

A HISTORY
OF
THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
ALTON, ILLINOIS
1836-1986

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1836-1936

"In the beginning" --- where and when was the beginning of our church? In the developing minds of prehistoric humans? When they were adapting to their environment and living in groups, did our ancestors accept group control and group explanations of all the mysteries around them or did they seek their own answers? Many beliefs have come down to us through the years. The Jewish religion, out of which christianity came is some three thousand years old. Christianity two thousand. The Unitarian church started with the rejection of the Christian belief in the Trinity - God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost - and the return to the belief in one God. This occurred in several countries with Hungary perhaps the earliest, in the 17th century. The following is from the Encyclopedia Britannica.

"In 1792 English Unitarians petitioned Parliament for the right to examine into and interpret the Holy Scriptures for themselves and the right to publicly declare the result of their enquiries. Essentially it was a demand for personal religious freedom, and for clear distinct and coherent religious thought and teaching. In England the penal laws against deniers of the Trinity were not repealed until 1813 and the Corporation and Test Act (against all dissenters from the National Church) not until 1828. At the beginning of the 19th century Unitarian Christianity was, broadly speaking, a biblical religion, accepting miracles and rejecting creeds, not as incredible but as non-biblical, resting its hopes on an external revelation. Then this system gave way to a revised theology which was due to the development of scientific and historical knowledge during the 19th century.

The first official acceptance of the Unitarian Faith in the United States was by King's Chapel in Boston in 1782. Harvard Divinity School was distinctly Unitarian from its formation in 1816 to 1870 when it became an unsectarian department of the University. Since 1885 Unitarianism has been a religion of rationalism, recognition of universal religion, large acceptance of the scientific method and ideas and an ethical attempt to realize the higher affirmation of Christianity."

Today and even in the last century there are and were differences in the beliefs of Unitarians. Some who believe in a God and others who say they have no proof of the existence of a God so should not be required to testify to the existence of one or worship one whom they do not know exists.

In the last half of the 19th century, the Mid-West Unitarian Conference devoted much time to this problem, and the following will indicate the seriousness with which it was debated. The National Conference of Unitarian Churches (organized in 1865) adopted the following position in 1894.

"The Conference reaffirmed as its basic and unitive principles: Intellectual Freedom and Fellowship in the quest for truth; Character, in the sense of moral integrity and Human service as the test proof and fruit of genuine, universal religion; No uniformity in speculative doctrinal opinion on the part of Members and Ministers was required."

The beginning of the Alton church was in 1836 with people, whose moral and religious values were alike, meeting together to discuss their

beliefs and goals. They met in the office of Alton's first physician, Dr. William Emerson. William Greenleaf Eliot, minister of the Unitarian church in St. Louis, frequently came up the river by boat (an eight hour trip, stopping twice to "wood-up") to preach and help with starting a church in Alton. In 1836 the first Unitarian church in Alton was organized. The Rev. Charles Andrew Farley (Harvard Divinity School, class of 1827) was called to be the first minister. On December 7th, 1836, Rev. Farley preached a sermon which concluded as follows:

"Do you now ask, 'Which is the true church?'. I answer, not the Episcopal church, not the Presbyterian church, not the Baptist church, not the Methodist church, not the Unitarian church, but the good in all these churches. All who live under the light of nature or under the more blessed light of revelation. The child of the Ganges, who worships the glorious river, and finds healing in its waters, he who adores the Sun in its Majesty, he who cries out for the help of the Great Father and whose dying eyes are lit up with the hope of hunting again in the spirit land, all, all are the children of God. All are members of the Church Universal, of that vast temple which the broad skies cover and the broad earth sustains and whose doors are open to the illimitable heaven."

This sermon was published by Treadway, Parks & Bailey and distributed widely about the city.

Mr. Caleb Stone was chairman and Mr. Henry Sargent, Secretary of the first Unitarian church in Alton.

Alton was a frontier town and had many lawless elements. There was much agitation for the abolition of slavery. Elijah P. Lovejoy, an editor, had come from St. Louis to Alton to publish a newspaper. He strongly

opposed slavery and antagonized some of the townspeople with his published articles against slavery. His press was destroyed and he was killed by a mob. Mr. Farley had supported Mr. Lovejoy and was also known for his anti slavery views. It was said that two men openly bragged that they had killed Mr. Lovejoy and the law did nothing. The small congregation became smaller through the trouble and Mr. Farley finally left the city and returned East.

It was 1852 before these pioneers were again strong enough to call a minister. The Rev. William D'Arcy Haley (Meadville, Class of 1853) came in October 1853. On November 8th, 1853, Edward Keating Esq. was elected President, B. T. Barry, Secretary, and Moses G. Atwood Esq., Treasurer of the church. Trustees elected were Henry Lea, M. H. Topping, George B. Ingersoll, L. S. Metcalf and Wm. McBride. On the records of the first year appear the names of the following members, Nathaniel Hanson, Erastus D. Topping, A. K. Root, S. W. Robbins, C. Stigleman, W. A. Platt, A. L. Corson, Robert Smith, H. W. Billings and George Moody. H. W. Billings was the grandfather of present day members Henry McAdams and Alice McAdams Hyndman.

A Unitarian church organization was formed with a list of thirty communicants and was called "The First Congregational Church of Alton". They adopted a constitution essentially the same as that of Dr. Eliot's church in St. Louis. Sunday meetings were held at twenty minutes past ten in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon.

In January 1854 it was decided to build a church and money was raised for the purpose with the St. Louis church contributing \$3,500. The Roman Catholic church at the corner of Third and Alby Streets had been partly destroyed by fire and they had moved to another location. This property was purchased from the Catholics by Col. J. B. Stanford, who later sold it to the Unitarian Society. Reconstruction was begun at once and the

new church was dedicated October 14th, 1855. The cost was about \$13,000. The property cost \$4,000 and the building \$9,000. The Rev. G. W. Hosmer, D.D., of Buffalo, New York, preached the dedication sermon.

The first High School in Alton began in the basement of our first church building in 1858 and was called "Advanced School".

The ladies of the New South Church of Boston presented the Alton Church with a solid silver communion flagon dated September 1, 1855, and it is still treasured by the present day Unitarians.

Freedom of the pulpit was established in 1856 when the following events occurred. (From the Board minutes of July 15, 1856)

"The President called the meeting to order, The Secretary read a letter of resignation of our Pastor, on account of having received report condemning his acts in preaching a sermon on the 13th inst. in relation to the aspect of the time. A motion was made to accept and debated 'with some warmth and length' by four in favor and three against. Finally the following preamble and resolution as a substitute to the 1st motion - 'Whereas our Pastor, Rev. W. D. Haley has desired the Pewholders of this church to act upon resignation offered to the Trustees in a sermon preached on the 13th inst., and Whereas we have now assembled for that purpose, therefore be it Resolved, That we believe the course of Mr. Haley has been such as to give no just cause, during his ministrations with us, of complaint to anyone and that however we may as individuals differ in opinions upon the numerous questions, Political and others constantly presented to us, yet as a Society we will never condemn a person for upholding the cause of Truth, Justice and Morality. Resolved, That the resignation of Mr. Haley, we as a Society would most respectfully request him to withdraw.

