

Universalist Church Notes

Vote On Union

Monday night the Church submitted its ballot of the members of the parish to the plebiscite committee of the Joint Merger Commission of the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association. Outside the people of the parish only the Commission will know how the Church voted. There will be further news in May when delegates complete the work of the merger. The delegates have been enjoined to follow the will of the churches as expressed in the plebiscite. Over 70% of both Universalist and Unitarian Churches have voted so far, thus validating the plebiscite.

Church Notes

Friday night the Bible Study Group will meet at the home of Rev. and Mrs. James Mott at 8 o'clock and Wednesday night the Men's Club will meet there for their social night with their work night at the Church the following evening.

The Men's Club is planning another rummage sale for Friday and Saturday, April 22 and 23. Duncant Bryant and Stanley Snow will pick up any donations.

The steeple fund continues to grow slowly but it still lacks a good deal of money.

Funds Sought For Repairs To Historic Tower

The Universalist Church is often called "The Church That Whaling Built," since it was constructed during the height of Provincetown's mid-19th century prosperity; an era when great fortunes were made from the whaling industry. It is now the only Church in Provincetown, dating from that period, which is presently in use, and it should be preserved, if only as one of the town's historic buildings. Certainly it should be preserved as a fine example of New England church architecture. Contributions toward this fund will be received with deep appreciation, and should be marked "Steeple Fund," and sent to Ross Moffett, Treasurer, Church of the Redeemer, Universalist.

For many years the Church was only open during the summer, however it is now in use again on a year-round basis under the leadership of a young, dedicated minister, Rev. James W. Mott.

The history of the Church goes back to the days when whaling brought riches to Provincetown, and a colony of some 200 persons lived in a settlement on Long Point. Among them was the family of Prince Freeman, whose name now remains synonymous with the founding of the Universalist Church in Provincetown.

Sylvia and Elizabeth Freeman, daughters of Prince, were walking along the shore one stormy winter's day, and saw a large book coming in with the tide. They waded into the water, retrieved the book, and took it home to dry. It proved to be a copy of a book by John Murray, the Englishman who introduced the Universalist movement to America. There was little amusement during the winter, and the girls became more and more interested as they read their new book. Soon they had a small group, who gathered together to read and discuss the new religion. Compared to the old Puritan ways they knew, the Universalist preachings seemed wonderfully liberal; one could dance and play cards on

Sundays, and the belief was in one God. They decided to form a Universalist Church in Provincetown.

Chapel Built in 1829

In 1829, during the hey-day of Provincetown, they built their first small chapel in the west end of town. Soon, this was not large enough to accommodate the great number of persons who joined the church, and it was decided to erect what is now the Universalist Church on Commercial Street.

