



THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY AND HERITAGE SOCIETY BULLETIN



Why Promote UU History?

By Kathleen Parker, *Editor of UUHHS Journal*

Recently a question was asked of our UUHHS leadership: “What purpose do you serve?” For those of us who love history, the answer seems obvious – history provides a record, albeit imperfect, of the past, helping to illuminate our understanding of the people who came before us. For UUs in particular, our study of Unitarian Universalist history can deepen the meanings we derive from our religious forbears and enrich our experience of UUism today. Selected examples from the latest issues of our *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History* illustrate this.

History tells us how individuals and groups in the past lived their lives, helping us to see how they were inspired by others and how they in turn affected the course of events and traditions. Peter Hughes (in vol. 37) dates the birth of Michael Servetus to a point five years prior to the date found in traditional accounts and shows that his anti-trinitarian views were influenced by his experiences in Spain, in particular his disaffection toward the forced baptism of Muslims there. The story of Dorcas Hiller Cleveland, told by Megan Joiner (in vol. 36), tells of the first woman to write “tracts” for the AUA in the late 1820s. In Cleveland’s *Dialogues*, Mrs. Henderson advises her son to reject abhorrent (Calvinist) dogmas for a more reasonable faith based on actual reading of the New Testament. Claudia Elferdink shows (in vol. 35) how ordained English minister Margaret Brackenberry Crook made a career teaching religion at Smith College when the AUA leadership was shutting women in America out of ministry. Jeff Liebmann’s analysis (also in vol. 35) of conflicted Unitarian responses to the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s shows that Unitarians were not of one mind in response to these complex historical forces.

History helps us identify models of struggle, conviction, and courage. In vol. 38, we learn from Colin Bossen how strongly Abby Price advocated for women’s rights at Hopedale. From Dan McKanan, we are introduced to Universalist reformer George Lippard, whose many novels advocated the redemption of the lowest and most wayward figures in society. Robert Reutenauer reveals the tumultuous life of Universalist



John Milton Niles whose career moved from newspaperman, to Congressman, to advocate for anti-slavery. Pete Guest gives us a first-time sociological analysis of Universalist motives for not supporting the Universalist Antislavery Petition of 1845. By the end of the nineteenth century, we see the successful western ministry of Mila Frances Tupper Maynard to churches and communities disrupted by the unfair censorship of AUA leadership, as told by Dana Capasso.

There is much we can learn as Unitarian Universalists from the study of our past – examining the documents left behind, piecing together the lives of those now gone, creating a record that can instruct, caution, and inspire us still today. Keep in mind, we are always looking for good articles and book reviews! Your next issue (vol. 39) of the *Journal* is just now coming together, assembled as always with these goals in mind.



Serendipity

By Jim Nugent

Meadville Lombard Theological School (MLTS) is working with HistoryIT, a digitization and archive management consulting firm founded by Dr. Kirsten Gwinn-Becker, to make more of its materials available on the Internet. This collaboration grew out of Dr. Gwinn-Becker's 2013 UUHHS Conrad Wright lecture at Meadville Lombard.

John Leeker, MLTS archivist is working with the HistoryIT staff to catalog and digitize its archival holdings. MLTS holds papers by William Henry Channing and many of the men and women associated with the former Western Unitarian Conference. Last year two truckloads of congregational records formerly housed in the basement at 25 Beacon Street were added to the MLTS archives.

Dr. Gwinn-Becker's 2013 Conrad Wright Lecture was on Emily Balch, a founder of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946. She is the author of ***Emily Greene Balch: The Long Road to Internationalism*** (University of Illinois Press, 2010).

For more information on the project visit: <http://www.historyit.com/>

PRESIDENT'S POST

by Earl Holt, *UUHHS President*

UUHHS has a new Board President, and as I take up the gavel I would like first to credit a few of the Society's notable accomplishments under the leadership of my two recent predecessors, Gordon Gibson and Kate Walker, and all those who worked with them.

Gordon was president from 2006 to 2011, and Kate served from 2011 to July of this year. Prior to this time, she served as President for several years of what was then the UU Women's Heritage Society. Both Gordon and Kate were deeply involved in the consolidation of UUWHS and UUHS, which added a second H to our masthead. This occurred just as the Society was for the first time formally incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

During this past decade the Society also inaugurated two very successful History Convos, both shared with Collegium, in 2010 and 2013, with plans for a third in the fall of 2016 now well underway. In addition we have recently begun a campaign to provide an endowment for the annual Conrad Wright Lecture. (Be assured that you will be hearing more about this.)