Resolved, That this Society cherish toward Mr. Haley the best of feelings and will uphold him in his Christian ministry. Resolved, That the forgoing resolution be attested to by our Secretary and published in the Alton Courier with request that the Missouri Republican should also publish the same." Resolution passed.

The Rev. J. G. Forman, minister during the War of the Rebellion enlisted as Chaplain in the Federal service and the church was closed from October 1861 to May 1863. He returned and served another year.

In 1878 a commodious brick parsonage was built on the lot adjoining the church edifice at a cost of \$2,500.

On December 21st, 1890 the name of the church was changed to First Unitarian Society and the By-Laws were adopted. Article 11 of the By-Laws reads "The purpose of this Society is to advance the moral and spiritual interests of its members and of the community at large; by the maintenance of public religious services, and in other ways to help extend a knowledge and practice of pure religion in the world." A Covenant and Preamble were also adopted at this time.

COVENANT

"Recognizing the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man and an earnest endeavor to live and work in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite together to worship God and to seek the Truth, and to serve our fellow man, asking only a sincere effort to follow the Truth, we cordially welcome all to a place among us who sympathize with us in these our aims."

PREAMBLE

"Whereas, there are those among us who feel that they will be helped and strengthened in their religious life by adoption and signing of the covenant as adopted by the Society, and Whereas, there are others among us

who have been members of this Society for many years who for reasons good and sufficient unto themselves, feel that they cannot sign said covenant, therefore be it Resolved, that we have thought it best to make acquisition of membership in this church to consist simply in the signing of either the Covenant or the By-Laws of the Society, it being clearly understood by us all that there shall be no distinction or difference in the rights, privileges or standing among the members of this church, but that every one shall be equal to every other one in respect to membership in this Society and be it further Resolved that said Covenant is to be considered in no sense as a creed or a test of fellowship in this church, but as being only the expression of those who may sign it and further that it is always open to amendment or change in accordance with the wisdom and judgement of the Society."

The By-Laws included a committee which would control the Free Library, also one for Cooperation and City Works to devise and bring forward plans for educational, philanthropic and missionary enterprise; whether to be carried on by the congregation alone, or in conjunction with other societies or people. These two committees are not found in today's by-laws. However, Article 11 of the 1890 by-laws reads almost word for word the same as section 3, Article 1 of the 1968 by-laws on the purpose of the church.

The State Conference was held in Alton on October 21, 22, 23, 1890 and the following is an excerpt from the newspaper account. "Is there a new religion? If so, what is it? Rev. J. D. Jones of Chicago, argued that the religion of the future must be broad enough to include humanity and that it can make no other condition of fellowship than the unanimity of a purpose to work together for one end - the advancement of and the help of mankind."

The church was incorporated in Illinois, February 25th, 1891.

The pipe organ was re-built in 1897 for \$750 by Geo. Kilgin & Son, St. Louis, Missouri.

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century the church was "financially out of debt and in a united and prosperous condition." It embraced about fifty-seven families and had an active Sunday School with a library of over 600 well selected volumes."

In 1903 they voted to remain on the present site and build a new church. Specifications for the new building included - "All cut stone in the building to be either bush hammered Alton limestone or sawed Indiana stone and the lime must be slaked and run off 30 days or more before being used." One comment in the specs - "Why will not our floor of maple be better and cheaper?"

Plans for the new church were accepted February 14, 1904 from Ernest J. Hesse, Architects of St. Louis. The total cost of the new building was estimated to be \$12,725. The amount pledged was \$12,072. The cornerstone of the new building was laid April 30, 1905 and the church was dedicated October 29th, 1905.

The following years were productive if they can be judged by the fact that four different Women's Organizations gave financial reports for the fiscal year 1907-1908. Today (1984) it is becoming difficult to keep one organization in members. Of course many more women work outside the home today than in 1907. Treasurers' reports for the four organizations are as follows:

Each year in October committees were appointed and listed. This list was hung in the vestibule of the church. Following the Treasurer's reports will be the list for the 1891-1892 church year.

TREASURERS' REPORTS FOR FOUR CHURCH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

1907-1908

WOMEN'S AUXILLIARY

Balance on Hand	\$ 3.97
<u>Receipts -</u>	
Ladies Aid Donation	10.00
Alliance Cake Sale	17.30
Bazaar	26.05
Cake Sale	12.50
Parcel Sale	51.25
Excursion	87.00
	<u>\$208.07</u>
<u>Disbursements -</u>	
Janitor's Salary (9 mos.)	90.00
Gas and Electric Co.	23.74
Coal	18.25
Advertisements	3.05
	<u>\$135.04</u>
Balance on Hand 10/10/08	\$ 73.03

LADIES AID SOCIETY

<u>Receipts -</u>	
Meeting dues amounted to	\$ 17.65
Monthly dues for A.U.A. Bond	42.80
Proceeds of Bazaar 12/07/07	15.95
Donations for Western Newsletter	.75
	<u>\$ 77.15</u>
<u>Expenses -</u>	
Material for work	
Organist's Salary	
Charity	
Minister's Salary	
A.U.A. Bond	
Alliance Dues	
Flowers for Funeral	
Charity Entertainment for Four Children	
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 79.16</u>

LEND-A-HAND

Balance on Hand	\$ 10.97
Halloween Social	9.20
Donations	1.00
Bazaar	2.45
Candy Sale	2.00
Donation	.40
	<u>\$ 26.02</u>
<u>Disbursements -</u>	
Janitor	.50
Flowers	5.00
Christmas Charity	5.00
Gift to Mrs. Gebauer	3.00
	<u>\$ 13.50</u>
Balance	\$ 12.52

ANNA D. SPARKS ALLIANCE

Balance on Hand	\$ 27.91
<u>Receipts -</u>	
Sociable	12.85
Luncheon at W.M.A.	52.20
Dues	11.00
Annual Sale	17.80
Work done by Members	9.90
Donations	19.15
Souvenir Letter	6.06
	<u>\$156.87</u>
<u>Disbursements -</u>	
Organist's Salary	5.00
Postage	.20
Flowers	14.00
Snow Hill Institute	1.00
Christmas Fund	5.00
Insurance	3.32
Alliance Dues	8.00
A.U.A. Bond	75.00
Material for Charity	26.64
	<u>\$138.16</u>
Balance	\$ 18.71

COMMITTEES APPOINTED FOR THE CHURCH YEAR 1891-1892

Unitarian Conference - Monmouth, Illinois - Mr. E. C. Hayward, Mrs. A. K. Root, Mrs. George R. Hewitt.

Fellowship - Rev. H. D. Stevens, Mrs. S. A. Haskell, Mrs. J. H. Yager, Mrs. Orson Hewitt, Mrs. John S. Roper.

Sunday School - Mrs. A. E. Stevens, Mrs. A. K. Root, Miss Leslie E. Topping, Mr. E. C. Haywood.

Introduction and Hospitality - Mrs. D. R. Sparks, Mrs. M. H. Sprague, Mrs. H. L. Green, Mrs. R. M. Cavender, Mr. A. K. Root.

Social and Entertainment - Mrs. M. H. Sprague, Mrs. H. J. Crane, Mrs. G. A. McMillen, Mrs. S. F. Connor, Mrs. E. C. Hayward, Mrs. D. R. Sparks.

Decorations - Miss Helen Haskell, Mrs. A. E. Mill, Mrs. Geo. R. Hewitt, Miss Julia Philips, Mrs. S. F. Connor.

