Goldwater is a reactionary, not a conservative. It is perhaps charitable to say simply that Mr. Goldwater has proven there are many degrees of conservatism....*

*Obviously, Mr. Goldwater was defeated for many reasons. He managed to alienate almost every interest group in the nation.... There has been considerable criticism of the treatment afforded Goldwater by the press and other news media.... While the legitimate press was strongly anti-Goldwater, this was*

*somewhat balanced by the fact that the overwhelming amount of smear literature of this campaign was largely anti-Johnson.... His campaign was largely one of negative generalities which left the listener and the commentators the task of filling in the details and implications.... Mr. Goldwater was not defeated because he received the backing and support of extremist groups; he was beaten, in part, because he has taken extreme positions....*

*Mr. Goldwater based his campaign on moral issues. Ironically, I believe it was basically a moral issue that defeated him.... He has been defeated because of his moral indifference, or at best neutrality, toward persons who have not been born to, or achieved success. His denial of national responsibility for the injustices of society can only result from the view that might makes right, that only success is worthy of respect and concern....*

*We must, invariably, ask ourselves why people supported Goldwater – there were, after all, some 26 million of them.... My consolation, when I consider that very sizable vote he received, is that either they were mistaken, or I was. If my reading of Mr. Goldwater is correct, then I can only hope that the conservatives of our country will, next time, find an advocate more worthy to represent them.*



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### **Our famous pioneering women in the ministry**

102. (9-15-12)

Readers of this column may remember that Marie Jenney and Elizabeth Padgham have been featured before, and new information is included in this article. A plaque dedicated to these remarkable ministerial pioneers will be placed in the Memorial Room in October. A reminder, too, that on October 28th, following the service, there will be a church history display in the Social Hall, including some historical artifacts never before displayed in our church. Marie Jenney, born in 1870, grew up in our church and said she was inspired by Rev. Samuel Calthrop, our third minister, to enter the ministry. As a young woman



**Marie Jenney**



**Elizabeth Padgham**

*(from the April 30, 1927 issue of the Rutherford Republican)*

she helped form the Women's Alliance that existed in the church for more than 80 years. In 1893, she attended the Unitarian Theological Seminary in Meadville and was ordained in our church in 1898. After serving as a minister in two Iowa churches for a few years, she married Frederick Howe, a progressive municipal reformer, in 1904, moved to New York City, and left the ministry. However, she never lost her activist spirit, especially as related to women's suffrage, and became instrumental in promoting what was known as the new feminism. She was the leader of the Heterodoxy Club of Greenwich Village, a group of twenty-five women that came together in 1912. The club met regularly and was a consciousness-raising group before the term was invented. Their purpose was individual psychic freedom. Marie was quoted as saying, "*We intend simply to be ourselves, not just our little female selves, but our whole big human selves.*" Their feminism stood for self-development as contrasted with self-sacrifice or submergence in family. The feminists of Heterodoxy Club were all highly educated women, with either formal education in colleges and graduate school or informal education in labor or socialist movements. They were able to assert individuality in livelihood, personal relationships, habits of dress, and living. Marie also said, "*Feminism means a changed psychology, the creation of new consciousness.*" She was famous for this quote: "*... when I look around me at the men, I feel that God never meant us women to be too particular.*" Marie died in her sleep of a heart attack in 1934.

The second pioneering woman to be ordained at May Memorial was Elizabeth Padgham. Elizabeth, born in 1874, grew up in our church and also said that Rev. Calthrop was her role model. She graduated from Meadville and was ordained at May Memorial in 1901. Delivering the ordination sermon was Rev. Marie Jenney. Elizabeth served as a Unitarian minister for twenty-six years, first in Iowa and then in Rutherford, New Jersey. Poet William Carlos Williams and Elizabeth became friends in Rutherford. Our late friend, **Mary Zimmer**, would have loved Elizabeth because she and William Williams often went bird watching together. Williams in a 1955 interview said he was impressed with her skillful footing on the trails: "*The way she can get through brambles, climb banks, and jump over streams is a caution.*" Elizabeth also was a pioneer among women as president of the Rutherford Equal Suffrage League. Elizabeth was engaged to be married to Lt. Howard O. Thorne, of the U.S. Army Engineers, during her time in Rutherford. Thorne died, however, in Europe during World War I and she never married. After her retirement in 1927, she moved back to Syracuse and once again became active at May Memorial, delivering occasional sermons, serving as a lay delegate, working with RE, and as a trustee for 13 years. She died on December 4, 1952, at the age of 78. Go to this internet site for a short biography on Elizabeth: <http://history.mmuus.org/Padghambiohistory.pdf>.



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## **It Takes Only One Observation**

103. (10-15-12)

Readers of this column know that I have been privileged as of late to be digitally scanning Rev. Nick Cardell's archival materials as part of the History Committee's preservation activities. The information I am discovering has served as fodder for several past articles. This article comes from that process but it is a bit more poignant than the previous articles. I discovered an undated document where Nick provides some insight, based on his time as a prisoner of war during WWII, into what may have been the most crucial experience in his life that set him on the path toward the ministry. He said, "This experience has been a motivating factor in my life (probably the primary one) and, as such, is basic to my faith and my commitment. It has been, and will continue to be crucial to my theological development." What follows are excerpts from this document in Nick's words.

It was February of 1945, and although I had never been in Germany before, I was sure it was the coldest, most desolate winter that country had ever known... Now as we were being marched [by guards] along a deserted road through one of Germany's many wooded areas to a new prison camp, we were silent... Suddenly we became aware of a distant, but powerful droning. Within seconds it had grown to a roar and soon a flight of bombers and their P-47 escorts passed overhead. In a moment our morale had soared as high as the planes. We cheered hysterically... the planes rapidly disappeared from sight and finally were not even heard. Minutes later we were again startled, this time by the sound of exploding bombs. We filled the gaps between explosions with comments such as "give 'em hell boys," "that'll show 'em." All this quickly ended, too, but our spirits continued at high altitude for the next two or three hours.

It was in this frame of mind that we arrived at a small city notable only for its large railroad terminal and yards. It was here in this little city that the bombs had been exploding two or three hours earlier. Most of the destruction centered around the rail yards, but it seemed as though the entire town was rubble. News



The bombed-out city of  
Nuremberg, Germany (1945).



that American prisoners were being marched through town must have spread. As we approached the center of town we noticed that a crowd had gathered...

The mob consisted almost entirely of elderly men, women, and children. Many of the men gripped clubs, pitchforks, and an odd assortment of stones and bricks... we began to hear them growling angrily.

I don't know how we escaped untouched... A few minutes later when we passed out of their sight our relief expressed itself in self-righteous reactions: "What the devil was the matter with them? We didn't bomb their ... hick town. Who ... do they think started this war, anyway." As we muttered and cursed our way along we arrived at a place where a bomb had exploded a building outward into the street. As our column picked its way over and through the rubble I noticed that the front of the column had split its two lines to go right and left around some object on the ground at which each man paused to stare. The column moved spasmodically until, I, too, could see amid the debris a tiny arm and a patch of long blond hair. We walked on and we were silent once more.



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### **Honoring Jack Wilkinson**

104. (11-15-12)



Some readers of this column will have known Jack, many much better than me. Rev. John "Jack" Wilkinson, the III, was a long time member of MMUUS, but moved to West Virginia to be with family several years ago. His heritage links to our church go back to 1839 when his great, great grandfather, John Wilkinson, joined our church only one year after it was officially formed as the Unitarian Congregational Society of Syracuse. The first John Wilkinson and his family would have attended in our first building, a wooden chapel, that was at 317 East Genesee near downtown. That John was a successful business man and responsible for giving Syracuse its name as well as helping to win our city's charter in 1848. John's son, Alfred, married Charlotte May, Sam May's daughter.

Jack was a big guy both in stature and personality. I believe he carried the heritage of his name and relationship to both the original John Wilkinson and to Sam May with pride but, I think, at times with a feeling that was fashioned on "how can I ever live up to that name." Jack had a booming voice and always sat in

the front pew. Our minister of many years, Nick Cardell, usually had a talk-back time after his sermons. Jack would almost always be the first one up with his version of things and in that loud booming voice. It was almost too much at times, but parishioners were used to it. Jack also believed himself to be a singer and he would boom out his voice on any hymn such that you could hear him almost no matter where you sat. Frankly, I remember that he was often slightly off key and held out the final notes longer than most others. However, that was just Jack and people understood it.