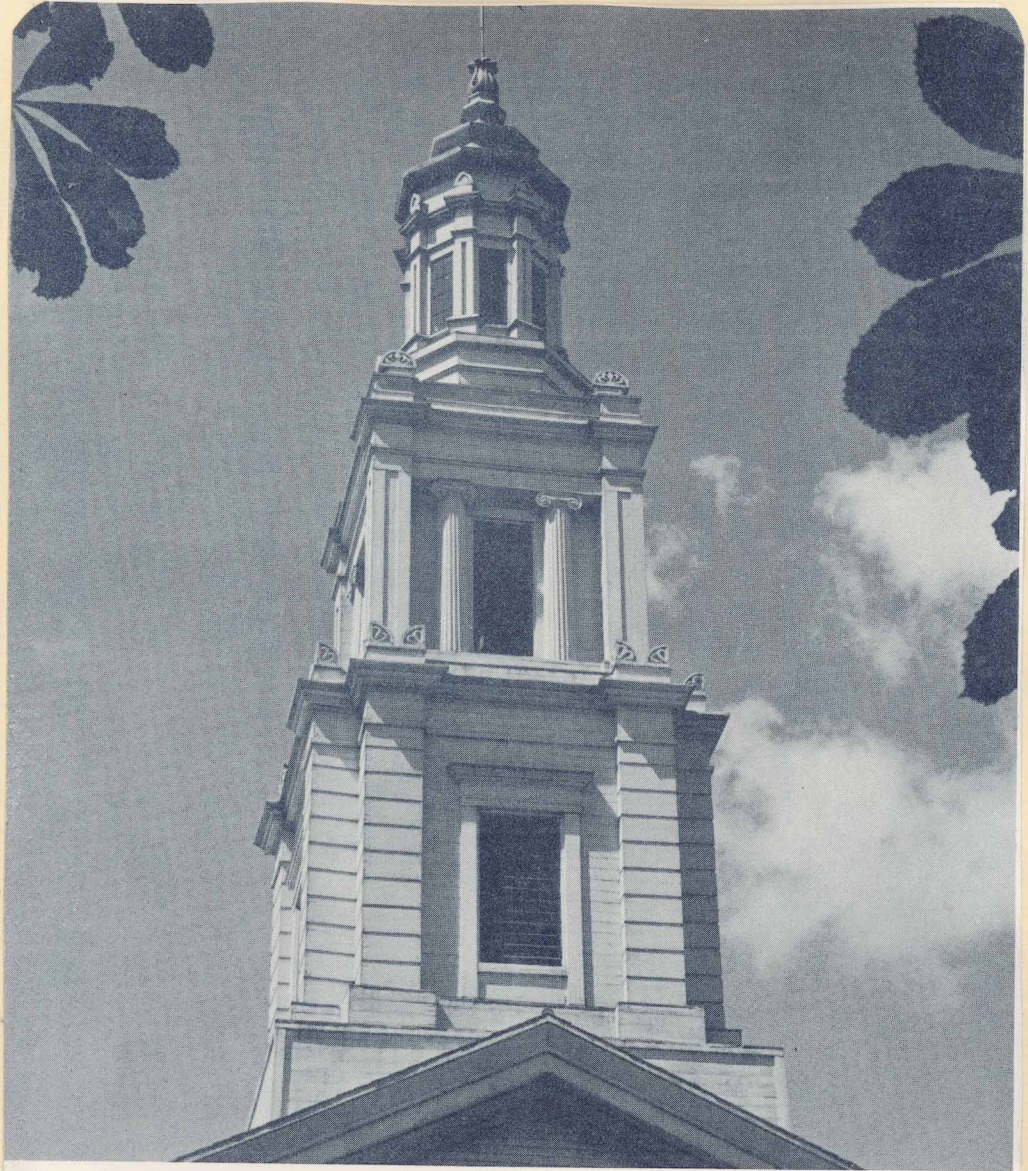
This was built in 1847, at a cost of \$12,000, in old colonial style and with a tower designed after those by the English architect, Sir Christopher Wren. A German, Carl G. Wendte, who had studied painting in Italy, came to Provincetown at that time for a visit, and was hired to do the unusual frescoes, which still decorate the inside of the church.

Pews And Organ Purchased

Four years later, the pews and a grand organ were purchased, and silk covered cushions of a deep red color were made for the pews by the ladies of the congregation. All of these fittings still remain in the church today, though the organ has been electrified and the dark red of the cushions has faded to a rosy pink.

Because it was whaling that really built the Universalist Church, a small button, made from whale's teeth, was chosen as a decoration on the side of each pew, and an old whaling captain, Joseph Atkins by name, 81 years old in 1847, presented a large clock to the church.

These too remain intact, as does the communion service, which stands in an old cabinet at the front of the meeting room, and contains some pieces made by Paul Revere. Still in use, also, are the antique, long-handled collection boxes, their linings of the same silk as the cushions, and now the same color. From the center of the ceiling hangs the original Sandwich glass chandelier, electrified some years ago.



CHRISTOPHER WREN TOWER, PROVINCETOWN

John W. Gregory

The tower of the Universalist Church was designed after the famous architect. Its classic beauty is a source of pleasure to both the resident and the tourist.

Mar. 30, 1960

The Steeple Fund has gone over the \$600 mark, but that still leaves \$900 we need. To all those who have helped, we say thank you.