Music - Miss Floy Philips, Miss W. Trenchery, Mattie A. Milnor, Mr. Wm. Eliot Smith.

Young People's Committee - Mr. Hosea B. Sparks, Miss Isabel Flagg, Mr. H. J. Bowman, Miss Julia Philips, Miss D. Homeyer, Mr. E. C. Hayward.

Cooperation and City Works - Mr. D. R. Sparks, Mrs. J. H. Yager, Mrs. J. M. Giberson.

Free Library - Mrs. John S. Roper, Mrs. J. M. Giberson, Mrs. C. S. Philips, Dr. W. A. Haskell.

Post Office Mission - Mrs. L. B. Fisher, Mrs. M. F. Topping, Mrs. A. S. Haskell, Mr. John S. Roper.

Publications - Mr. Frank Fisher, Mr. W. B. Pierce, Mr. S. F. Connor.

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY

1891-1892.

CHURCH OFFICERS.

1891-1892.

PRESIDENT—A. K. ROOT.

VICE-PRESIDENT—D. R. SPARKS.

SECRETARY—FRANK FISHER.

TREASURER—Mrs. A. D. SPARKS.

TRUSTEES—A. K. Root, Wm. Eliot Smith,
W. A. Haskell, S. F. Connor, John S. Roper,
D. R. Sparks, E. C. Hayward.

LIST OF MEMBERS.

The following list includes the names of all those persons who have signed either the By-Laws or the Covenant, or both, of the FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON, ILL. It does not include, however, the names of all who make up the congregation and help support its services:

NAME.	RESIDENCE.
Bowman, Mrs. Selina.....	508 E. 12th street.
Bowman, Mrs. Virginia Job.....	1105 Henry street.
Cavender, Mrs. C. M.....	704 Franklin st.
Clark, N. H.....	St. Louis.
Connor, Silas F.....	327 E. 3rd street.
Connor, Mrs. S. A.....	327 E. 3rd street.
Crane, H. J.....	823 Alby street.
Crane, Mrs. H. J.....	823 Alby street.
Curtis, William L.....	215 Williams st.
Dow, Julia.....	704 Franklin st.
Fisher, Frank.....	508 Summit street.
Fisher, Waldo.....	508 Summit street.
Flagg, Norman G.....	Moro, Ill.
Flagg, Isabel.....	Moro, Ill.
Giberson, J. M.....	511 Belle street.
Giberson, Mrs. Irene.....	511 Belle street.
Giberson, Herbert.....	511 Belle street.
Gillham, Mrs. Mary W.....	Wanda, Ill.
Green, Mrs. L. S.....	225 E. 5th street.
Hayward, Edward C.....	410 Belleview ave.
Hayward, Mrs. Lucy C.....	410 Belleview ave.
Haskell, Mrs. Lucy A.....	1207 Henry street.
Haskell, Helen.....	1207 Henry street.
Hewitt, Geo. R.....	1407 Liberty st.
Hewitt, Mrs. Alice M.....	1407 Liberty st.

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NAME.	RESIDENCE.
Hewitt, Mrs. Orson.....	Upper Alton.
Hudson, John H.....	319 E. 4th street.
McMillen, Mrs. Emma B.....	321 Easton street.
Milnor, Mrs. Mattie A.....	Jacksonville, Ill.
Milnor, Leland T.....	704 Franklin st.
Mills, Mrs. Fannie M.....	Upper Alton.
Moritz, H. C. G.....	319 Prospect st.
Pierce, W. Byron.....	1419 State street.
Pierce, Mrs. Emily A.....	1419 State street.
Philips, Mrs. Mary E.....	Upper Alton.
Philips, Julia.....	Upper Alton.
Philips, Floy.....	Upper Alton.
Platt, Sadie.....	1008 State street.
Root, A. K.....	1511 State street.
Root, Mrs. Harriet E.....	1511 State street.
Root, Lillian A.....	1511 State street.
Roper, John S.....	414 Langdon st.
Roper, Mrs. Adelaide.....	414 Langdon st.
Roper, Denney W.....	414 Langdon st.
Roberts, Mrs. Esther P.....	100 16th street.
Smith, William H.....	Stanton street.
Smith, Mrs. Ellen.....	Stanton street.
Sparks, D. R.....	410 Prospect st.
Sparks, Mrs. A. D.....	410 Prospect st.
Sparks, Hosen B.....	410 Prospect st.
Sprague, Mrs. M. H.....	1027 George street.
Stanford, Homer.....	107 E. 3rd street.
Stanford, Mrs. Eva L.....	107 E. 3rd street.
Stevens, Henry D. (Minister).....	102 E. 3rd street.
Stevens, Mrs. A. E.....	102 E. 3rd street.
Topping, Marcus H.....	Jacksonville, Ill.
Topping, Mrs. M. F.....	Jacksonville, Ill.
Topping, Lulu G.....	Jacksonville, Ill.
Trenchery, Mrs. E.....	601 State street.
Trenchery, Wilhelmina.....	601 State street.
Tuttle, Olivia B.....	410 Prospect st.
Woolrych, Mrs. F. H. W.....	St. Louis.
Yager, Ida E.....	908 Langdon st.

UNITARIAN ANTIQUES - EXHIBIT RARE TREAT

Will Loan Curios.

Washington Relics, Century-Old Quilts, Ancient Bridal Gowns and Valuable Heirlooms Will Be Displayed.

The loan exhibit of antiques which the Unitarian Ladies will give on April 25-29 (1911) will be one of the most extraordinary and interesting shows of the kind ever held in the Bluff City. The ladies are planning to bring together in their show rooms in the building vacated by the Luer Wachter Co. the largest and most valuable collection of old documents, curios and local articles of historical and intrinsic value ever assembled in Illinois. Some documents bearing George Washington's signature, worth their weight in gold, will be on exhibition. A military commission from Washington to Gen. Eaton, Mrs. A. K. Root's grandfather and a commission from Andrew Jackson to her father, Capt. Eaton, have been promised, and also a bid to a colonial ball from President George Washington. A collection of spinning wheels, old bridal gowns, rare spinning wheels and old samplers dating back to 1800 will be some of the drawing cards. Mrs. H. J. Bowman, chairman of the exhibit, is trying to get the building permit of the oldest house in the city from Wm. Pinckard, of Chicago for the show. The ladies have already a large number of century-old quilts. Some old altar laces, Japanese satsumas, and swords which were obtained in the Revolutionary and Mexican wars will be great attractions. What is considered the rarest curio however, is the regal robe of a king of the Sandwich Islands, made of mulberry bark, which is said to have been made in 1300. Old family Bibles and a piece of wood from the San Juan blockhouse have also been secured for the exhibition.

→ The ladies expect a large crowd and will charge 25¢ admission. The exhibition will open on Tuesday noon, April 25, 1911.

The Rev. Curtis W. Reese was installed as minister in a ceremony that lasted from November 9th to the 13th in the year 1913. Mr. Reese worked against crime in the city and must have been successful or at least threatening to the vice circle. The following is quoted from the index to the Alton telegraph dated March 28, 1914. "For the first time in the history of Alton, a resident formally demands protection of life and property when Rev. C. W. Reese, minister of the Unitarian church, made this request of Mayor Paulstich, after his life had been threatened by a group of gangsters because of his work as head of the Anti-Crime Syndicate."