He was in the Army Airborne after college and did a tour in Korea under General William Westmoreland after which he studied drama in a graduate program at SU. He really loved to act and was involved with that craft in many ways in Syracuse as well as in our church. We had a group that performed within church occasionally and Jack was always a part of it. In many ways, his voice and personality were perfect for that craft. Jack said in Dick Case's *Remembering Syracuse* that he was bitten by the theater bug while in college. He also was very involved in the Syracuse Storytellers. He also loved to play the part of Robert Frost or Rudyard Kipling in his one-man shows.

Jack began studying for the UU ministry when he was 34. After being ordained he had congregations in Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Little Falls, NY. After he moved back to Syracuse he occasionally did a sermon as a guest minister in our church as well as other churches in the area. They were always interesting, but, in my view, a bit long. One of Jack's passions was advocating for the legalization of some currently illegal drugs with speeches, letters to the editor, and even posters that showed up in our Social Hall on occasion. Some found this irritating, some humorous, but I know he had his followers, too.

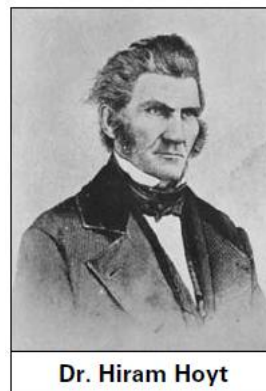
Jack's brother and sister survive him, as well as three children, one named John, and two grandchildren, including John the Fifth.



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### **Our Illustrious Ancestors**

105. (12-15-12)



Dr. Hiram Hoyt

Our church membership is made up individuals from various walks of life. That is what makes attending MMUUS so interesting and invigorating. This has

been true since our very beginning. This month I describe the backgrounds of several early church ancestors. I must note, though, that all the people noted below are males as they made up most of our early written history. Female leaders did not really surface in what was recorded until several decades after our church began.

- Dr. Hiram Hoyt was one of the first church members in October, 1838. He was a surgeon who developed a technique for amputation that was used in the Civil War. It was in his office on South Warren Street that a secret meeting was held to make arrangements for the famous Jerry Rescue. He was also a founder of City Hospital in Syracuse, created in 1874 in reaction to a smallpox epidemic.
- Another early church founder was Elisha Wallace who moved to Syracuse in 1825 to practice law. He soon became involved in business as a salt manufacturer. He gained stature at the local and even national level and served as the U.S Consul in Cuba from 1861-62. He was a member of a committee for the protection of children which led to the establishment of the Syracuse Orphan's Home. He was honored by a stained glass window in the James Street church (<http://history.mmuus.org/wallace.html>).
- Elihu Walter was also a founding member of the church. He was an incorporator of the Syracuse Stone Railroad Company, constructed to connect Syracuse to the quarries in the hamlet of Split Rock southwest of our city, now in between Fairmount and OCC. He was a master gardener, too, and often won awards at the State Fair for his vegetables.
- Another early member was Captain Hiram Putnam, a former sea captain who was a pioneer in creating U.S.-China trade. He was involved in the building of our first church in 1839 on E. Genesee Street downtown. In 1848 the Syracuse Board of Education was created and Captain Putnam was elected as its first president. He, too, was honored by a stained glass window in our former church (<http://history.mmuus.org/putnam.html>).
- William Malcolm was also a founding member. He was one of the first names in American rifle scopes and opened for business in Syracuse. The Malcolm scopes were considered the best of the American-made scopes. In addition to scopes, Malcolm invented the celebrated Elevating Screw Movement and the Screw Wind Gauge Movement for telescopes.
- Another founding ancestors was Parley Bassett. He was Treasurer of Syracuse in 1873 and 1874 and also the city Coroner. He was listed as collector of tolls for Syracuse on the Erie Canal in the 1843 New York State register. Parley opened the very first general store in Syracuse. He was involved in purchasing the lot for our very first church.

- David Cogswell was also one of our founders. David, a master mason and builder, was known to be industrious, energetic, honest, and honorable. He built one of the most beautiful and substantial homes of that era, located on the southwest corner of James and Lodi Streets. Another stained glass window in the James Street church was in his honor (<http://history.mmuus.org/cogswell.html>).

An amazing mixture of backgrounds and professions. It had to have been exciting and stimulating to be a member of our church even at its beginning.

**2013**



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### **Are You a “None?”**

106. (1-8-13)

I read an interesting article in the January 3 *Post Standard* in which Esther Cepeda described a Pew Center report on religion (Pew Research Center, 2012, October 9, “None” on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, <http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx#ranks>) noting that those of us who prefer to keep our beliefs to ourselves can be called a “none.” Whether or not you are in this category, it is interesting to consider what some of our former ministers said about Unitarianism and beliefs [remember the time era when you read the constant use of the male pronoun.] Their thoughts may help you think more about your own beliefs. Rev. May said “because we have no formula of faith; no system of doctrines; no list of articles prescribed by pope, bishops, General Assembly, or other human authority, which everyone must profess to believe before he can be admitted to membership in our church, – there are those who allege that we Unitarians have no faith; that we believe nothing, or that each one believes what he pleases. ... We believe and insist, that each and every rational and moral being ... is under the highest obligation to form his or her own opinions about religion.” (Sam May, Circa 1867, *What Do Unitarians Believe?*, [http://history.mmuus.org/samma\\_ybelieve.html](http://history.mmuus.org/samma_ybelieve.html).)

Rev. Calthrop noted that religion and faith are tied to two mighty principles: “(a) Faith in the verdict of man's conscience; faith that that verdict, rightly interpreted, will reveal the moral law of the universe; and (b) faith in the verdict or man’s heart; faith that that verdict, rightly interpreted, will reveal the infinite center of love.” (Sam Calthrop, 1901, *The Preacher of the Twentieth Century*, <http://history.mmuus.org/calthrop3-3-01.html>.) Rev. Applebee believed “that Unitarianism is the attitude of the mind towards truth. It seeks the truth wherever it may be found. It is open to every discovery of science, and to every word of prophet or of poet. It is not interested in proclaiming a dogma; it is interested in discovering the truth.” (John Applebee, 1914, *Unitarianism: What It Is Not, and What It Is*, <http://history.mmuus.org/applebeesermon1914.html>.)

Rev. Argow said this: “The Unitarian Church is not founded upon uniformity of belief, but upon a unity of purpose and endeavor. Therefore, when a person asks, what am I to believe, we reply, believe whatever to you seems reasonable, right, just, good, true, honorable, beautiful, noble, sublime! Each of us is different; we have a different inheritance, a different background, a different mental equipment; therefore we are bound to differ in our beliefs and in our interpretations.” (W. W. W. Argow, 1934, *When Is a Person a Unitarian?* <http://history.mmuus.org/argowsermon-1934.html>.) Rev. Zoerheide believed that Unitarians have a deep trust in goodness: “We have been termed optimists because of our confidence in human nature, its goodness rather than sinfulness, and because of our hope for the future... that confidence in the innate goodness of human nature will prove to be the best instrument for the establishment of that goodness.” (Robert Zoerheide, circa 1956, *New Dimensions of Unitarianism*, <http://history.mmuus.org/zoerheidensermon1956.html>.)

Rev. Fuller noted this: “I am a Unitarian, because this faith invites me to the adventure of intellectual freedom in religion. I am encouraged by this faith to come to my own theology and philosophy of life, not to the church's. Whatever I come up with theologically is right, if it is right for me ... whether I believe in a personal God or in none whatsoever – whether I am theistic, agnostic, or atheist – it is not wrong or heretical or un-Unitarian or irreligious. I am my own authority in matters theological.” (John C. Fuller, 1965, *Why I Am a Unitarian*, <http://history.mmuus.org/fullersermon5-2-65.html>.)

Finally, Rev. Cardell believed this: “As Unitarian Universalists we have no fixed certainties in doctrines or creeds. Nevertheless, we do share in affirming as a value to be served ‘the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.’ That affirmation expresses our desire to perceive what might and often is seen as mundane, profane, as sacred. And to yearn for sacredness in life is to live with great faith. Such faith, alone, can make our daily lives meaningful and well worth

the living.” (Nick Cardell, Jr., March 1, 1981, *Creating One’s Own Reality*. Retrieved from a scanned document.)



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### **May Memorial, the Sanctuary Movement and La Estancia**

107. (2-15-13)



The year 1981 marked the beginning of the society's interest in refugees from El Salvador. It began with a joint meeting of the Syracuse UU churches sponsored by the UU Service Committee, which sent a representative to speak about events in Central America.

A Sunday morning forum in March of 1981 on the causes of the refugee problem started the long involvement of a group of members that eventually resulted in May Memorial's commitment to the Sanctuary Movement.

Civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala displaced hundreds of thousands of families who fled to neighboring countries. An estimated 200,000 of these people made their way to the United States, most as illegal immigrants who were deported to their homeland if caught by immigration authorities.

People in the Sanctuary movement point out the historical parallel with the Underground Railroad during slavery times, and Unitarians in Syracuse make the obvious connection with Samuel May and his antislavery activism. A Sanctuary committee formed at May Memorial in the summer of 1983 after hearing a representative of the movement speak at a summer service.

Ann Tiffany and Agnes Lane, with the help of the Cardells and several others, and with the approval of the board of trustees, organized an educational program. It included informational forums, group discussions, speakers, films and debates, all of which led to the congregation in December of 1983 to vote an offer of temporary sanctuary to a refugee as a test of the congregation's interest in the movement. Most of the congregation agreed that Central Americans should have refugee status as victims of political persecution.

However, a strong minority opposed having the congregation, as a whole, take a stand on a political issue—an act that, so far as anyone knows, would be only the second such instance in its history. The minority's concerns were not

theoretical ones. The Immigration and Naturalization Service was threatening prosecution of people in the Sanctuary movement. (In early 1986, the INS did successfully prosecute several members of Sanctuary in the Southwest, although the convictions were appealed.) Some members at May Memorial felt very strongly that they could not belong to a society taking part in a “conspiracy” to shelter illegal aliens.

The vote in December 1983 was a real test of the congregation's sense of community. Could a small group of activists, supported by a large majority of sympathizers, get the society to commit itself to controversial action without alienating the minority who disagreed? The answer was both “yes” and “no.” The Sanctuary resolution passed by an 80.5% majority with 145 for, 29 against, 7 abstaining.

In October of 1984, a young couple who were refugees from El Salvador lived for two weeks at May Memorial, sharing their experiences of war and political persecution as well as their “overground railroad” travels representing the Sanctuary movement. In the spring of 1985 the congregation voted to join with other Sanctuary congregations in a lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City. The suit requests legal refugee status for Central Americans who have fled persecution. It also seeks legal justification for religious organizations aiding them.

In the meantime other groups in Syracuse had become interested in the Sanctuary movement and, encouraged by May Memorial, had begun their own educational programs. In May of 1986, the congregation once again took up the issue and this time voted 145 to 18, an 89% majority, to form a Covenant Sanctuary with other congregations and groups in Syracuse to offer long-term sanctuary to a Guatemalan or Salvadoran family. The Sanctuary Committee together with the committees from the Plymouth Congregational Church, the Society of Friends, Pax Christi, New Jewish Agenda, and individuals from other local congregations organized the Covenant Sanctuary Committee of Syracuse. Together they prepared for the shelter and support of a refugee family. A budget was planned and pledges were solicited to cover a family's living expenses, and in May of 1987, a family of three adults and three children from El Salvador moved into an apartment prepared by the committee. (Excerpted from [\*May No One Be A Stranger\*](#), 1988)

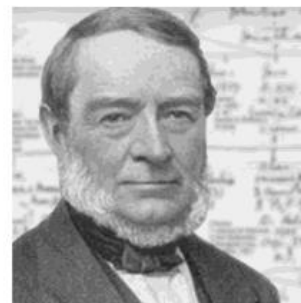
The parents were known to us as Juana and Carlos; we now know them by their real names Gloria and Roberto Zamora. They along with Gloria's mother and their three children now live in Edmonton Alberta. They spent 22 months in Syracuse and many of us became their close friends. It is through this continued contact that a sister community project was initiated in the 1990s that continues today. Syracuse is twined with a small community in North-eastern El Salvador

known as “La Estancia.” Several people from May Memorial have visited this community, and you can read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter.

Douglas Igelsrud, Guest Contributor



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### **Widespread Interest in May Memorial's History**

108. (3-14-13)

Over the years since late 2005 that I have served as Chair of the History Committee and creator of web page material on our church, I have been pleased with the interest in our history by people far and wide beyond just our members. I receive several inquiries about our church history each year, as does **Brian Betz**, as well as **Rev. Jean** and **Rev. Jennifer**. Following is a sampling of such inquiries during the past six years.

- An author and college professor is doing work on Lucy Stone, an early leader in the women's rights movement and her husband Henry Blackwell, an early reformer. She sought supportive information on Rev. Elizabeth Padgham and Rev. Marie Jenny, both of whom grew up in our church and were early UU ministers.
- A graduate student at Syracuse University needed information to help him write about Sam May and his ties to the Underground Railroad for a course project. For a project in another course he utilized much of the information on our web page to nominate Sam for future membership in the National Abolition Hall of Fame.
- A great-great grandson of Sam May, living in New Hampshire, contacted us about his connections to Sam May. He eventually donated to the church two of Sam's bibles, a family genealogy chart, and a silver ladle with Sam's name engraved on it.
- An author in Massachusetts who wrote *Marmee & Louisa: The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother*, had contacted us for information on Sam May, Louisa May's uncle.
- A local contractor who had acquired some stained glass decorative material that was part of the former James Street church entry contacted us for more information about it.



- Another graduate student at Syracuse University was researching the Underground Railroad and contacted us for information about Sam May and how we keep his memory alive.
- An NPR reporter from downstate was doing a story about Prudence Crandall and desired more information. Prudence was a young white woman from Canterbury, Connecticut, who in the early 1830s accepted black students at her boarding school for girls. When this created an uproar among townspeople, nearby minister Sam May (in his first church) assisted her and became one of her ardent supporters.
- Dick Case from the *Post Standard* did an article related to the Tiffany “New Jerusalem” stained glass window, formerly in our James Street church and now displayed in the Everson. He contacted us for more information.
- A historical researcher from California was writing a report for the Women’s Rights National Historical Park and sought our permission to use an image of Sam May on our website.
- A UU minister from West Virginia who conducted a memorial for a former member of MMUUS and a descendent of Sam May, sought information to help him in his comments.
- Another UU minister in Illinois created an archive of the Josephine Gould (one of our earlier DREs) lectures and needed some descriptive information about her.
- A graduate student in Massachusetts studying for the UU ministry sought photos of our past ministers and church buildings for course project.



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## Blazing Trees

109. (4-12-13)

Blazing trees was a technique used by early U.S. colonists to mark their way through a forest. This involved using an axe or knife to periodically chop out a piece of tree bark to expose the lighter colored wood (the cambium) underneath, but not damage it. As the tree “heals” and grows over time, that lighter colored

wood remains exposed. Early Native Americans used blazing by lightly cutting trees with tomahawks when they pursued wounded animals so they had a path back to their start point. Over time in this area the Onondagas, for example, applied vegetable based paints to more permanently mark trails to and from villages. A 2011 book by Dennis Downes, *Native American Trail Marker Trees* (Chicago's Books Press) provides information about this.

A friend of mine (Dave Kellogg) has long been interested in an historic blazed tree, now called the Indian Paint Tree, near the Liverpool High School. On a brisk day in February we journeyed to see the tree. It is a magnificent giant Sugar Maple that is somewhere between 350 to 400 years old. The photo shows a blaze on the north side of the tree with color that actually is modern graffiti, any original colors long faded away (photo courtesy of D. Kellogg, 4/9/13).

How does this tangentially tie into the work of Sam May? From our own historical records and *God's Chore Boy* by W. Freeman Galpin (<http://history.mmuus.org/galpin-may.html>) we know that Sam was very interested in the Onondaga People. Soon after his arrival in Syracuse he helped promote the construction of a schoolhouse and church on the reservation. During much of the rest of his life he devoted considerable attention to the wants and needs of the Onondagas. He visited them frequently and in many ways became an unofficial agent for them in their dealings with the State relative to land rights and privileges. This even involved collecting funds on their behalf. Later in his life he acted almost as a manager of the reservation. For example, we know from the work of Professor Galpin that he made reports to Albany as to the needs of the Onondaga Nation. "An Indian chief" was mentioned among the many who filled the Church of the Messiah during Sam's funeral in 1871 (E. LaPlante, 2012, *Marmee & Louisa: The untold story of Louisa May Alcott and her mother*, New York: Free Press, p. 243).

We find this quote from a book, the 1873 *Memoir of Samuel Joseph May* (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/ABJ1200.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>), by Thomas James Mumford: "The Indians themselves often resorted to him for all sorts of advice and help. Sometimes groups of them would sit stolidly in his study for hour after hour. Whenever he visited the Reservation their faces lighted up with joy and welcome. The whole tribe knew him. A friend who accompanied him the last time he visited these Indians says 'An Indian boy overtook us, and ran nearly half a mile beside the carriage to talk with Mr. May.'"

