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Rev. Knickerbacker Leads Establish Full-Fledged Universalist Church In October, 1866

(EDITOR'S NOTE — The Universalist Church at Warner and Thomas Streets, Farmington's oldest house of worship, is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1966. Apropos of this centennial, The Farmington Enterprise is publishing a series of articles on the church's history, of which this is the fourth. Readers are advised to clip and save these articles. A limited number of extra copies of The Enterprise will be available for mailing to friends.)

IV. A SECOND CHURCH
The Saint Ste. Marie locks were completed, the Dred Scott decision shook the nation, oil was discovered in Pennsylvania, thousands were bankrupted in the panic of 1857, the Republican party was born, and the Rev. Henry L. Hayward, as moderator, reported for the Farmington Union Society to the State Universalist Convention. In June 1859, while the Lincoln campaign for the presidency was on, the Farmington church got a new pastor, 26-year-old Chauncey Washington Knickerbacker.

The pulp committee had made a fortuitous choice, for the Rev. Mr. Knickerbacker became a tower of strength in the Universalist structure. For 12 of his 37 years in the ministry he was president of the Michigan Universalist Convention. At least five churches, seven in this State and two in Ontario, were built through his instrumentality. He was a native of Wayne, Michigan, and at 16 had been a school teacher. He became acquainted with the Rev. E. M. Woolley, the first Universalist preacher in Farmington, and David H. Ravelin and was encouraged to enter the ministry. Mr. Ravelin died in 1849 on the plains en route to California with the gold seekers.

Mr. Knickerbacker preached his first sermon at the age of 25 in the Wayne schoolhouse where he had taught, although he was not ordained until 1850, three years later. For eight years preceding 1850 he had been minister at Lansing.

When he answered the Farmington call he had returned to Wayne. He preached there and in New Hudson, Rochester, Holly and Cornu (near Owosso) as well as in Farmington until 1870, when he assumed the pulpit in Bay City. Subsequently he preached at Concord,

Michigan, and at Olanda and Road Eau, Ontario, before his death April 26, 1884, in Wayne of heart disease at the age of 59.

Miss M. S. Green recalls that the Rev. Mr. Knickerbacker preached at times in Congregational churches, his hearers not being aware that he was a Universalist. He was a tall, clean-eyed, friendly man with wavy black hair; thoughtful, earnest and eloquent. J. W. Hanson said of him:

"He seemed to have been born for the pulpit — of symmetrical physical proportions, a beautiful head, a serene and benignant countenance, he looked the minister."

"Those who heard him longest prized him most, and we personally know of places where he was preferred on a week ending to any other procurable on Sunday. He always commanded the attention that there was a man behind the spoken word, and that gave his utterances a momentum and emphasis that few could impart."

He was a compiler of the Union Church reported to the State Convention that it had 150 members, that Mr. Knickerbacker was preaching every other Sunday, and that the Sabbath School had 50 scholars and a library of 150 volumes.

Under the 10-year pastorate of Mr. Knickerbacker the congregation underwent an important metamorphosis. Perhaps by his persuasion, it was decided to establish a full-fledged Universalist Church. Sergeant's son was one of the Union Society members who abandoned the old designation and set up "the First Universalist Church in Farmington," with a printed constitution, Declaration of Faith and Constitution.

The date was October 1866. In November, eight more members were received into the Universalist Church and the following year the church was organized.

(Continued on Page Nine).

West Farmington
By MRS. SARAH KNAPP

Mrs. William Tamm has been ill with a cold all week. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Heitler motored to Arcadia last week for a two day trip into northern Michigan.

Mr. and Mrs. George Graham are the parents of a baby born July 16. She was named Alice Jean. Patricia Graham has been staying with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Starr Graham.

Mrs. Dolbert Guyer spent Friday with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Heitler.

Mrs. Charles Bowman and brother Maurice Merwin of Grand Rapids spent the week-end with Mrs. Edith Sarantos of 13 Mile Road, Mrs. Elmer See, 23201 14 Mile Road opened her home Monday evening for the meeting of the Walled Lake W. C. T. U.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer See entertained their family, Arvin Wik of Ohio, and Gordon Stewart, formerly of Ohio, at a birthday dinner in honor of Mrs. Floyd Calmes and Mrs. Irvin Wik's birthday anniversary at a dinner July 22.

Eighty people attended the Farm Bureau picnic held at Kensington Park Sunday, July 22. A potluck dinner was served.

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JOYCE LINDA GUNNETT

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey J. Drown of 25641 Orchard Lake Road have announced the engagement of their daughter, Joyce Linda Gunnett, to Corporal Arthur J. Kline, USAF, son of Mrs. John McDonald of 538 Sumpter Road, Belleville, Michigan, and Mr. Donald Kline of Hialeah, Florida. Cpl. Kline is stationed at Selfridge Air Force Base, Mt. Clemens, Michigan. Joyce graduated from Farmington High School this June.

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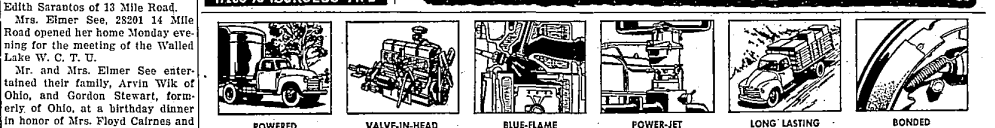


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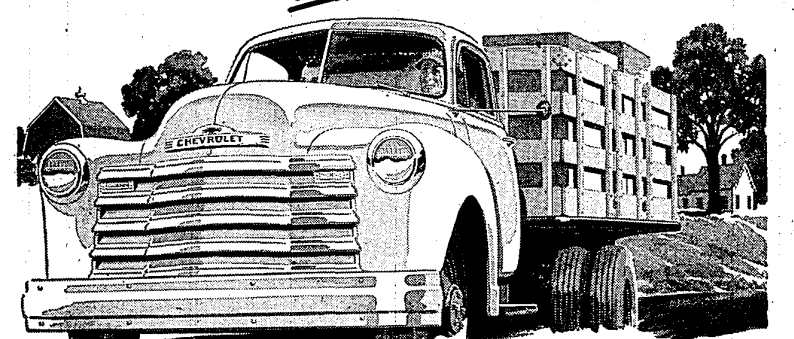
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