



PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FAMILIES STILL VISIBLE IN BURLINGTON TODAY

Many of Plymouth Congregational Church’s founding members were prominent pioneers whose significant contributions to the Burlington community helped to shape the city – and church – as we know it today.

BUSHNELL

“Born in 1875, Ida Bushnell was the only child of William and Sara (nee Toombs) Bushnell, and William was the only surviving child of David and Elizabeth Bushnell. David Bushnell is reported to be the earliest settler in the Burlington area. His farm was along the area now known as Highway 142 (Bushnell Road). Ida Bushnell attended Burlington schools and graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin. She returned to Burlington and taught Latin at Burlington High School. She spent her entire life on the family farm, which she gave to Racine County to develop as a park when she died in 1966. In addition to the land slated as a county park, Racine County also received certain investments and other property, which were placed in trust for the care and maintenance of the park. There has been ongoing development of the 95-acre park since the early 1970s.

Ida Bushnell’s funeral was June 23, 1966 at Plymouth Congregational chapel, with Rev. Trent Rockwell officiating. In 1972, the church narthex was built with funds that were willed by Bushnell and three other women. A \$23,000 bequest from Ida Bushnell was used for church remodeling.



MRS. O. W. CHANDLER

CHANDLER

Oliver W. and Eunice C. Chandler’s names appear in the minutes book of the Plymouth Church and Society of 1888, and he was an honorary pall bearer at the Plymouth funeral of Rev. L. A. Pettibone. Oliver and Eunice were married in Burlington in 1863. They then lived in other places, returning to Burlington in 1872. He sold musical instruments in his later active years. Oliver’s sister was the wife of Charles G. Foltz, trustee and long-time clerk of Plymouth. Eunice Chandler joined Plymouth in May 1872, sang in the choir, and was church organist for many years. She also sang at the funeral of Rev. Pettibone. Eunice died January 16, 1912. Her picture (left) was among those in a collection given by Plymouth church members to Rev. Pettibone as a farewell gift in 1863.

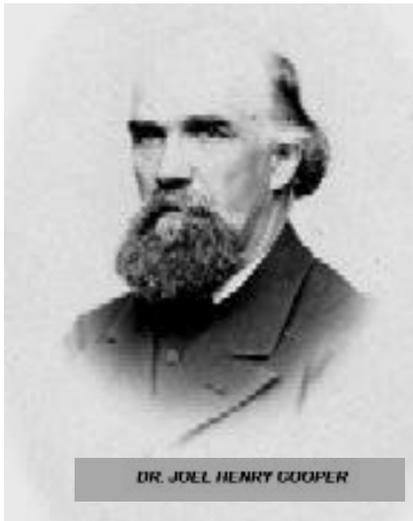
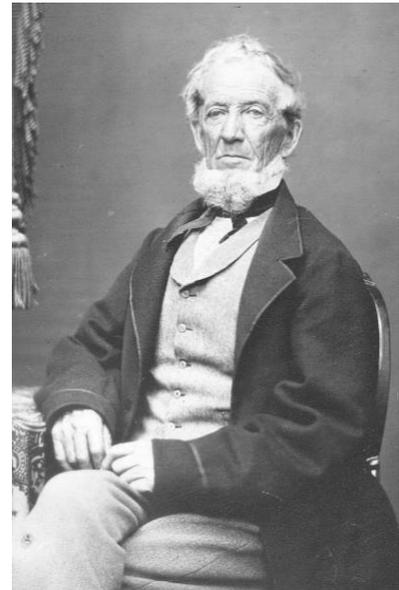
The Chandler family lived in the white frame home on the hill on the northwest corner of Kane Street and Chandler Boulevard. Oliver’s funeral in October 1921 was conducted by Plymouth’s Rev. E. L. Benson.



CONKEY

Lucius Conkey, born in 1793 in Vermont, lived in St. Lawrence County, New York until he and his second wife moved to Burlington in 1852. Children by first wife, Elizabeth Townsend, include: James Henry, Elizabeth (m. Ephraim Perkins), Dewitt Clinton, Ellen (m. Pliny Perkins) and Phoebe (died at 18). After the death of Elizabeth, he married Frances (Fanny) Kinney in 1852. Their children were: Martha, Lucius W. (m. Julia Sheldon), and Clara (m. Lafayette Webb).

Conkey is listed as giving \$26.25 to Plymouth Church May 9, 1859. A communion table, once used as the altar in the church chapel, was presented in memory of Lucius and Frances by their children and grandchildren on October 28, 1891 at a special service at Plymouth Church. Lucius died February 28, 1867. A window in the sanctuary of Plymouth Church commemorates his daughter and son-in-law, Ellen and Pliny Merrick Perkins. Others in this family were also very active at Plymouth. Miss Martha Conkey joined the church in the first class after its organization.