There is no evidence that Sam ever saw or walked by this tree or even knew of its existence, but it feels wonderful to speculate that he might have seen it. Perhaps someone from the Onondaga Nation understanding its significance, convinced Sam to go on a long walk with him some brisk day in a February or March in the early 1860s to this spot or some other nearby "Indian Paint Tree."

Now, about that tree. “There are trees in this area that sprouted prior to the introduction of Europeans and are still surviving. They are rare now. Even more rare are trees that bare the markings of our indigenous people. The Liverpool tree is one such rare example. It is in original Onondaga land and has large blazes which appear to be aligned with north, south, and west. A east marking may have been overgrown with time. ... It stands in a small ancient grove; ... Most probably the tree was the largest in the grove when it was marked. ... This is not a tree one just sees; one *experiences* it. Although its crown, which towers over surrounding trees, appears quite healthy, the trunk is hollow, and I fear for its survival. I won’t be happy until all Onondagas know of it and have an opportunity to see it for themselves.” (Dave Kellogg, personal Communication, 3/16/13). Dave also noted that the Liverpool “Indian Paint tree” was marked by the Onondaga Nation prior to 1790 when it was mentioned in a military survey. I would add that Dave and or I would be happy to help anyone experience this tree and think about the connections between Sam May and the Onondagas.

[My thanks to Wanda Lyons and Dave Kellogg who each gave me valuable input on this article. Historical footnote: I also dedicate it to Gerry Lanier. I believe he would have loved it!]



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### **Another Pioneer May Memorial Woman**

110. (5-13-13)

Bev Adams pointed me to an interesting article in the March/April issue of the *Central New York Magazine* about Mary Elizabeth Evans that sent me on a great research journey. Mary Elizabeth, who grew up at May Memorial church in the late 1880s, made a huge nation-wide impact in various ways. Born in 1884 as the oldest to church members William Evans (a Syracuse University music professor), and Fanny Riegel Evans (daughter of Judge Henry Riegel—the longest serving county judge in Onondaga County—and Mary Hoster Riegel), she went on to considerable success as a business woman, contributor to WWI success, and philanthropist

William and Fanny's family quickly grew to four children and William found that a professor's salary made it difficult to support them. He decided to enter into the California Klondike gold rush (probably the only May Memorial member to ever do so) but died in 1892 at the beginning of this journey. Fanny then took over a grocery store of one of Judge Riegel's many real estate holdings to help make ends meet. When Judge Riegel died in 1897 his estate consisted almost solely of property. A depressed real estate market at the time meant that all the sudden the family approached poverty levels. Mary Elizabeth at age 13 talked with Mary Anna Bagg Merrill, her May Memorial religious education teacher, about how as the oldest daughter she could help the family. Mary Anna wisely asked her what she liked to do and Mary Elizabeth's response that her hobby was making candy, lit a lightbulb that led to the start of a lifelong career.



Mary Elizabeth as an older woman  
(Photograph Courtesy of OHA)

Starting modestly with the honor system in paying for her candy in the lobby of the downtown University Building, her popularity and income grew. Mary Elizabeth had an innate sense of what it took to build a business and she traveled by train throughout New York and New England to find customers. The success continued and she opened up a string of Mary Elizabeth Candy Shops and eventually Tea Rooms in various locations. The rest is history as she steadily became wealthy. When WWI broke out, she met with Herbert Hoover, then Head of the United States Food Administration, about the best use of rationed foods and she discovered ways of substituting non-rationed foods in favorite American dishes. This led to a successful recipe book and continued success of her candy shops and tea rooms with re-engineered recipes.

In 1917 she funded and led a successful expedition of the American Red Cross and U.S. Food Administration to the very war front in Paris where she also managed the U. S. Central Diet Kitchen for American servicemen. In 1920 she was married to Henry Dexter Sharpe a wealthy businessman from Providence, RI. They had one son, Hank, Jr. A millionaire several times over, Mary Elizabeth became a philanthropist. She was a major contributor to Memorial Hospital in Syracuse, for example, which eventually became Crouse Hospital. She was an art collector, too, eventually donating many of her items to the Everson.

Mary lived to be more than 100, dying in 1985. Her son, Hank, still lives and recently donated her copyrighted secret candy recipes to the Onondaga Historical Association which then contracted with *Lune Chocolat* of Manlius to manufacture a line of Mary Elizabeth's original candies. A portion of the proceeds from those sales benefit the OHA. One of Mary's uncles, Charley, was a successful actor in NYC after starting his acting career in Syracuse. Her sister, Mary, was also a

successful actress in NYC. Isn't amazing what a start in a May Memorial RE program can lead to. (☺)



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GEORGE BARNES, 1852

### **Distinguished May Memorial Couple**

111. (6-13-13)

In last month's newsletter, the history column was about May Memorial member, Mary Elizabeth Evans, who became quite famous and very successful as a business woman. This month, two past members who also achieved much success and made many contributions to Syracuse are highlighted. Those who read the *Post Standard* may have seen in the June 2 paper a very interesting article about George and Rebecca Barnes and the mansion they built in 1853 on then a hill at 930 James Street, the first mansion to be built on that street. It was known as an Italianate villa and the photo shows its current beauty.

George was born in England in 1827 and came to Syracuse in 1844 to study law in the firm of John Wilkinson (John has been featured several times in past articles; he was an ardent May Memorial member as well as related by marriage to Sam May) and James Bagg (also a May Memorial member). John and George became good friends and George quickly become involved in the law and with railroads because of John's connections with both areas. George also became friends with Charles Sedgwick (another May Memorial member) and in 1851 joined the law firm of Sedgwick and Andrews. John Wilkinson's orphaned niece, Rebecca Heermans (another May Memorial member), lived with the Wilkinsons, eventually met George, and in 1849 married him.

This trio of families (Barnes, Sedgwicks, and Wilkinsons), along with Sam May and others, formed a core group of Underground Railroad supporters in the greater Syracuse area. Sam May's home was reputed to even have been on the Underground Railroad. George signed the call for a mass convention held in the Syracuse City Hall on October 14, 1851, to counter the hated Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850. This law dictated that all runaway slaves, if captured anywhere in the country, must be returned to their owner. George also served as legal counsel for and put up bail money needed by people involved in the famous Jerry Rescue (also highlighted in past history columns) including Sam May. Jerry was captured

because of the Fugitive Slave Law and placed in the Syracuse jail until he was broken out of it and spirited away to Canada. George continued his anti-slavery work for many years and was director of Syracuse's Anti-Slavery Society. In 1855 he became editor of the *Syracuse Evening Chronicle*, which supported the newly formed Republican Party (much different than today's Republican Party). In addition, George was founder and first president of the Syracuse State Bank and the Trust and Deposit Company of Onondaga (mergers with other banks over the years has now led to the Key Corp organization).

Rebecca was an active member of May Memorial and helped create a rose garden and other garden areas at the James Street home known for their considerable beauty and originality. Her daughter, Mary Elizabeth, married Frank Hiscock, who eventually became Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. Both were active members of May Memorial throughout their lives. Mary Elizabeth inherited the mansion upon George and Rebecca's deaths (1892 and 1894, respectively) and maintained and improved on the gardens surrounding the house, especially the rose garden. These gardens became showcases enjoyed by numerous people in Syracuse for many years. The Barnes Hiscock Mansion is open for occasional tours and special events (see <http://www.grbarnes.org/>).

So many people very important to the history of Syracuse and beyond have been May memorial members. We all can be very proud of our ancestors.



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### **Sam May's Path to Syracuse**

112. (7-13-13)

What is the path that drew Sam to Syracuse and the need to settle into one location for the remainder of his professional career? One can never know for sure, but a chronology of his life and career choices provides some clues.

- September 12, 1797, Samuel Joseph May born in Boston, MA. Sam was supposed to have been named James Freeman May, but to honor two earlier brothers named Samuel Joseph who had passed away fairly soon after their birth his parents used the names again.

