

EARLY UNIVERSALISTS ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE

VISIT TO MARTHA'S VINEYARD - Letter from Rev. Z. Baker, Providence, RI
November 15, 1837

Rev. Baker left Providence on October 10 with Bro. Balch who preached there that evening. Next he went to New Bedford and visit Bro. Spear. Next he visited Bro. Taylor at Mattapoisset who divides his time with Sippican.

Then Rev. Baker took the packet, Branch, with Capt. Smith for Edgartown and stayed with John P. Norton. He preached to a small group in the morning and a large one in the evening. "The people have heard that Universalism is bad doctrine."

On Monday he was introduced to Mr. Tilton, the Orthodox (Congregationalist) clergyman of Edgartown.

On Tuesday he started for Holmes Hole but stopped to call on Ichabod Norton, Esq., a bachelor of 76 who had been born a Universalist. Mr. Norton is said to be the richest on the island, "he will do considerable for the promulgation of the gospel of peace."

He was welcomed in Holmes Hole by kind friends and found "many of the Abrahamic faith here" to whom I gave a lecture on Wednesday evening.

With a friend, he went four miles to the North Shore. The previous evening Mr. Chase, a Presbyterian, hearing that a Universalist was coming the next day, warned his listeners not to attend. The meeting in the school house was well attended and Rev. Baker preached for an hour and a half.

Saturday evening he returned to Ichabod Norton and gave a lecture, Sunday he returned to Holmes Hole where Mr. Chase resides and preaches, full attendance, more than could be accommodated in the chapel, and preached in the afternoon and evening.

Rev. Baker set out for Chilmark on Monday, and found no friends in West Tisbury, he was denied a house or a place of meeting and there was no public house. He found a house where there was some tea, but the host was uncomfortable with a Universalist, so he continued on to Chilmark. Before leaving, however, he made arrangements for the school house to be used and placed a notice in the store.

In Chilmark he met John Hancock and was once more among friends. He preached there on Tuesday and went back to West Tisbury on Wednesday.

In West Tisbury the school was full where he was heard with attention.

Thursday he planned to go to Nantucket but got word that there was no house in which to hold a meeting.

Sunday he preached in Edgartown. He had intended to go back to Holmes Hole but the chapel was unavailable and a home would have been too small. Rev. Baker spent his time in Edgartown with the Baptist minister, Mr. Hall who is "decidedly opposed to Arminianism."

"There are three towns upon the island, viz. Edgartown, Tisbury and Chilmark. In Edgartown there are three Societies now alive. There has been a Unitarian Society here, but I believe it is now extinct. The Methodists are the most numerous, Presbyterian not very large, Baptist very small. I did not find a great many who are openly Universalists;

probably a great many nearly such, or would be if they were informed upon the subject.”
“Tisbury of which Holmes Hole is a part, contains a great many Universalists. If they were brought together, they would embrace half the town in means, and I think nearly that in numbers, and there are three other Societies in town, the Presbyterians in West Tisbury, Baptists and Methodists at Holmes Hole.”

“The Baptists have just finished an elegant house at Holmes Hole. The Universalists have invested considerable sums of money in the house, but whether they are to own in proportion to the stock invested, I am totally unable to say. It is pretty certain if the Baptists have a preacher, that he will occupy the house, and if the Universalists have one likewise, they will want a nice place of worship.”

Rev. Baker thinks there is room for Universalists in Chilmark.

“There are Universalists enough upon the Island to give a preacher a good support and not feel burdened at all. The chief difficulty will be to get them together. Rev. Baker thinks that they have a process for collecting (money) to support “a judicious, zealous, prudent man to come among them.”

“I have never been so warmly received or treated with such kind hospitality as by the people of the Island” for which he is very grateful. He took the boat back to New Bedford the next day, the weather was bad and he was seasick. He had been gone three weeks.

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, December 7, 1845

MARTHA’S VINEYARD - Letter from D. P. Livermore, Fall River, Aug. 21, 1845

Seeking to leave the crowded, hot city, Mr. Livermore visits Martha’s Vineyard which has cool breezes.

He leaves New Bedford on the 5th of the month and at the advice of Br. Fletcher of New Bedford, takes the steamer, Massachusetts. He lands at “Holmes Hole, but more properly called East Tisbury” where he is met by John Barrows. He describes the green island and speaks of the Gay Head lighthouse and the many colors of the cliffs.