Among the distinctive beliefs of a modern church stated by Mr. Reese is "Righteousness is Salvation, not the result of Salvation".

Taxes assessed April 1, 1913 on Parsonage Lot No. 1, Block No. 14, valued at \$250.00 - State \$.95, County \$1.13, Road and Bridge \$.65, Corporation \$4.80, Park \$.40, District School \$5.40. Total \$13.33.

In August of 1917 a contract was awarded to H. H. Unterbrink for interior decorating including a new paneled ceiling at a cost of \$1,500.00.

The Board minutes for November 5, 1917 recorded that a committee had been appointed to solicit funds for the Y.W.C.A. war work.

The brick parsonage, built in 1878, was remodeled into a duplex in 1926. The low bid was \$13,895.75. The original cost of the building in 1878 was \$2,500.

In June 1930 a committee was appointed to raise money to buy a new organ. No further mention was made of this.

Frances Jones (member today, 1985) recalls when she was a child and her father, Judge Levi D. Yager played the old pipe organ and her brother Levi Jr. and Henry McAdams pumped the organ bellows while concealed behind a red velvet curtain in the back of the church. Occasionally they forgot to pump!!

M. Ryrie Milnor has given the church a copy of a "Statement of Belief" written by his grandfather David R. Sparks before 1907 and some interesting comments written by Anna D. Sparks. These will become part of the church archives and everyone will have an opportunity to read them in their entirety. I have selected the following paragraph for this history.

"But now I have rather given my objections to the religions of the past and present without giving my own views on the subject. It is not for me nor any thinking man to explain his thoughts on this subject unless he has concluded to adopt faith without thought; in fact, faith without thought is consistent. With the power of thought brought into play, faith vanishes and the mind goes out unfettered to fields yet unexplored. I might simply adopt the words of the immortal Paine and say, "The world is my country and to do good is my religion." These words have no equal for grandeur of thought in either old or new testament but I'll attempt a further view of my thoughts on this subject.---God to me is everything, is everywhere; he is the universe, the stars, the sun, the earth; he is the human soul, he is the wood and is in the rocks; he is in the air, in the storm and sunshine alike. In part, everything we see about us or in us is the infinite God."

The Rev. Wallace W. Robbins said in his history of the first one hundred years - "Most of the members have come from other churches and have had to learn the meaning of the free spirit and a free spirit's discipline from the church. Nothing could ever be taken for granted. Recruits came desiring freedom for themselves and learned only by patient and arduous teaching to desire that freedom for others."

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1936-1946

The first decade after the one hundredth anniversary began with the Rev. Wallace Robbins as minister. In speaking of the faith of this church, he is quoted as saying - "This faith, that man can and must build a better world by building a better community, has been the strength of our church in our city for more than a century". He personally testified to its effectiveness in the years he was here.

During this decade the Board of Trustees was increased to nine members serving three year terms, three to be elected each year. The nine trustees, to be selected by a Nominating Committee, were in addition to the three officers. The minutes read that women were elected to the Board for the first time in 1942 (almost unanimously). Old records show that women served on the Board from 1881 to 1917. Anna Davenport Sparks served as Treasurer from 1881 through 1895 and Lillian Root from 1896 through 1907.

All through the years church members, officers and trustees have worked to provide Alton with a free library.

The fiscal year was changed from August first to September first in 1941. In 1937 the Board appointed a committee called "cooperation and City Works". This complied with the by-laws adopted in 1891. No further mention was made of this committee in the Board minutes for this decade but the results were self evident. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops were sponsored and led by members of the church. During the war the local Coast Guard held its meetings at the church. Donations were made to the United Appeal and to the Alton Memorial Hospital building fund.

The church school was an active part of the church during this period. In 1944 it was stated that the church school was rapidly becoming one of the best in this part of the country.

References made to church growth in the board minutes are - "In

May 1940 thirteen children were dedicated and there were twelve new members since last May". In October 1942 - "Having church school at the same time as church had greatly increased attendance at both".

In the May 1943 congregational meeting it was reported that 97 had attended the candle light service on Christmas Eve and 110 attended the Easter service. Twenty-six new members had joined the church since October of the previous year (1942). Attendance at the annual fall dinner meeting in 1938 was 114.

In 1938 changes in the by-laws were approved to change the name from First Unitarian Society to First Unitarian Church.

A sample of the extra church activities during this decade is one given on July 12, 1942 - a 45 minute summer musical at 6:30, followed by a cold supper.

In 1944 the minister was invited to join the Alton Ministerial Alliance and the church became a member of the Alton Council of Churches. The minister, Dr. John G. Gill, said "we are following a policy of cooperating with everything that is done for the benefit of Alton and tie ourselves in with the element that is liberal in all denominations".

Church school hours were changed from one to two hours.

This decade covered the period World War II, but only a few references to it were made in the church records. Saturday night parties were given for servicemen. A Military Service committee was appointed to keep in touch with men in the service from our church. Dudley F. Giberson resigned as treasurer when he joined the service. A statement by the minister - "For the present, intensity of program could compensate for lack of expansion in activities during war time".

Also, writing of the church during World War II brought to mind the following - The Church School teachers held a party for the children of the

church. There was rationing of meat and other things at this time. Wanting to make the party as pleasant as possible the teachers pooled some of their own ration stamps so they could have meat sandwiches. The reaction of the children was unexpected. It was "Where's the peanut butter?"

During the summer of 1944 there was a discussion group meeting every Sunday, carrying on the discussion of liberal religion.

In 1945 adult Sunday morning classes were held.

The Anna D. Sparks Alliance continued to be one of the strengths of the church, supporting it with service as well as financially. they also gave of their time and money to the community. Some of their services were contributions to the Community Chest, Red Cross, Alton Memorial Hospital building fund, and the Alton Women's Home. For much of the decade they made layettes for babies of disadvantaged mothers. One meeting a month was devoted to this sewing.

The church property was improved during this decade. In 1936 the stained glass windows were repaired (no mention was made of how or for what) at a cost of \$650.00. The interior of the church was decorated, costing \$165.00. Fifty new hymnals were purchased. The roof was repaired - \$273.71 and the apartment redecorated - approximately \$200.00. In 1938 it was decided to keep the wayside pulpit "if the cost remained between \$2.50 and \$5.00". A stoker was installed in 1941.

The Rev. Wallace Robbins, minister at the beginning of this decade, resigned in February 1938 to go to St. Paul, Minnesota. The Rev. Randall Hilton accepted the position May 17, 1938 and served until late in 1943, leaving to become secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference. The Rev. John G. Gill's ministry began March 1944 and continued into the next decade.

At the beginning of this decade (1936-46) the church was in

arrears \$3,000 on a loan from U.U.A. This loan dated October 11, 1926 for \$7500 was to be paid in ten years. At the end of 1946 the \$3,000 had been paid. This amount with the unusual expenses mentioned earlier and the regular yearly expenses were met with contributions from members and friends.

The minister in 1944 was quoted as saying "(he) liked our way of keeping the financial end unobtrusive - no collection plates - no talking money". The last report of the treasurer as the decade ended showed a balance of \$703.02 and no debt. It began with a balance of \$449.56 and a debt of \$3,000.00.

During the early part of this decade Sunday evening parties were held for the young people of the church and community, with supper served by the ladies of the church, followed by dancing and other entertainment. Melba and Henry McAdams remember their courting days and the Sunday evenings spent there.