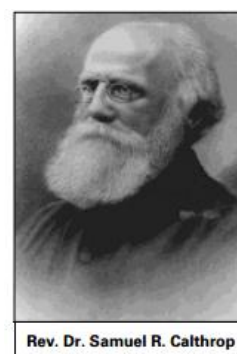
- After a fairly typical childhood in a home filled with books and encouraging parents, Sam moved to Marblehead, MA, in 1884 to live with his uncle, Samuel Sewell (Chief Justice of the state) so he could attend a local academy there.
- In 1886 Sam moved back to Boston to attend private schools.
- In September, 1813, at age 16 Sam entered Harvard College. Sam had a rough freshman year finding himself and even had to pay a fine (of 38 cents) for rowdiness (probably one of the very first and only times Sam “acted” up). Things got better from the sophomore year on and in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year he decided on the ministry.
- Thus in 1817 he entered the Harvard Divinity School and completed it in 1820.
- In the fall of that year he served as schoolmaster for a Nahant, MA, private school. He also occasionally preached as a guest minister there.
- In December, 1820, he served as a guest minister in the Brooklyn, CT, Unitarian church.
- In the spring of 1821 he was asked to become a full time minister at the Brooklyn church but felt he was too young and inexperienced so turned it down.
- In early 1822 he was approached again by the Brooklyn, CT, church, and accepted a temporary position, starting his first full time ministry there in late March, after having been formally ordained in the Chauncey Place Church, Boston, in early March.
- In October, 1823, hoping to keep Sam at the church permanently, leaders offered him a salary of \$600 a year and in November he was formally installed there.
- On June 1, 1825, he married Lucretia and purchased a house in Brooklyn.
- In 1826 he began to get more and more involved with the anti-slavery movement.
- In 1833 Prudence Crandall permitted a black girl to attend her female boarding school in nearby Canterbury, CT, creating an uproar because of racist views. She was threatened and harassed and Sam was drawn into the dispute by his beliefs. Prudence was eventually arrested. She served no jail time through Sam’s help, but left the community.
- By 1834 because of his increasing anti-slavery work and much needed time away from Brooklyn, the parishioners became increasingly disillusioned with his ministry there.
- In early 1835 he accepted a position with the anti-slavery organization for a salary of \$1000. He maintained his home in Brooklyn with his family continuing to live there.

- In 1837 he accepted a position as minister in the South Situate, MA, Unitarian church, and continued his work with the anti-slavery movement.
- In August 1842 Sam accepted a position as Principal of the Normal School at Lexington, MA, at a larger salary (his growing family dictated this decision). He resigned in July, 1844, in some respects because of the School's negative policy on enrolling black students.
- Finally, in December, 1844, after making sure the Unitarian leaders fully understood his intention to continue his work as an abolitionist, he accepted the call from Syracuse and began his ministry there in 1845 remaining in the city the rest of his life.



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## The Second Sam

113. (8-14-13)

Our third minister was Rev. Dr. Samuel Robert Calthrop, a minister here for 43 years (1868-1911 – the second longest pastorate in UU history) and pastor emeritus after that. Rev. Calthrop was truly a renaissance man. For those interested in more information, go to the following sites: (a) An early history of our church: [history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html](http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html); (b) biographical information written by his daughter in 1939 about Sam's boyhood years: <http://history.mmuus.org/SamCalthropBoyhoodStory.html>; (c) a delightful article written by a man who remembers Rev. Calthrop as a very important mentor, person, and colleague, Recollections of the Old Master: Rev. Samuel Robert Calthrop: <http://history.mmuus.org/recollections.html>; and (d) two of his interesting sermons entitled The Preacher of the Twentieth Century <http://history.mmuus.org/calthrop3-3-01.html> and The Aid Given By Science to Religion During the Nineteenth Century <http://history.mmuus.org/calthropsermon1901.html>. A marble bust of Sam stands next to Sam May's bust in the Memorial Room.

Born in England, Sam entered Cambridge at the age of 19 where he excelled. However, he refused to sign 39 Articles of the Anglican church faith required by the university which prevented his graduation and eventually led him



to the United States and Unitarianism. He was an excellent scientist having patented a streamlined train (pictures of this invention are shown in in his daughter's manuscript noted above), discovered numerous sunspots via his ever-popular telescope, and learned to predict the weather (Syracuse newspapers often turned to him for such predictions). He lectured in our church and elsewhere on a wide variety of topics beyond religion such as astronomy, botany, financial management, flowers, geology, physical training needs, and even raising tomatoes. He even won prizes at the State Fair for his vegetables. He knew Sir Thomas Carlyle and Oliver Wendell Holmes and was a friend of Susan B. Anthony. Like his predecessor, Sam May, Rev. Calthrop was very interested in education and youth. A teacher prior to becoming a pastor, he organized the Syracuse Boys' Club, established the first playgrounds in Syracuse, and even taught at Syracuse University.

Dr. Calthrop was a very physically fit individual most of his life. Tall, with a big frame, and a great white beard, he was an expert boxer in his younger days, and skilled at billiards, crew, cricket, hockey, rowing, and tennis. His true passion was chess where he was known as one of the best in the country by winning local and even New York State championships. He beat opponents while playing blindfolded and by playing several at the same time. Able to quote verbatim from Greek and Latin Classics, he was widely published, a gifted poet, and a sought after orator. All of this while maintaining his pastorate here and being well loved and respected by both May Memorial church members and people throughout Syracuse. Renaissance man, indeed. Wow, were we lucky or what with our two Sams.

[Note: This article was adapted from one written in June, 2006.]



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## **Henry Mertens**

114. (9-14-13)

As you may know, we are nearing the year in which we celebrate 50 years in this wonderful building. The current renovation efforts coming from our successful

capital campaign is one way of honoring our church home. One other way of beginning the countdown to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is to say something about Henry Mertens, who was named Chair of the Building Administration Committee in 1961 as the process began that led to the creation of this building. He spearheaded the entire effort working with many committees, our architect Pietro Belluschi (who died at age 94 in 1994), our various local contractors, architects, and builders, and spent countless hours on site. Henry and Ilse moved to White Plains, NY, in 1966, where he lived until his death on June 24, 1998. They were active in the Community Unitarian Church of White Plains.

A few weeks ago we were contacted by their daughter, Evelyn Mertens. She was helping her mother (in her 90s and not well) downsize and Ilse wished to send us some material she had gathered over the years. Ilse had been a tireless worker at May Memorial, involved in the Women's Alliance, an organizer, and often involved with kitchen activities. A box of materials arrived last week and I have been having a wonderful time going through this treasure trove.

When church leaders organized a 20<sup>th</sup> year celebration in our sanctuary on September 30, 1984, Henry returned to participate in and speak at our ceremonies. Here is a synopsis adapted from his words on that day.

*Ladies and gentlemen, I am enormously honored and pleased to have been invited to participate in this ceremony and am moved to find myself again in this sanctuary which is so precious to me. I wish to start out by paying tribute to three extra-ordinary human beings. The first is Bob Zoerheide who was the minister of our James Street church during the 1950s. Bob was one of the most erudite persons I have ever met. I shall share with you a brief passage from one of his sermons: "We must require from religion as much respect for science as we find in the laboratory, as much regard for truth as we find in education, and as least as much democracy as we find in society at large."*

*The second person is the late John Fuller, minister of this church during the 1960s, first at James Street and then here. We all loved him dearly. He was a man in whom the passion for social justice burned like a searing flame. He touched everyone with the warmth of his personality and the force of his intellect. I*



Henry in a committee meeting (he is second from the left).



At the building site in 1963 - of the men standing, Rev. Fuller is on the left, Francis Hares, local architect is in the middle, and Henry is on the right.

will quote briefly from the sermon he delivered at the inauguration ceremony of this church: “We built this house as an expression of our desire for universality in religion, unshackled by images of what is dated, transient, and particular. Every worthwhile truth is welcome in this space.”

The third person is Dean Pietro Belluschi, one of the greatest architects of the 20th Century and the designer of this church. As many of the persons in this room know, he not only combined outstanding talents and a special vision of space and light, but he also was one of the few architects of such stature who was willing to listen to the client and be sensitive to his needs, aspirations, and resources. I do have a brief quote: “No less than religion at its best, architecture at its best is witness and custodian of the spirit of modern man.”

Here are some precious moments associated with this church: (a) April 30, 1961 - after years of failed attempts, the congregation votes to leave the old church on James Street and relocate to the green environs on East Genesee Street. (b) December 2, 1962 – The Building Committees and the architect completed their intensive labors and Dean Belluschi presents the plans and model which the congregation approves. (c) October 4, 1964 – The construction has been finished and a beautiful moving ceremony took place. Today I see many of my old friends again and look forward to being invited to your next ceremony.