I am a neophyte on our Board, having served for just a year, but I am very conscious of the legacy of board members and others who have faithfully carried forward the work of the Society. We build upon the legacy of the past, and I have appreciated working



Kristen Gwinn-Becker delivering 2013 Conrad Wright Lecture in the Atherton Lounge overlooking Grant Park and Lake Michigan.

under Kate's (a.k.a. "Captin' Kate") steady but enthusiastic leadership this year. As I succeed her, for better or worse, I feel she has given me both big shoes to fill and an inspiring example to follow. We owe her, and Gordon, a great measure of gratitude for their long and faithful service, along with all those who have contributed to the work of the Society in myriad capacities over the years.

I am still about the task of learning all the aspects of what I call the several "moving parts" of our shared endeavors. The scope and quality of the Society's varied programs is really quite remarkable, especially considering that it is almost entirely a volunteer enterprise. We are blessed to have on our Board and in our membership many who care so deeply about our movement and its foundation in a significant history, that they willingly contribute to its work, not only financially (though that is very important) but also in important volunteer roles. Thank you all. (Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2)

A FINAL THOUGHT

Many of you may be familiar with the “Common Meditation” series, short passages from a wide variety of sources sent out daily by Galen Guenrich, Minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City. I have subscribed for several years. (If you would like to try it go to www.allsoulsnyc and you will see a link to sign up on their home page.) By serendipity, or perhaps something more, the Meditation sent out on Saturday, July 11, the second day of our Society Board Meeting, was this reflection on the importance of history, from Gretel Ehrlich:

History is not truth versus falsehoods, but a mixture of both, a mélange of tendencies, reactions, dreams, errors, and power plays. What’s important is what we make of it; its moral use. By writing history, we can widen readers thinking and deepen their sympathies in every direction. Perhaps history should show us not how to control the world, but how to enlarge, deepen, and discipline ourselves.

ADVANCE NOTICE
UUHHS WILL HAVE A NEW ADDRESS AS OF JANUARY 1, 2016!
After that date all correspondence should be addressed to:
UUHHS
670 High Street
Dedham, MA 02026

The UUHHS Board 2015/2016



L-R: John Marsh, Mark Harris, Dan McKanan, Colin Bossen, Kate Walker, Earl Holt, Barbara Coeyman, Phoebe Cos, Kathy Parker (missing Nicole Kirk, Helen Zidowecki, Paul Sprecher).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

UUHHS welcomed two new members to its board this summer: Nicole Kirk and Phoebe Cos. Nicole Kirk joined the Meadville Lombard faculty as the first Dr. J Frank Schulman and Alice Schulman professor of UU History in July of 2012. She received her PhD in American church history and also a DMin from the Princeton Theological Seminary. Formerly she had served for eight years as minister of the East Shore Unitarian Universalist Church in Kirtland, Ohio. Phoebe Cos is a senior at Mount Holyoke College where her major is history and her minor public history, archival and museum studies, and she heads the UU group on campus. She spent her junior year in Prague, Czech Republic and the Khasi Hills of Northeast India, learning about the history of Unitarians in both regions.

CONVO IS COMING!

Specific plans for the Fall 2016 Convo are near completion as we go to press. More information to follow!

LOOKING AHEAD

We shall reach some Milestone Anniversaries in the next few years, and we anticipate acknowledging each event, either on our own or in partnership with others. Please let us know if you have a special interest in working on any of these.

2017 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Henry David Thoreau on July 12, in Concord, Massachusetts.

2019 marks the 200th Anniversary on May 5 of William Ellery Channing's seminal Baltimore Sermon, "Unitarian Christianity".

2020 marks the 250th Anniversary of the first Universalist sermon preached in America, on September 20 by John Murray in New Jersey. Coincidentally, Murray's wife, the estimable Judith Sargeant Murray died on June 9, 1820, so this year also marks the 200th anniversary of her death.