The record of this decade ends with a quote from the minister's report in 1944, "the strength of the church is in its absence of rigidity, whether dogma or habit. It is flexible, open to new ideas, vigorous in its civic interest. There is no rigor mortis about it. A good balance of youth and experience and draws a fine loyalty from its members."

1944-1945

Theme for the Year: The Sense of Security —
"And underneath are the everlasting arms"
Deuteronomy 33:27

1944-45

Cradle Roll 1-2 yrs. Elnorah Drury, Leatha Hilton



Nursery and Kindergarten 3-4-5 yrs.
3 yrs. My Book for Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer - Dorothy Hull
4 yrs. Martin and Judy, Vol. 1 - Catherine Dittman
5 yrs. Martin and Judy, Vol. 2 - Marguerite Fay



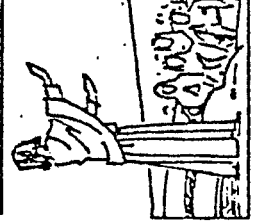
Primary 6-7-8 yrs.
6-7 yrs. Unit on the Gift of Life Wonders of Natural Things
Animal Babies, A Brand New Baby How Miracles Abound
Growing Bigger - Francis Jones Orland Forcade



Junior 9-10-11 yrs.
9-10 yrs. Beginnings of Earth and Sky Egyptian Prince, Nomad Sheikh
Beginnings of Life and Death Lawgiver - Child of the Sun
Norton Hilton Ethel Dettart



Intermediate 12-13-14 yrs. - Louise B. Griffiths, Ruth Ann Gainer
How Our Religion Began - The Church of Our Fathers
Writing Together a Book on the Development of the Church



Senior 15-16-17-18 yrs.
Origin of the Bible
How One Man Changed the World
Faith for Our Generation - John Gill

Adult Class - The Bible and Ethics - Hollis F. Ware

Experience-Centered Program of Religious Education

The First Unitarian Church
of Alton

3rd and Alby

Music

Harriet Rumsey - Ramona Harris
Girt
Evelyn P. Gill - Charlotte Ware

Objective: to increase our awareness of the world about us, realize the infinite value of perceptions, and the continuity of our own visions of right and wrong with the great prophets of the past.

Frances Y. Jones - Chairman
Louise B. Griffiths - Director
Irene Rich - Assistant
Mable McCallister - Secretary

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1946-1956

The 1946-56 decade began with everything going well. The minister, Dr. John G. Gill, was retained by unanimous vote. He spoke of his continuing goal of making our church a major factor in our community. "To evolve a community for creative living."

One hundred and four attended the annual fall meeting in 1946. The pledge goal was \$4,050 and \$4,106 had been received from eighty-one members and fifteen friends, with twenty new donors. The treasurer reported \$1,040.74 deposited in a surplus fund and \$349.42 on hand. In 1947-48 the minister's salary was raised.

The church school maintained an enrollment of 50 with an average attendance of 32. The adult forum maximum attendance was 19, average 10.

The Anna D. Sparks Alliance reported a membership of 84 in 1951. Other than supporting the church financially, the Anna D's, during this decade, had shipped twenty large cartons of useful clothing to the destitute people in Europe sold 750 cookbooks, making a profit of \$1,000, contributed money to seven community charitable organizations, bought a new stove for the kitchen, had the sanctuary painted, cooked and served the church dinners, had the pulpit chairs upholstered and purchased 32 metal folding chairs. They celebrated their fiftieth anniversary.

In 1946 the organist presented three organ recitals, a Good Friday meditation, and an oratorio with eight singers and an orchestra of eleven members.

Other programs during this decade were movies for children on Saturday afternoons, a series of five movies for adults, a "Parents Project" in which couples participated, a philosophy group, art classes, a "Talkfest for Teens", and a study group on "The spirit of the U.S. Constitution as evidenced in Supreme Court decisions". The Alton Art Guild and the Alton

Civic Orchestra met regularly at the church. Several successful public art exhibits were held.

A lawn supper was served Wednesday June 7, 1950 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. Nelson Schweppe at Prospect and Summit Streets overlooking the Mississippi river. 150 adults and 75 children were served. Hostesses were Mrs. E. Elwell, Mrs. Hugh L. Harris, Mrs. John D. McAdams, Mrs. Eben Rogers and Mrs. H. Nelson Schweppe.

A committee appointed by the Board helped to promote a public library in Alton.

Excerpts from a sermon by the minister on February 6, 1949 - "The noblest piece of English writing is generally considered to be the King James translation of the Bible,---The Bible remains the most important of books. No longer infallible, or uniform, or alone, but still the Epic of mankind, with a great sweeping vision of human history, and deep insights into the meaning of events, it gives us perspective on the confusion of our time.---The Bible has another message to us today, besides the vastness of its perspective. It is the conception of reality for which it uses the simpler and more naive word "God". "The creative thought of man", it suggests, "is not an unnatural happening, appearing out of sand and stones, but is itself kin to the sources from which it comes."

In 1948-50 an organization of committees covering all phases of church activities was adopted. Qualifications and responsibilities were defined for each chairman and committee, with each officer and trustee acting as liaison from the Board to a committee. The president in presenting these new organization plans stated that "by adopting the goals of "advancement of the moral, spiritual, cultural and humanitarian interests of the community we obligate ourselves as well as the minister to schieve them and thus should check periodically to see if each of us is doing his

proper share in organizing, supporting, and participating in those activities which are advancing the goals stated above. If we cannot score ourselves as performing satisfactorily, then we are not fulfilling our obligations as members of the First Unitarian Church of Alton and our complaints about the lack of effectiveness of the church must be partly directed against ourselves". The results of this very fine attempt to make the membership as well as the minister responsible for the growth and success of the church were diminished by the following events.

The church went through a difficult time in 1950. The minister had been accused by leaders and others in the community of instigating a move by the Blacks to enroll their children at the nearest white school. (Alton had segregated schools at that time.) This accusation was denied by the Blacks and the minister, who said he learned of the plan only a few days before it occurred. He then attempted to help prevent trouble by asking ministers and others to go to the schools to help maintain order.

This was a time when many people in the community were openly opposed to integration and were very angry. Our church officers and members received angry calls severely criticizing the church and the minister, whom they blamed for the integration attempt.

In 1948 a questionnaire evaluating the minister was sent to all members. 64 responded. The results were reported at the annual meeting in May and were - "Substantially all like the minister and think he is a pleasant person, a little less than half think he is not patient and does not understand the dynamics of human behavior. A substantial majority feel he is an inspiring, creative leader, and that he challenges the members with a vision of the function of the church. Majority consider his sermons effective". There was one reference to the minister not working with the new organization plan.

The trouble continued to smoulder through the summer and after several board members and officers resigned a meeting was held which resulted in his not returning to the Alton pulpit.

This was interpreted by the press as the church being against integration and made the national news in Time magazine and the St. Louis papers.

The Unitarian Ministers association was at first very critical of the Alton church and published an inaccurate report of the events in their newsletter to all of their members. Copies of the minutes of our Board and Congregational meetings were sent to U.U.A. and our Board met with the Executive committee of the U.M.A. to clear up other errors. Also the U.M.A. was informed that "It has not in the past been the policy of this church to ask the minister to promise to 'take no public stand on a community problem without the approval of the Board of Trustees', future ministers will not be asked to make such a promise". They were also informed that the congregation was on record as "believing in racial equality and universal brotherhood".