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### **More on Our Building**

115. (10-15-13)



I have continued going through the material sent to us several weeks ago by Ilse Mertens and her daughter, Evelyn. It is very exciting information for anyone interested in the history of our church. One delightful tidbit was in a letter from former church President John Chamberlin to Henry Mertens dated February 21, 1994. John was telling Henry about the death of Pietro Beluschi (our church architect) on February 14. I found most interesting a final paragraph in that letter:

*I still marvel at the quiet elegance of our MMUS building (now officially MMUUS by a recent name change to recognize the UU relationship). The only thing I miss is the faint odor of cedar that persisted for several years. It was obvious mostly when one entered from the outside into the quiet air of the lobby or sanctuary, but it seems to have finally dissipated.*

Janet and I began coming to the church in 1980 and I don't remember thinking that there was a cedar odor in the church, but not knowing the history of our building I was not thinking about. Those of you who have been here a much longer time may remember it. The next time you enter the church, imagine a faint cedar aroma in honor of our nearly 50 years.

There also was a clipping from the *Post-Standard* dated October 5, 1964, with a photo of our sanctuary. (There were a couple of newspaper photos, too, showing our church's construction process. To see a great slide show created by Harsey Leonard portraying this construction, go to this web link: <http://history.mmuus.org/Constructing.pdf>.) The article was by reporter Ramona Bowden (a MMUS member) entitled "600 Attend First Service in New Unitarian Structure." Can you imagine this number of May Memorial members and friends crammed into our auditorium that previous Sunday morning. There were no pews yet, so people sat in rented chairs placed everywhere with, according to the photo, some young people sitting side by side on the steps leading to the altar. The choir loft was filled, too, accommodating a large choir accompanied by the huge old Steinway piano (our glorious organ had not yet been installed) that had been on loan for years from the Calthrop family. It must have been quite a task getting that piano up there. I know that a few in our congregation were present for that opening day so I hope they will share their memories. The accompanying photo shows a picture of the sanctuary similar to that newspaper photo, but at a later date after the pews had been installed.

There also were several documents related to past annual reports for 1959, 1960, 1963, 1964, and 1965 that I had not seen before. I have added them to our annual reports file for those who are interested in this sort of thing: <http://history.mmuus.org/annuals.html>. Finally, Ilse and Evelyn included three past sermons I had not seen:

- *Protestantism at the Crossroads*, delivered by Rev. Robert Zoerheide at MMUS on May 17, 1959
- *That Troublesome Wall*, preached by Rev. John Fuller at MMUUS on February 19, 1967.
- *Thank God Gore & Bush are Saved*, delivered by Rev. Scott Tayler at MMUUS on April 9, 2000.

Surprising to me was the one by Scott because of the date. However, through correspondence I discovered that Scott and Ilse had communicated with each other a few times and he sent her this sermon after she expressed interest. There also was a program for John Fuller's 1962 Installation Service. I have included all these documents on the church web page under the respective ministers' sections for those interested: <http://history.mmuus.org/>.



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**Dr. Elizabeth Manwell,**  
Religious Education Director,  
MMUUS, 1935-1949

### **Dr. Elizabeth Manwell's Contributions**

116. (11-15-13)

The previous two articles related to some historical material we received in August from Ilse and Evelyn Mertens. This article ties into other information I found in that treasure trove. There were two documents authored by Dr. Elizabeth Manwell (Hank's Mom) that I had not seen before and they make for wonderful reading. Elizabeth was a Child Psychologist, Professor in Child Development at Syracuse University, and our RE director from 1935-1949. A summary of these two splendid documents follows and each is on our web page. I very much recommend that you read them: *Horizons for the Educated Woman* (<http://history.mmuus.org/HorizonsfortheEducatedWoman.pdf>) and *A Brief Introduction to Unitarianism* (<http://history.mmuus.org/ABriefIntroductiontoUnitarianism.pdf>).

The *Horizons* document was a convocation address delivered in Hendricks Chapel on May 4, 1962, to the graduating Home Economics seniors from Syracuse University. Taking into account the language used in 1962, it is one of the best convocation addresses I have ever heard or read, and it must have kept the attention well of all in the audience. Elizabeth uses eloquent words, wonderful imagery, and a real passion in sending these young women graduates out into the world. She notes early in her presentation, "What will determine the width of your horizons...? How does an educated young woman chart her course as she graduates from college?"

She goes on a little later to say, "How does an educated young woman chart her course as she graduates from college? ...What is the circumference of her

vision? ... this new self faces the wide horizons of the future, can she think with her mind, or mainly with her feelings? ... Can she think with her mind on issues large or small, or, when she cannot, can she discern which of her conclusions are based on accurate facts and which ones, in contrast, she has evolved through deeply hidden feelings ...? the mind can open to the wide horizons only where its conclusions are not limited by the blinders of emotional rigidity. ... [C]hart your true course toward a goal on the farthest horizon of your sight.”

The brief introduction to Unitarianism document was undated and its purpose is not clear. However, it provides wonderful insight into a dedicated Unitarian’s thinking in what I believe was the early 1960s. She begins with this statement that still fits well with what we say today: “Unitarianism is a way of religious living which encourages in each individual the maturing of his [*sic*] deepest spiritual, ethical, emotional, physical and intellectual resources. It is based on an awareness of the worth and inherent goodness or potential soundness of human beings, and is concerned to build a society in which this maturity is nurtured and its worth valued.”

Later she notes the following: “Perhaps it is the acceptance of each individual’s unique understanding of the truth, especially in the realm of the infinite and the spiritual, that has led religious liberals to form creed-less churches. They recognize that words related to theology have many meanings ... and they respect each person’s integrity.” Her child development predilections show forth later in the document with this statement that is very poignant this time of the year: “Unitarians also value the lives and personalities of children. Indeed, one of the reasons they rejoice in Christmas is that to them the story of the Nativity symbolizes the birth and the promise and the beauty of all children ... This desire to protect and nurture and respect children has led the denomination ... to develop a high quality of religious education.” I believe Elizabeth’s voice reaches across the decades to guide us all as we move forward. Thank you Dr. Manwell!

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## Our Christmases Past

117. (12-15-13)

As a person interested in our church history, one of the activities that brings me much joy is pouring over older church documents. What some might find a chore in smelling old sometimes musty paper, I find myself reverently reaching back and touching the minds, spirits, and even essence of our ancestors. I recently discovered some orders of service from 50 or more years ago and would like to share a little of this essence with you.

Having just experienced our own holiday season services, I want to describe a church service conducted on December 20, 1959, in the old James Street church. It began with an organ prelude by Frank Macomber during which he played *La Nativite* by French composer Jean Langlais, and *In Dulci Jubilo* by Johann Michael Bach. After a candle lighting at the alter, Hildegarde Vander Sluis sang the *Appalachian Carol*.

Next came a dedication of children ending with the congregation singing the hymn, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*. This was followed by a story read by Jean Zoerheide (Rev. Bob's wife) entitled World, Book, and Candle. The hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, was sung next. The musical selection from Frank Macomber for the offertory was *Greensleeves*. Next came a sermon by Rev. Zoerheide entitled, *When the World Turns to Christmas*, in which he highlighted the family of today, children of the world, a girl from India, and the shepherds of the Christian story. The final hymn was *Joy to the World*.

For those who may remember that far back, here were some of the people involved in that service; The candle lighters were Robin Gourley, Jana Henrickson, and Douglas Livingston. The Christmas tableau was created by Al and Helen Obrist, Carl Bye, Sylvia Vander Sluis, Jeffrey Johnson, Virginia Tradup, James Chapman, and Donald Northrop. The Postlude singers were members of the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> grades and directed by Miss Joan Kibbe. On display was a globe presented by Mrs. William Eager in memory of her parents, Judge and Mrs. Frank Hiscock, and a menorah on loan from Temple Concord. The order of service cover was designed by Donald Waterman. The following people were thanked for helping to prepare the Christmas service: Mrs. Inglehart Smith, Warren Ransler, Mrs. Kenneth Kindelsperger, Mrs. James Chapman, and Mrs. Allen Stephens.

On the back of the order of service was this reading recommended to be used by each family in their own candle lighting time:

Once, a long ago, a star pointed the way  
 to where a little child brought love and light;  
 And now we think that from each home that's filled  
 with love and faith, this star shines out again.

There are so many little children in this world to  
 love; so many homes to send out shining hope!  
 Go, little candle, Light of Home in many homes,  
 shine out upon the world  
 and turn into its guiding star!

Poignant thoughts to remember each holiday season as we think about those who passed before us in the continuation of this church.