BOOK REVIEW: *William James Potter, Vol. 2: Visionary Social and Religious Reformer*

By Jim Nugent

The second volume of Richard Kellaway's biography of William James Potter is a must read for UU history buffs. Volume 1 covered Potter's Quaker upbringing, Harvard education, and European travels. Volume 2 picks up Potter's story in 1860 when he is installed as minister to the First Congregational Society in New Bedford, Massachusetts. I learned a lot about our larger movement from this in-depth longitudinal study of one extraordinary minister. I found volume 2 more interesting and informative than volume 1 because Potter's life and work is representative of the changes within our denomination during his lifetime and it touches on the cross fertilization with Transcendentalism, free religion, and other movements of the time.

From the Women's Portfolio:

By Barbara Coeyman, *UUHHS Board Member*

Now that Helen Zidowecki has completed a history of the UU Women's Heritage Society (UJWHS) (see article on next page), as the UUHHS board member holding the Women's Portfolio, I want to turn our women's history attention to adding articles on women for the *Dictionary of UU Biography* (for more information visit <http://uudb.org/>). Currently there are approximately seventy-five completed entries on women, with about twice as many proposed but incomplete. For the next few years, we aim to add about five new articles on women each year: that is, by summer 2016 we will complete the first five articles. Surprisingly, the *Dictionary* includes no biography of Susan B. Anthony, Sophia Fahs, Phebe Hanaford, or Ada Bowles. There are certainly other women in our UU history who are not identified on the "proposed" list. Whose biography would you like to see in the *Dictionary*?

Therefore, I welcome input from readers of this newsletter. Please consult the *DUUB* for the list of incomplete articles on women (too long to publish in this newsletter). If you are interested in writing any of the proposed articles, please contact me at revbarbarac@comcast.net and I will put you in touch with the *DUUB* editor, Jim Nugent. Also, if you have interest in and information about other women not on the proposed list who you would like to add to the dictionary, please send me a note about an additional entry. Editorial guidelines for Dictionary entries are found on the *DUUB* website.

This well documented biography, based on extensive research and analysis, presents a comprehensive picture of Potter, the founder of the Free Religious Association (FRA). Even more important, it presents a comprehensive view of the evolution of liberal religious thought during the last half of the nineteenth century. It documents the interplay between the Liberal or Free Religion movements and the other strains of religious thought that were important after the Civil War. It also traces the interplay between the American Unitarian Association (AUA) and the National Conference of Unitarian Churches.

Paperback and hardback versions are available at Amazon.com or you can download the Kindle e-book for under four dollars and start reading within minutes.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S HERITAGE STORY

By Helen Zidowecki, *UUHHS Board Member and UUWHS History Compiler*

It is impossible to name all of the people who participated in the Unitarian Universalist Women's Heritage Society (UUWHS) "movement" from the inception of Rev. Dr. Dorothy May Emerson's Women's History Publication Project in 1988, through over a decade of activity as the UUWHS, to the merger of the Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society (UUHHS) in 2011. Women and men took to the stage, literally and figuratively, to discover and preserve the stories of Unitarian and Universalist (U/U) and Unitarian Universalist (UU) women's lives so that future generations could be inspired by their wisdom and courage.

The very nature of the UUWHS made it a catalyst for bringing the contributions of Unitarian and Universalist women forward. A major focus was the gathering and publication of materials by and about U/U women through worship services; newsletters (*The Flame*); occasional papers about specific U/U women; oral History manual; calendars with pages sponsored by individuals and congregations, compiled into *UU Women: Liberating History* (2008); resources at the GA booth; displays and presentations and the traveling exhibit; and publication of several books.

The conversion of materials developed by the UUWHS to electronic format, with the repository being the UUHHS website (www.uuhhs.org) under Women's Resources, is still ongoing. The Library of a thousand volumes moved to Andover Newton Theological Seminary in 2012. UUWHS actively engaged with organizations such as UU Historical Society, UU Religious Education History Group, and UU Collegium toward a broader group that focuses on UU history, with a strong component on women.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS AND LIKE TO TRAVEL, THIS IS WORTH A LOOK!

Since 2009 the Rev. Jenny Rankin and partners have offered "small and engaging tours for the intellectually curious traveler who wants to explore the philosophical, literary and spiritual legacy of New England Transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller."