The U.M.A. published a correction in their national publication and sent a letter of commendation to our church leadership on their handling of the situation. "Would that all churches had such grand leadership in the cause we all serve". Also from Frederick M. Eliot, president of A.U.A. - "It seems to me that through these difficult days the people of the Alton church have conducted themselves with great dignity and propriety wholly in line with what I should have expected from the congregation of that church."

Late in 1950 the trustees voted to discontinue the evaluation of officers and the practice of having open meeting evaluation reports.

On April 17, 1951 the congregation voted to call the Rev. Zoltan Nagy, a displaced Unitarian minister from Hungary, as minister to the Alton

church. Nine new members were reported at the annual fall meeting.

In May 1952 the Unitarian-Universalist merger was approved by this church 30 to 1. The merger was approved nationally in June 1953, 289 Unitarian churches voted yes, 18 no. Fellowships voted 60 yes, 19 no. Universalists churches voted 74 yes, 46 no.

A committee of three was appointed in 1953 to join with Rev. Nagy "to work up material for information about our church to be put in the paper for those who believe as we do but know little about us." The minister also held fireside discussions with friends of Unitarianism and six discussion sessions with our youth in 1953 and reported 17 new members and a total church membership of 137. In 1955 the average church attendance was 61 and the church school had 65 registered.

Rev. Nagy is quoted as saying - "Religious education must concern itself with 'man's coming religion' rather than a religion of fear." Also, "The secret of Unitarianism is its slow growth - slow because reason plays such a great part in our religious life, a comparatively small part in the other religions."

The church sponsored a conference on group dynamics in 1954 and had an attendance of over 100 local civic leaders. Mr. Malcolm Knowles, of the Ford Foundation and a national authority on group dynamics, conducted the conference.

The ammendments to the by-laws during this decade provided for the succession of officers from Secretary to treasurer to Vice-President to President. Article VI, Sec. 1 to read "Minister shall be elected by the congregation at a meeting held in accordance with the by-laws. The term of election shall be unlimited with the exception that it may be terminated by either the minister or by the congregation with three months notice. This originally read "to be elected yearly".

Financially the church fared all right during this decade. The treasurer reported in 1948 that this was the 6th year that receipts had exceeded expenses. The practice of passing collection plates on Sunday morning was started in 1950.

In November of 1955 the church purchased a house at 1135 McKinley Blvd. to be used as a parsonage. The parsonage next to the church was used by the church school. The cost of the new building was \$19,950. A successful capital fund drive was held with a total of \$23,500 pledged by 69 members.

Following is an excerpt from Rev. Nagy's sermon given on January 6, 1952 - "No Christmas cake will ever be served to me which would taste better than that first pure, half white, wheat loaf of bread Mrs. Nagy and I received on our special holiday-ration card in Germany, after the war, at Christmas in 1945. Did it matter that on Christmas day we had but potatoes when we still could feel the taste of that loaf consumed at once while still warm from the baker's the previous day, and awake in the morning with its fragrance still in our nostrils?" Mrs. Nagy often had tears in her eyes on seeing plates returned with uneaten food at church dinners.

Rev. Nagy said when he arrived in Alton (1951) he doubted he would ever forget that he was a "Displaced Person" but today (1955) he feels at home in America. "Unitarians are made pretty much of the same stuff. They believe in freedom where faith is concerned. Use their reason in their beliefs. Hence the common faith in the dignity of the individual. Hence our belief in a religion not separate from life."

The end of the decade (1946-56) finds the church in good repair, financially solvent and attendance at its highest.

The last quote from this decade is from the minister in 1953.

"Love is the Spirit of this Church and Service is its Law.

To dwell together in Peace, To seek the Truth in Love,
And to help one another. This is our Covenant."

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1956-1966

The 1956-66 decade began and ended on the up-beat. This was one decade when everything seemed to go well. The Board minutes reported 21 new members joined in the 1957-58 church year and 26 in the 1960-61 year. Other years were not reported. The church school began the decade with an enrollment of 66 in 8 classes and ended with 138 representing 55 families with an average attendance of 100 each Sunday.

The following is taken from a church program dated July 21, 1957. The purpose of the church is given in the By-Laws, Article I, Section 3: "The purpose of this church is to advance the moral and spiritual interest of its members, and the community at large by the maintenance of public religious services and in other ways to help extend a knowledge and practice of pure religion."

This free church rejects both ecclesiastical and theological authority and stresses religious democracy. It operates under these principles of conduct; freedom, reason and tolerance. Thus we have no official creed binding on all who join this church, though individuals have their particular beliefs.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

The Fatherhood of God
The brotherhood of men
The Leadership of Jesus

Salvation by character

The progress of mankind

TODAY - 1957

Individual freedom of belief
Decipleship to advancing truth
The democratic process in human relations,
Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed,
Allegiance to the cause of a united world community.

OUR CHURCH SCHOOL

Our school of religion is a community of children who work and play and learn together, and who share with one another the deep experience of growing into maturity. It is where the open mind is cherished and nourished.

Instead of receiving dogmatic answers your child learns the greater joy born of a questioning mind and of an understanding heart so that he may build for himself an intelligent faith, a religion which is a living experience in his daily life.

In the autumn of 1956 the minister and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. Zoltan Nagy, went to Salzburg, Austria to work with the U.U.S.C. in helping the Hungarian refugees. Members and friends of the church made special donations which were used for emergency requests of refugees, special short term projects and financial aid to Hungarian Unitarians for needs such as food, supplementary clothing, doctor's bills and \$200 was deposited in Holland for Unitarian churches which surround Budapest. If this amount seems small remember this was 1956 not 1986. Mr. Nagy was a key person in the continuing work of the U.U.S.C. He resigned as minister of the Alton church to accept the pastorate of the Fairhaven, Mass. church in 1958. The Rev. Hugh Kennedy was called to the pulpit and arrived in April 1959.

In 1966 the financial drive chairman reported that in soliciting pledges and discussing why members and friends liked the church, "the keystone was Hugh Kennedy".

The treasury began the decade with an \$800 surplus. The first financial drive resulted in pledges exceeding the goal by \$200 and ended the decade by exceeding the goal by 5%. New hymnals and a piano were purchased. The parsonage was sold in 1965 and the money invested in the U.U.A. general fund. The church was tuckpointed at a cost of \$5,643.50 in 1957 and in 1961 the stained glass windows were repaired (\$485).

The Anna D. Sparks Alliance celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1958. They purchased cushions for the pews, re-tiled the vestibule, sent clothing to Hungary and in 1957 started the custom of outfitting a needy girl each year at Christmas. This custom continues today. To earn money for these projects they organized supper clubs, bridge tournaments, fall sales, canned and sold pickles and preserves and issued a new cookbook. They had programs on art, crafts, music, Alton history, Family welfare, water fluoridation, mental health, Indian affairs, Democracy and book reviews.

Coffee hours after Sunday morning church services were started at the request of Rev. Nagy and have continued to date.

A community art exhibit was held in the Wuerker room in the fall of 1965.