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### Historical Potpourri

118. (1-12-14)



Rev. Elizabeth Padgham



Carol Cohen, Ann Pia, and Roberta Brain (1976)

Every three years I devote a column to a potpourri of historical happenings as I discover and save them while meandering through the archives. This article is the third of these efforts. The first of these happenings centers on an interesting coincidence. In the summer of 1843, church leaders agreed that an abolitionist rally could be held in our first church building, a small wooden building known as the little tabernacle. However, our first minister, Rev. John Storer, often referred to it as our “little chapel” (to view some history on that church and our early church buildings, go to this site: <http://history.mmuus.org/churchtribute.pdf>.) John was none too happy about the rally being held there as were some of the church members. A few days after that rally the coincidence took place. Rev. Sam May preached his first sermon in Syracuse several months before he was a candidate to be our minister. He was on a vacation trip to Niagara Falls with his wife, Lucretia, and financed part of this trip by preaching in Unitarian churches along the way. Hearing of the discontent among some church members about that rally, although already established as an abolitionist himself, he avoided any conflict by preaching on a religious topic while not talking about slavery. I suspect that is why when he was a candidate in late 1844 he made sure everyone in the church knew he was an active abolitionist.



The second item pertains to the picture of Rev. Elizabeth Padgham shown in this column. It was taken when she was pastor of the Unitarian Church of Our Father in Rutherford, New Jersey. I have talked about Elizabeth several times in the history column (<http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf>) and devote space to her in the supplemental history page (<http://history.mmuus.org/>) referring to her as our favorite daughter. After Elizabeth retired from the New Jersey church, she returned to Syracuse and considerable leadership in our church for several years. She was considered to be an honorary minister here, serving on the Board of Trustees, delivering sermons annually for many years, and bequeathing much to us upon her death.

The third item is a delightful photo discovered in one box. As we venture toward improvements in our kitchen as part of the capital campaign, the second photo centers in our kitchen. It is a color snapshot of the kitchen crew on a Sunday in 1976 as they carried out their volunteer duties. The people in the photo are Carol Cohen (L), Ann Pia (center), and Roberta Brain (R). Ask Ann if she remembers that particular day.

Finally, I was surprised to learn that Rev. Cardell actually served four churches as minister. I had known that he served the First Unitarian Church of Plainfield, New Jersey, and then the First Unitarian Church of Albany before coming to May Memorial. However, I discovered a transcript from an interview of Nick by former member and church historian, Jean Hoefler, conducted on December 11, 1986. In one part of the interview, Jean asked Nick how he prepared for the ministry. Nick replied, "I made the decision at the end of my first year in college ... between religion and politics, and finally decided on religion for a variety of reasons. At the time I was a Presbyterian, so I got in touch with the Presbytery in NYC. They have a system called taking people under care of the Presbytery. So I was taken under care ... and then went ahead with my college studies as a philosophy major at Columbia. During my last year at Columbia ... I was over at Union Theological Seminary [Nick studied there the next year] ... getting lined up for a field work assignment .... I wound up with a kind of preaching assignment, a kind of pulpit supply for one Sunday on Long Island .... I was invited back to be a candidate for their pulpit. It was a tiny church, nondenominational. A little desperate for money anyway, I sort of leapt at the chance and they called me as their minister." Nick stayed there for a year before discovering Unitarianism and switching from Union Theological Seminary to Meadville Theological School. The fun part about digging through our archives is that you can always discover something new.



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## The Tyranny Quartet

119. (2-14-14)

*Tyranny*

**Freedom**

**Words**

**Peace**

**Perfection**

I am slowly preserving (scanning) the sermons of our former minister, Rev. Nick Cardell (1974-1995). I have scanned over 500 thus far with many more to go. When reading just the titles there is some duplication, but still much reading is ahead for anyone interested. I only read a few that catch my attention and occasionally report on them in this column. A set of four that I have found intriguing was Nick's tyranny quartet, *Tyranny of Freedom*, *Tyranny of Words*, *Tyranny of Peace*, and *Tyranny of Perfection*. Most were written and delivered early in Nick's ministry but revised and delivered at May Memorial and other churches in this area.

First mention of the tyranny topic that I can find in what has been scanned thus far was a paper entitled, *The Tyranny of Freedom*, delivered at a Long Island Religious Education Teacher-Training Institute in 1961. It reads to me as though Nick was trying out the term because later sermons on that topic are quite a bit different. I believe the first time he may have introduced the concept of a tyranny quartet when as a minister at First Unitarian Society of Albany he delivered a sermon entitled, *The Four Tyrannies*, during the annual Pilgrimage Sunday in the Unitarian Church of Barneveld on June 21, 1964. (The Barneveld church was organized in 1803 and the annual pilgrimage has been in existence for more than 90 years.) I don't have access to very many sermons delivered prior to his time at May Memorial, so he may have talked about the quartet before then. There is evidence of this in the following quote when Nick appears to use "tyranny" as a way of describing how a word or concept holds sway over us or affects what we do. From that 1964 sermon he said, "... the future has an implicit weakness which often expresses itself in what I have called The Four Tyrannies. One of the perils of these four tyrannies is that they are not wholly tyrannical; they are attitudes and assumptions which we also value highly."

So how did Nick think about each of these tyrannies? In a January 28, 1968, sermon entitled, *The Tyranny of Freedom*, Nick talked about the concept a bit differently than in that 1961 paper, perhaps because it was a sermon and not a training institute paper. “[I see] ... a real problem among us. It’s one I have described as the tyranny of freedom. Our most unique characteristic, our most prized asset has become a potential liability. Enslaved by the *idea* of freedom, we cannot act freely or even speak freely in the name of our religious institutions. Awed by our primary principles of religious freedom we are afraid to say anything about the Unitarian Universalist movement except that it is free. In our worthy effort to preserve the principle of freedom we are in danger of giving up its practice.... Establishing and maintaining an active social responsibilities committee for any length of time seems to tax our capacities unreasonably. Why? It doesn’t seem to be from any lack of interest in social issues. We debate them ad nauseam. The root of the cause is freedom. We are afraid of such committees because they may take stands or actions which appear to represent the church. And we even hesitate to set up procedures to guarantee that they only make statements which *do* represent the church because there would always be a minority unrepresented on some issues. It’s a laudable concern; but when it produces complete inactivity, I wonder if it is a concern that has been carried too far.

In a July 24, 1970, sermon entitled, *The Tyranny of Words*, Nick noted that “the ubiquity of words is probably a primary source of their danger. They are so much with us that we often overlook their power in our lives. Words not only serve to convey meaning or express experiences and feelings, but words – even nonsense words – can be used to create feeling, experience, and meaning.... In a general sense, of course, we do place a very high value on words.... Confusion over words – some more serious than others – happens to all of us at all ages.... We are still very superstitious about words.... One of the major misuses of words is what we call rationalization: the verbal means by which we logically justify what may not be justifiable in fact.... We have become so dominated by words and so dependent upon words that words take priority and perhaps one of the illnesses of our society is that we are so involved with the words, with the language of living, with the language of existence, that we get out of touch with our existence. We are so involved with the words of feeling, with the language of meaning, that we’ve lost any direct encounter with our own feeling.

In an undated (but most likely 1970) sermon Nick said that “this is the third in a series of sermons I have called the ‘Four Tyrannies.’ And this one concerns itself with the *Tyranny of Peace*. Peace is one of a very few words having almost no negative associations attached to it, except with regard to international affairs. In the area of international conflict there is a tendency to equate peace with appeasement.... [However,] life itself would never have evolved had it not been

for conflict. In an age such as ours, where the need for an easing of tension and a lessening of conflict is so vital to our existence, it is easy to overlook the creative function of conflict, and instead to establish peace as our primary value, our primary goal in all areas of life.... When peace is allowed to become so important that we will pay any price for it, when it is our primary goal, then it has become a tyrannical evil, not a good. For then it exercises an unqualified, arbitrary, and often irrational controlling power over us.

Finally, in an early 1970 sermon, Nick said “This sermon – *The Tyranny of Perfection* – is the last in a series. There could have been five, or six, or three, but the last in the series would have to have been this one. The theme of this sermon is what ties the others together; it is what the other three have in common. When I speak of perfection I am using it as a short hand word or symbol. By *perfection* I mean something more than a simple dictionary definition ... I mean an ideal state, a flawless creation, something without blemish ... We seek perfection in so many different ways – perfect peace, perfect words, perfect freedom, the perfect deed, and there is a sense in which we seek perfection itself. The tyranny of perfection exists in that we either fail to recognize or admit that perfection is unattainable, or we recognize it, admit it, and resign ourselves to mediocrity.... A passion for perfection is a good thing, but not if it blinds us to our own finitude and fallibility; not if it forces us into cynical resignation and mediocrity; not if it drives us to destructive self-deception.

Can you think of other tyrannies? If so, let me know ([rogerhiemstra@gmail.com](mailto:rogerhiemstra@gmail.com)) and I will print your suggestions in a future newsletter article.