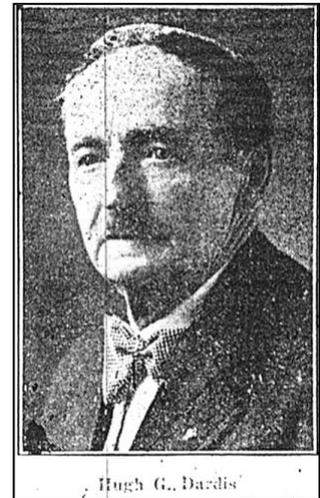
COOPER

Joel Henry Cooper owned a drug store and was one of Burlington's earliest doctors. After graduating from the Rush Medical college in Chicago in 1853, Cooper moved to Burlington with his family. Dr. Cooper is listed as giving \$26.25 to Plymouth Church May 9, 1859. In 1861, he was appointed by President Lincoln as Burlington's postmaster, an office he held until 1874. During that time, the post office was located in Cooper's drug store. The family lived in the house right next to what is now known as Lincoln School. The house has been identified as one of the Burlington stops on the Underground Railroad. Dr. Cooper died on September 3, 1893. The funeral conducted by Rev. Pettibone. His wife, Persis Allen Cooper, died December 13, 1897. Her funeral was also held at Plymouth church. Both are buried at the Burlington Cemetery. Congressman Henry Allen Cooper, for whom the Conkey Street School was later renamed (1940), was the eldest son of Dr. Cooper.



DARDIS

Hugh G. Dardis learned the carpenter's trade and later entered the lumber business. In the late 1840s, he came to Burlington and established the Dardis Lumber Co. He married Sarah Anna Smith in 1879. Their daughter Mary was especially active in Plymouth Church, and a lifetime member. Hugh was also active, having been a trustee for many years. His funeral services were conducted with Rev. Stever and Rev. Stackman officiating. Several streets on the western end of Burlington are named for members of this family.



Hugh G. Dardis



DEVOR

William R. Devor was publisher and editor of the Burlington Free Press from 1891 until 1920 when he sold the paper to Kirchner and Koch. He continued his newspaper activities for the next 20 years, as editor of the Free Press and correspondent for papers in Racine, Milwaukee and Chicago. He was a long time member of Plymouth Church, active on boards and contributing to various church projects. Rev. Henry Schadeberg officiated at his funeral in January 1954. His wife Clare was continuously active in his work. She was a charter member of Plymouth's Woman's Club.

Their only child, Clara was baptized at Plymouth in 1906 and was confirmed in March 1921. She taught at Burlington High School for nearly 20 years and was always active at Plymouth. The Devor Fund was established by a \$33,000 bequest to provide for educational purposes in perpetuity for Plymouth's youth and adult education program. Clara died in March 1963.

DYER

Dr. Edward G. Dyer, Burlington's first physician and ardent abolitionist, brought his family to Burlington in June 1839 when government land was available for \$1.25 per acre. Dyer had first come to Foxville in spring of 1837 to help his brother-in-law, Origen Perkins, develop his claim. Dr. Dyer and his wife Ann Eliza (nee Morse) were among a small group of people who peacefully broke away from the Baptist church at Spring Prairie and formed a new Baptist church in 1843.

In a newspaper account of 1883, Deacon Thurston spoke of having organized with the assistance of Mrs. Pliny M. Perkins and Mrs. Edward Dyer, the first 'Sabbath School' at Plymouth. Dr. and Mrs. Dyer's daughter Harriet wrote letters for a couple of Plymouth publications in which she recalls happy memories of her early years at Plymouth Church with her mother. For the publication of 1902, she wrote a long letter recalling early services, sitting by her mother and



observing events and people around her, including her sister Emily at the melodeon. She also mentioned her mother working on church projects to aid the young men fighting in the Civil War. Harriet wrote another letter for the 50th anniversary Plymouth publication. The photo above shows Harriet as a choir member sometime between 1880 and 1895. In 1865, Harriet married Franklin B. Norton. After his death, she lived her later years in Pasadena, California. She is buried in the family plot at the Burlington cemetery.

In 2000, Burlington Intermediate School was named for Dr. Dyer.

GARDNER

Palmer Gardner established a land claim just west of Burlington in the spring of 1836. The area of his claim came to be known as Gardner's Prairie. In 1872, Gardner moved to Burlington where he built a two-story house on the north end of Kane Street. That house, with a third story and tower added, was later owned by the Patterson and Waller families. It was moved to the Shiloh Hills subdivision in April 1996. There are other Gardners in early Burlington.