In 2016 they have two weeklong tours scheduled: "Rome and the Countryside", May 17 to 25 and a "Sicily Sojourn", May 25 to June 3. Full information is available on their website, www.transcendentalisttours.com

UUWHS engaged people and organizations within and outside of UU circles at various levels (individual, congregational, denominational) and from various backgrounds (grassroots and academic). The diversity of U/U women included in the worship services, publications, and the calendars reflected the recognition that all women were important in their own ways.

UU women's history and heritage must continue to be available at all levels (personal, congregational and denominational, and from grassroots to academia). History is never complete, as we continually discover new information. This is our heritage. Read about our Unitarian and Universalist women's heritage. Order the *UUWHS Story* from UUHHS now!

ORDER/PURCHASE FORM

Unitarian Universalist Women's Heritage Society Story

Your Name: _____ E-mail or

phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Zip _____

Item	# items ordered	Postage & Handling	Amount \$
Books \$25 each		\$6 first book/\$3 per additional book	
CD \$10 each		\$2 first CD/\$1 per additional CD	
Totals		----- --	

Make checks out to Unitarian Universalist History and Heritage Society (UUHHS). Send your Order with payment to UUHHS, 27 Grove Street, Scituate, MA 02066. After January 1st, 2016, mail to UUHHS, 670 High St., Dedham, MA 02026

For information about the book, contact Rev. Helen Zidowecki, 32 Stevenstown Road, Litchfield, ME 04350, hzmre@hzmre.com or 207-582-5308.



“Long Lost History from Thoreau”

By Mark Harris, *UUHHS Vice President*



Just as the UUHHS Board began to consider ways to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Henry David Thoreau in 2017, an important original manuscript surfaced. What is even more exciting is that the document brings together the three most famous names in Transcendentalism: Emerson, Fuller and Thoreau. In early August the *Boston Globe* reported that Harvard’s Houghton Library had acquired Thoreau’s original notes concerning one of the great human tragedies of this era of history. In July 1850 Thoreau was asked by Emerson to travel to Fire Island to uncover whatever information or remains he could find to shed light on the drowning death of Margaret Fuller, her husband Giovanni Ossoli, and their son Nino in a shipwreck off the coast of New York.

Thoreau’s notes constitute an important manuscript discovery for scholars and lovers of UU history alike. Fuller and her family were traveling aboard a small cargo ship that was wrecked in a storm. When Emerson learned about the tragedy, he asked Thoreau to travel to the sight to investigate and question both survivors and witnesses. He also wanted to learn what had happened to her manuscripts, especially her account of the Italian revolution. These original pages of what Thoreau found supersede what had been only second- and third-hand accounts of his discoveries that day. Here in Thoreau’s hastily inscribed pencil notes is a description of the condition of the boy’s body, the only member of the family to be found. Thoreau was also highly critical of those who became scavengers of the site, hoarding belongings that washed up on shore. Thoreau wrote that “thieves . . . withdrew a little & divided the spoil.” In these notes, we also gain a glimpse of Margaret Fuller’s final moments.

These 165-year-old notes had been seemingly lost, but their discovery sheds lights upon a quirk of publishing history. In 1906 Houghton Mifflin published a twenty-volume edition of Thoreau’s works. As a special bonus to boost sales, the publisher had bound original pieces of a Thoreau manuscript into 600 special sets. Most sets only included a page or two, but this particular set, purchased by Harvard, contained nine leaves or eighteen pages total. In addition they were also framed in paper to bind them into the volumes. When the paper was carefully removed there was further treasure in the margins. This gold was Thoreau’s original notes along the edges of the pages. These pages are a major discovery for all those interested in the history of Transcendentalism, and are especially timely as we prepare to contemplate and celebrate Thoreau’s place in our UU history.

Membership Dues:

Students \$30 Regular \$50 Three year \$125

Membership Renewal!

Your membership expires in June of the year on your mailing label or in the Subject line of the email you received. To renew or extend your membership, contact: Paul Sprecher, UUHHS, 27 Grove St., Scituate, MA 02066, (after January 2016: UUHHS, 670 High Street, Dedham, MA 02026) or email membership@uuhhs.org. You can also renew ONLINE at uuhhs.org/Join. Simply print out the form, fill it in, drop it in the mail, or use PayPal option from that page.