[Note: It was impossible to do justice to four great sermons just by abstracting words and sentences into a paragraph on each. If you would like to read the originals from which I quoted the words above, let me know and I will be happy to send them to you as a PDF file.]



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### **Our Ill-Fated Second Church Building**

120. (3-11-14)



May Memorial has had five different church buildings. Those interested in a pictorial display of our various church buildings can see them at <http://history.mmuus.org/churchbuildings.pdf> . The second church building on the south corner of Lock Street (now known as State Street) and Burnet Avenue was somewhat ill-fated. Relatively soon after the initial construction in 1843 it was deemed too small for the rapidly growing congregation that was due to Rev. May's increasing popularity. Thus, in the fall of 1850 a decision was made to increase the building's length by 20 feet so 28 pews could be added. A spire was also added to the original tower during this remodeling phase. This latter decision may have added to a subsequent calamity when on February 29, 1852, a huge storm, some even called it a hurricane, came through Syracuse causing the tower and that spire to crash down on the roof (and the house next door) pressing out the side and rear walls and leaving the church a ruined mess. A decision was made soon after to construct a new building (our third building) on the old foundation, of course at great cost and long lasting debt.

Thus, about 161 years ago on April 11, 1853, this third iteration was dedicated "to the worship of God, to the inculcation of Religious Truth and Christian Duty." An original hymn was written for the dedication service by church leader, Dudley Phelps. We don't know the melody, but the message in the first three verses is interesting:

*With hearts depressed, but not cast down,  
When crushing tempests raged,  
In earnest faith new hopes to crown  
Our zealous hands engaged.*

*'Til on those broken walls once more  
A fairer temple stands;  
Accept, O God, whom we adore,  
The offering of our hands.*

*Around this altar which we raise  
Let thy felt presence be;  
Here may our prayers and songs of praise  
Acceptance find with Thee.*



The story of buildings on this site does not end there, though. Three decades later the peace and tranquility usually expected on a Sunday morning was being interrupted by the incursion of railroad tracks. The cute plaster figures we can see at the old train station along I-690 near where our old church stood meant that 130

years ago too much noise and commotion interrupted each weekly service as well as other church activities during the week. Thus, in 1884 a decision was made to purchase the lot on James Street that became the site of our fourth church building.



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### **Our Silver Communion Pieces**

121. (4-12-14)

Those who were in church on March 30 for the annual Sam May Day not only heard a wonderful sermon by Dr. Dick Gilbert, but also saw as part of the alter decoration our beautiful silver communion pieces shown in the accompanying photo. Mary and Bob Burdick created this display as they do most Sam May Days. Mary suggested I take a closer look at the pieces and that led to my doing some research and this newsletter article.

It is not clear how old this communion set is as no purchase date or information could be found in the archives. Those who attended church in the old James Street building may remember seeing the communion pieces on a communion table at the front of the church. I anticipate that in earlier times there were communion services not too unlike what can be found in many churches today, but probably with “Unitarian” touches. Malcolm Clark does not remember such services when he attended there as a young man. He said in an email that “The women's morning group very carefully attended to the silver, but it was not used in my tenure. I remember that John Fuller had a service in our present building that was a communion of sorts. I was so angry, that I left the building and walked around the block to cool off.” I suspect that many of us today would have had a similar reaction.

We do know something about the pieces. All of them are back stamped showing the manufacturer as Rogers & Brothers of Waterbury Connecticut. I anticipated it would be easy with an Internet search to find some specific information. I was surprised to find that many silver manufacturing companies used



Rogers in their name as various companies on the East Coast, each with their own specific back stamp mark, formed, merged, separated, folded, and absorbed each other. Eventually many of the marks wound up being owned by two major companies, our own nearby Oneida Silver, and the International Silver Company. The stamp on the back of our communion set (shown in the photo above taken of one of the communion set pieces – the actual size of the stamp is roughly ½ inch in diameter whereas this photo is enlarged) does not completely match the many, many stamps I could find on the Internet, but it does come close to a couple. It reads from the top Rogers & Bro Extra Plate Waterbury CT.

Rogers & Brothers was formed in Waterbury by four people, two of whom had the last name of Rogers. Perhaps we can assume our communion service set was manufactured during the period of 1847-1855, the dates of the original company prior to when it was merged with another company, but this is only guess work. Whether our church purchased the set during that period is another question for which we do not know the answer. If so, that would even predate the construction of the James Street church.

The name Rogers actually is a recurring name among American makers of coins, sterling silverware, and silver-plated ware like our communion set. I even discovered a company in Sheffield, England, that has manufactured silver products from 1682 until the present. Perhaps early settlers here brought the Rogers name in association with silver manufacturing here. The people who managed the various “Rogers” companies were usually linked by family relationships, but not always. I found one instance where the Rogers & Hamilton Company, also of Waterbury, hired a Cigar dealer named William Rogers and made him secretary so the Rogers name could be used. Gee, I would even have lent my name if asked.

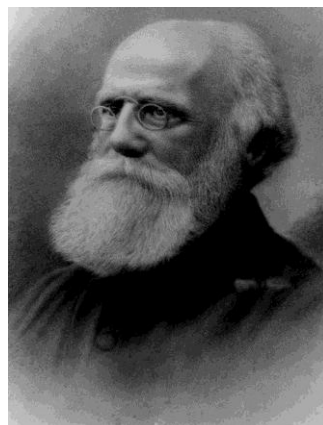


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### **Another Look at Rev. Samuel Calthrop**

122. (5-15-14)



This newsletter column is often associated in some way with Rev. Samuel May, our second minister. If you have not visited the Memorial Room for a while, you may not know that the bust of Sam has been moved to the north wall to make way for our new board room conference table. Check it out when you have a chance.

The bust of our third minister, Rev. Dr. Samuel Robert Calthrop, also has been moved to that north wall. These two busts represent the very important ministers who shepherded our ancestors for 66 years after the initial six years of our first minister, Rev. John Storer. Rev. Calthrop was senior pastor for an amazing 43 of those years (the second longest pastorate in Unitarian history) and was pastor emeritus at May Memorial for another six years until his death in 1917. Think of that, almost 30% of our church's ministerial history was associated with one person.

Dr. Calthrop was not just a place holder either; he made significant contributions to our church, to Syracuse, and to the State of New York. On some warm summer day, take a stroll in Oakwood Cemetery and look at the grave stones of Sam and his wife Edith. I have done it twice and it is a spiritual experience. Here is some related information on those grave stones: <http://history.mmuus.org/calthropfamily.html> For more information about Sam Calthrop see these two web sites: <http://history.mmuus.org/renaissance.html> and <http://history.mmuus.org/backwardglance.html>.

This amazing man was born in England in 1829. He entered Cambridge at the age of 19 where he excelled. However, he refused to sign 39 Articles of the Anglican Church faith required by the university which prevented his graduation and eventually led him to the United States and Unitarianism. He was an excellent scientist having patented a streamlined train (for a photo of his patent application model see article no. 24 at this site: <http://history.mmuus.org/newsletterarchives.pdf>), discovered numerous sunspots, and learned to predict the weather (often being called upon by the Syracuse newspapers for weather forecasts). He lectured in our church and elsewhere on a wide variety of topics beyond religion such as astronomy, botany, financial management, flowers, geology, physical training needs, and even raising tomatoes (for which he won blue ribbons at the New York State Fair). He met Sir Thomas Carlyle of Scotland and Oliver Wendell Holmes. He also was a personal friend of Susan B. Anthony. Like his predecessor, Sam May, he was very interested in education and youth. A teacher prior to becoming a pastor, he organized the Syracuse Boys' Club, established the first playgrounds in Syracuse, and even taught at Syracuse University.

Dr. Calthrop was a very physically fit individual most of his life. Tall, with a big frame, and a great white beard, he was an expert boxer in his younger days



(one day in his Syracuse house a burglar broke in thinking no one was at home and Sam knocked him unconscious with one blow of his fist), and skilled at billiards, crew, cricket, hockey, rowing, and tennis. His true passion was chess where he was known as one of the best in the country by winning local and state championships. He beat opponents while playing blindfolded and by playing several at the same time. Able to quote verbatim from Greek and Latin Classics, he was widely published, a gifted poet, and a sought after orator. All of this while maintaining his pastorate here and being well loved and respected by both May Memorial church members and people throughout Syracuse. He was truly a gifted individual.

(Note: A version of parts of this article appeared in the June 1, 2006, newsletter)  
Rog Hiemstra, Chair, History Committee

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June 9, 2014

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