“In Tisbury, where we were accommodated, are three churches - Baptist, Congregationalist and Methodist. There are but few *open* professors of liberal Christianity in the place, but those few are choice spirits.”

“At their request, meetings were held during our visit and they were well attended beyond our expectations. Both the school house and the dwelling house where we held our meetings were filled, and the people listened with apparent interest and attention to Br. Fletcher and myself as we spoke of the precious, cheering, glorious promises of our faith. We endeavored to commend Universalism as the comforting, cheering religion, which we ourselves have found it..”

They returned home and “can never cease to remember our Brs. John and Thomas Barrows” who were so hospitable.

“Now that I have visited the Vineyard, I am, like others, astonished that it is not a great resort as a ‘watering place’ as it is favorable situated for a Summer residence, more so, perhaps that many of the fashionable resorts along the sea shore.”

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, October 16, 1858

SOME ACCOUNT of Missionary Labor in one of the Isles of the Sea , By A Missionary

The missionary, (Br. Bruce of Sippican), his wife and five other zealous souls traveled to Holmes Hole where he is met by Peleg Barrows.

Learning that a Universalist minister has not been on the island in five years, they were determined to be “as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.”

With only a few hours to “serve the notice”, they expected few, but found a hundred had come to the hall. After an hour and a half, several followed them home for more discussion.

There were two meeting houses in the town, (Baptist and Congregationalist), without pastors for a year, but both were denied them. They met in “the Hall” where two to three hundred people came. Many followed them home for further discourse again.

Following this account, there is a correspondence between A Missionary and Rev.

Latham who is the Methodist minister. The first is an invitation from A Missionary to attend a meeting as “we are both striving to do our work in the same name, and likewise, that we work for a common object” etc.

Rev Latham replies that he “regards Universalism as a great and in multitudes of instances, a *fatal* error and believe that its legitimate tendency is to ‘unchain the tiger’ of depravity in the human soul and in human society.”

This exchange is followed by a long letter from Br. D. H. Plumb recommending himself as a missionary.

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, April 16, 1859

CONFERENCE ON THE VINEYARD.

“There will be a Conference of the Old Colony Association of Universalists held in the village of Holmes Hole on the second Wednesday and Thursday (11th and 12th) of May. A cordial and very earnest invitation is extended to all friends and the ‘region round about’ to attend, and encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of the very worthy friends in that place.”

“The fare on the Steamboat will be half price, one dollar to go and return.”

NOTE: There is no further account of this meeting perhaps it did not occur.

TRUM[ET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, July 2, 1859

“The Editor (Rev. Thomas Whittemore) of this publication will preach in Holmes Hole on Sunday, July 17

The next week there was a notice in the paper that the editor had not edited that edition because he was away on Martha’s Vineyard, “not for recreation, but to preach the Gospel of the blessed God.”

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, July 30, 1859

Visit to Martha’s Vineyard by Rev. Thomas Whittemore (editor)

Rev. Whittemore had traveled to Holmes Hole on Saturday via steamer from New Bedford.

He was met in Holmes Hole by Peleg Barrows and, that evening, visited Samuel Daggett, 96, who came to the service next day.

Sunday morning was devoted to the Sabbath School and afternoon services were at 3:30 and 5:30 in the Orthodox church (Congregationalist). "The Society which built this house has suffered much by removals and by death; and it discontinued its meetings some time ago. The house is a very pretty one, of modern architecture, with a handsome steeple. It needs painting without; but is beautifully frescoed within. It is a very pleasant temple, and stands in a commanding and central location."

He preached on important gospel themes to a large number of worshipers.

He departed on Tuesday and visited with Dr. W. G. Bruce in New Bedford before going home. He arrived home with lumbago.

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, July 30, 1859

UNIVERSALIST CREED, Written by Mr. Samuel Daggett of Holmes Hole, Mass, now in his 96th year

Upright in heart, in all their dealings just;
In God's free grace they put their only trust;
And in his boundless, universal love,
They place their hope of heaven and bliss above;
And when life's scene is drawing to its close,
Gently they drop into their last repose;
And as in Adam death o'er all does reign,
Even so in Christ shall all be raised again.

TRUMPET AND UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE, August 20, 1859

A notice that Br. S. Cobb will preach in Holmes Hole, August 28