March 20th, 1961 the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the church was held with 100 attending. The Rev. Dana McLean Greely, president of the American Unitarian Association as guest speaker, urged his audience to remember that the liberal church must take responsibility of pointing the way to peace. "We must pioneer the mind of man from superstition and hate, toward the glorious future within his grasp." He opened his speech with "The past is only prologue - look forward to the next 125 years as well as back." "We have service beyond ourselves to render."

The Sunday evening forum was active during this decade, discussing such subjects as "The post Civil War as a background for the present civil rights controversy", "What is Unitarianism", and one most lively where censorship of libraries and bookstores was discussed. Non-Unitarians, active proponents of censorship, were invited and were present at this session.

We close the history of this decade (1956-66) with excerpts from a

speech made by William W. Reynolds, Chairman of the 125th Anniversary Committee.

"One hundred and twenty-five years ago man was confident that he stood at the threshold of complete understanding of the universe. Seventeenth century rationalism had brought forth a new force into the world: that of logical inquiry through the experimental method.

Man now stands poised ready to leave the bounds of earth to begin the great exploration of space. Thus the human drama continues - man the curious who asks whither, why and whence. A temporal creature who longs for the infinite.

The future will determine whether man will survive the awesome power released by the fruits of his intelligence to create a world where all can live in harmony in the pursuit of high purpose.

Our task is clear. We must rededicate ourselves to preserve the right of free inquiry to provide a place where every man can decide for himself the ultimate nature of things. We must hold the torch high so that all who share our concern for man, our quest for understanding free from dogma, will find their way to our door."

At the end of the 1956-66 decade the church services were well attended, the membership growing and the church school was over crowded to the point of danger. The church buildings are in good condition and are well used for church activities and by some community service organizations. Financially the church is solvent, the investments sound and "All's right with the world".

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1966-76

This decade of our church began with all signs on "Go". In October 1966 there were 151 students registered in the church school with 8 classes and 12 teachers. In December 1968 there were 155 church members and 63 friends.

The Anna D's celebrated their 70th anniversary with a Gay Nineties party for all church members and friends. They reported that they had had the chandelier in the sanctuary renovated by the American Plating Company in St. Louis. It was said the chandelier was hand-made and priceless. It was rewired, refinished, lacquered and missing parts replaced. The Anna D's bought new kitchen equipment, card tables, tableware and had the church Bible restored. several evening meetings were held in an effort to attract women who could not come in the daytime. This effort proved unsuccessful.

The crowded condition of the church school made it necessary to provide more space and it was decided that Emerson Hall (formerly the parsonage) should be torn down and replaced by a larger building connected to the main church bilding. By April 2nd, 1967 gifts and pledges amounting to \$59,000 had been received from 72 members and friends. There were also unrestricted funds available amounting to \$37,000. In October 1966 the plans were accpted for a new building replacing Emerson Hall. Estimated cost was \$112,000. The congregation approved making an unsecured loan at the bank for \$75,000. The architect stated he had never heard of a church borrowing a large amount without security being demanded in the form of a mortgage. The new building was dedicated April 19th, 1969 with 72 present.

During the summer of 1967 Sunday morning meetings were held in the air-conditioned homes of members.

The 1967-68 every member canvass was "over-the top" with 95

pledges. On April 15, 1968 the Treasurer reported finances for the year were short of the amount pledged. The Finance Chairman for 1968-69 sounded a note of alarm, 21 of last years donors not pledging. The Treasurer recommended cutting the budget \$6,000. In December they voted to raise the minister's salary. In September 1969 severe budget shortages were reported. Only 23 had paid on their pledges. 34 units had not pledged. By April 1968 the R. E. department reported attendance had dropped and several classes needed teachers. In 1971 the Church School reported no education taking place.

During the decade the minister worked with high school students in trouble, introduced sensitivity groups to the congregation and the community and new ideas of worship in Sunday morning service. Encounter groups were introduced in the late 1860's. They encouraged participants, including non church members, to expose their most personal thoughts and problems to group scrutiny and judgement which was not always sympathetic. Sometimes the results were not healing but the opposite. AS to new ideas of worship, one was a "Mass" at Sunday service. Some other changes were incorporated into the service and remain today. In 1970 a split in the congregation emerged mainly over encounter groups and the Sunday morning service. Income declined and eventually reached the point where the minister's salary could not be paid. He had been our minister for 11 years.

A young ministerial graduate was hired for 4 months in October 1971 at a much smaller salary. When it was found this could not be increased he resigned. The church was without a minister for the remainder of this decade. Regular Sunday morning services were held with speakers from the church and community. Improvements were made in the Wuerker room and the stained glass windows were protected by storm windows,

gifts of two members and the Anna D's.

Some extra activities included valentine parties given by the men of the church, a Pheasant dinner, a Fiesta Italiano, an Iranian and a Mexican dinner.

Discussion groups covered such topics as "The New Morality", "The New Technology", Peace Corps, and Tax Reform in Illinois.

The debt owed on the new building was \$29,197.79 with interest at 7-3/4% in February of 1970 and by the end of this decade (1976) it was reduced to \$8,100.

In 1974 Joseph Russo and Joseph Sutton were appointed to perform marriages and other church services. It was found that marriage would not be legal. Those wanting a church ceremony could have a civil ceremony performed earlier, followed by a church ceremony.

The Anna D's had only 17 members in 1975 but reported gifts to the church yearly budget of \$700 and to the building fund \$1,100.

Outside groups using the building included - League of Republican Women (regular meetings), Motion Expression Group, two Encounter groups, (with some church members), Welfare Rights Committee permitted to have one meeting and one bake sale per month, and the D. A. R. Iranian Youths used the building to celebrate their New Year, the Morning Star Baptist Church women used the Wuerker room for a tea and fashion show and the Historical Society held an exhibit of ancient curios and paintings in connection with the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Pere Marquette expedition in 1673. Classes for pre-school children from Lincoln Gardens were held regularly in the kindergarten room of the church on Monday through Friday. They were conducted by Irene Riehl.

In 1971 the church cooperated with other churches in providing recreation for Black Young people.

At the end of this decade the church was paying off the remaining indebtedness on the new building at a satisfactory rate and was keeping up with its current expenses. The Pulpit Committee secured speakers from the church membership and from outside the church including some Ministerial students.

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON 1976-86

The last decade of the first 150 years began with the Rev. Calvin Knapp serving as part time minister. Following Rev. Knapp was the Rev. Maryell Cleary from the New Olmstead, Ohio church, who served as "Minister on Loan" for six weeks - from October 25th to December 4th, 1977.

A Ministerial Search Committee was elected and in October 1978 the Rev. Sylvia A. Falconer was chosen. She was ordained June 23, 1979. Her ministry began January 1, 1979, continuing to March 1983 when she accepted the pastorage of the Golden, Colorado church. She was a talented, dramatic speaker, worked hard for women's rights, immediately became a member of the Alton Pastor's Association and was elected president of the group. She was the first Unitarian to achieve this distinction and served until she moved to Golden.

Two bequests were received in 1976 - the D. C. K. Hutchinson and the Assen Kresteff bequests.

In 1978 the church was placed on the National Register of Historic Buildings.

The financial statement of March 15, 1979 showed the net worth of the church to be \$532,323.00.

Over a period of years the Lewis & Clark Junior College rented a room for classes for young people working for G. E. D. certificates.

Francis Bollo built and installed the present (1985) Wayside Pulpit in the spring of 1980.

Aoi Duncanson and Eric Wiseman represented the church at the International Youth Assembly in Oxford, England in the summer of 1978. Ruth Shaw attended the meeting for Women's groups of the International Ass'n for Religious Freedom in Oxford, England and again three years later in the Netherlands. In 1984 Ruth together with Joyce and Paul Berney attended

a meeting of this group in Japan where the subject was "Religious Path the Peace - Eastern Initiative and Western Response".

In 1981 TV Channel 12 presented a short program on the history of the church building, narrated by Eda-Margaret Bollo.

The Rev. Dr. Jean Witman Gilpatrick was elected to be the minister following the Rev. Falconer. She began her ministry December 1st, 1983 and was ordained May 13th, 1984. Her stay was cut short due to the fact that her husband's plans to move here were not successful. She remained to the end of the church year May 30, 1985 having served only a year and a half. In July she and her husband joined a U.U.W.F. group flying to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in the non governmental organization conference which coincided with the final United Nations Decade for Women conference with its official national delegates.

The Religious Education Department is smaller than it used to be when families had more children. Today one, two or three is the rule. They have a very competent staff of teachers who plan many interesting activities for the young people. In 1982 they presented a play "Vignettes From Our Past 1836-1905" written by Mary Johnson.

The Anna D. Sparks Alliance continued their support the church during this decade. They also continued community service by sponsoring public C.P.R. training classes, preparing and serving three public luncheons for the Pastor's Association, yearly contributions to local charities, Unitarian-Universalist Service Committee, and outfitting a needy young girl each Christmas. This young girl is selected by the I.C.H.&A. or Family Services and her identity is not revealed even to the Anna D's. To support these projects and others they continue to operate a bridge tournament which began in October 1956 with sixteen couples playing twice a month from October to June. This tournament has grown through these 29 years

from 32 players to 162 in 1985-86 and owes much of its success to Dot Hull who organizes them and works out all the many, many details each year. The Anna D's also have a money making luncheon each year in the fall and a "thank you" luncheon in the spring for the bridge players when the bridge scores are announced.

The treasurer of the Anna D's reported an income for the decade (1976-1985) to date of \$28,537.00 and expenses of \$22,373.56.

The Social Action Committee reported they had shown the film "Remember Me" and "War Without Winners", served a third World dinner, and collected food and clothing for the poor.

The Christmas Eve service followed by refreshments in the Wuerker room continues to be well attended as well as traditional.

Valentine dinners cooked and served by the men are also enjoyed and could become traditional.

The Sunday morning Unitarian Forum is well attended. They present a wide variety of subjects and are fortunate to have many excellent leaders.

We are a church without the number of members usually considered necessary to maintain a church, yet we have existed 150 years.

Are we strong enough to establish a public school for the teaching of ethics and morals to school age children and young people???

The first woman to be elected president of the church was Barbara S. Giberson who served from 1976 to 1978.

Those serving the longest as officers of the church are as follows:

Anna D. Sparks, Treasurer 1881 to 1895

H. Nelson Schweppe, Secretary 1933-1948

Eben Rodgers, President 1930-1948

The following is a statement of Principles and Purposes as adopted by the U.U.A. at the annual General Assembly in Atlanta, GA in 1985. 1800

delegates attended.

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to Spiritual growth
in our congregation;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process
within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for
all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we
are a part.

All available church documents have been read and many re-read
and chronicled to see what kind of a statement they make for 150 years of
the First Unitarian church of Alton.

The founding fathers would find our church today quite different
from the first church organized in 1836. The one statement from the early
church which remains as strong today as in the first century is "Freedom of
Belief". a second statement which continued to recur as late as 1949 was
"To advance the moral, spiritual, cultural and humanitarian interests of the
community and world". You may ask "Why do we need a church and how can
we work together when it is quite possible we all have different beliefs?"
(that is speculative doctrinal beliefs). We do share ethical and moral values
and the desire to make a better world. As to why we need a church in
today's world - we need the support of others who believe in freedom of
belief for all and who will help protect that freedom.

Another statement occurring with monotonous regularity was the
need to repair the roof, buy or repair a furnace. (Mundane needs)

The church has survived with a congregation small in numbers but many members with outstanding capabilities - scientific, artistic, business and social. The church was without a minister from 1970 to 1979 but maintained the usual services. We have a beautiful building in a very fine setting. Our sphere of influence has increased from one community in 1836 to fifteen in 1986. Is our goal still to make a better community and a better world through the teaching and practice of ethics and morals? Our sphere of influence has increased but the power of our individual vote diminishes rapidly each day as the world population increases. In the year 1982 world population increased 82,077,000 and that increase grows exponentially. Whether we are actively working for a better world or doing nothing because the task is so great, we are still exercising our one vote in a positive or negative way. The strength and warmth of fellowship in this church added to the strength of other Unitarian-Universalist churches in the United States and the world gives us more chance of succeeding. Can we still say today that our church's goal is to make a better world by making our communities better places to live? Is mankind still evolving and will we see new and better ways to improve the world or will the continuing rise in population bring us to a lower common denominator?

We have looked back on 150 years of the Alton Unitarian church from pioneer days, through major wars, the industrial revolution and into the over populated atomic and space age. To influence this ever increasing "Family of Man" we must work harder through "moral integrity and human services" to make a better community to make a better world. We are fortunate to have a warm, caring friendly congregation to work with to achieve this goal and to maintain freedom of belief.

MINISTERS OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALTON

1836-1986

Rev. Charles A. Farley	1836-1837	Rev. W. W. Robbins	1934-1938
Rev. W. D. Haley	1853-1856	Rev. R. S. Hilton	1938-1943
Rev. J. D. Forman	1856-1851 1863-1864	Rev. J. G. Gill	1944-1950
Rev. D. H. Clark	1865-1867	Rev. Zoltan Nagy	1951-1958
Rev. H. P. Cutting	1867-1873	Rev. Hugh Kennedy	1959-1970
Rev. Isaac Kelso	1870-1873	Rev. Kelly Wells	1970-1970
Rev. H. C. Hogg	1878-1886	Rev. Calvin Knapp	1976
Rev. Judson Fisher	1878-1886	Part time	
		Rev. Sylvia A. Falconer	1977-1983
Rev. J. B. Frost	1886-1887	Rev. Dr. Jean Gilpatrick	1983-1985
Rev. H. D. Stevens	1889-1892		
Rev. W. M. Backus	1892-1898		
Rev. G. R. Gebauer	1899-1908		
Rev. L. M. Cady	1908-1909		
Prof. H. MacQueary	1909-1913		
Rev. Dr. C. W. Reese	1913-1915		
Rev. R. W. Holloway	1916-1919		
Rev. C. R. Carlin	1920-1925		
Prof. McQueary & Mr. Witter	1925-1928		
Mr. Harvey Swanson	1928-1929		
Rev. Phillip Mercer	1930-1934		

SOURCES:

1. History of the first hundred years. Rev Wallace W. Robbins.
2. History of the Alton Unitarian Church (1900 to 1901). Author unknown.
3. Minutes of the board of trustees (1853 to 1985).
4. Lillian Mueller, Hayner Public Library.
5. Papers and notes of Irene Mondhink.
6. Alton Evening Telegraph (1836 to 1933), on microfilm.

March, 1986
Lottie Brown Forcade