Palmer and Margaret S. (nee Williams) had one child Lucretia Gardner born November 24, 1844. She died February 1, 1865. Her picture (right) was among those in a collection given by Plymouth church members to Rev. P. C. Pettibone as a farewell gift in 1863.



LUCRETIA GARDNER



MEINHARDT

The wife of Rev. Luman A. Pettibone was Alma Maria Meinhardt. Alma's parents, Anthony Meinhardt and Elisa Riel's other children included: Dr. Francis, Eda, Albert, Nellie, Antoinette and Nona. Luman and Alma's daughter Cornelia married Sherman L. Dudley, both being very active lifetime members of Plymouth Church.

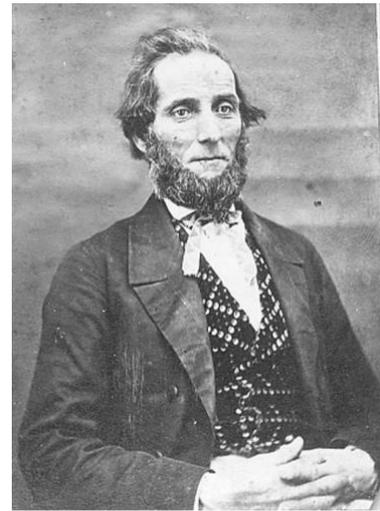
In 1943, Eda and Albert Meinhardt bought the Charles Beller estate property at 397 Jefferson St. with the intention to donate the real estate to the city for park and recreation purposes. The city accepted the property, located on the east bank of the Fox river extending south about a block from the Jefferson St. bridge. In the early 1900s, a pioneer cabin was moved to the Dr. Francis Meinhardt property on Kane St., later donated as an historical monument which today is located in Wehmhoff Square. Dr.

Francis Meinhardt donated the Lincoln Statue at State and Kane Streets to the City of Burlington. Mrs. Antoinette Meinhardt Fulton was the first president of the Burlington Historical society in 1928.



PERKINS

Pliny M. Perkins in 1834, at the age of 22, made the entire journey from Utica, N. Y. to Joliet, Illinois on horseback. In 1838 he came to Burlington, bought one half-section claim of government land, and built a saw-mill and a frame residence in which he lived two years. In 1840, he built the first large frame residence in this town as his private dwelling. He married Ellen A. Conkey in 1846. Perkins built the first grist-mill in Burlington from which the first flour shipment was made from Wisconsin to New York. He was also connected with the Burlington Underground Railroad.



P. M. PERKINS

Perkin's name appears as an original pew holder in the Free Church Society in Burlington. On March 29, 1859, a meeting was held to organize the Plymouth Congregational Society, to co-operate with the Church in sustaining religious worship. Perkins was among those elected as trustees who adopted a church constitution.

Ellen Perkins was very active in the church and both are remembered in a memorial window in the church sanctuary. His photo was among those in a collection given by Plymouth church members to Rev. Pettibone as a farewell gift in 1863. Perkins Boulevard honors the Perkins family including Origen and Ephraim. Funeral services for Pliny Perkins were held at Plymouth Church on April 24, 1881.



H. A. SHELDON



MRS. SHELDON

SHELDON

Hiram A. Sheldon and his wife Pauline (Bristol) became members of Plymouth Congregational church on March 3, 1872; Hiram's parents Orson and Phoebe Sheldon on May 19, 1877; Hiram's brother, Horace Eugene, and Clara Sheldon, and Alice Sheldon on Feb. 27, 1887. Will C. Sheldon and his brother Hiram and Pauline



WILL SHELDON

Sheldon are listed as being members of the church at the close of Rev. Pettibone's pastorate in 1863 and each of them was among the photo collection given by Plymouth church members to Rev. Pettibone as a farewell gift.

Orson was instrumental in the formation of the early church in Burlington. In the Plymouth publication of 1908, Thomas Buell remembered that Orson was among those who contributed \$20 toward the salary of Plymouth's first pastor. Pauline was active in children's Christian education and in the choir.



SMITH

Edwin R. Smith appears in the church register as having joined Plymouth Congregational church on January 2, 1873. He was born in Spring Prairie in 1844 and taught in area schools until he became principal of Burlington High School in 1872 and held the position for 11 years. He left Burlington, becoming county superintendent of schools of Manitowoc County and later had a pharmaceutical business in Port Washington. Edwin was a veteran of the Civil War.

WEHMHOFF and WEHMOFF JUCKER

Eugene John Wehmhoff was born in Burlington on February 27, 1879, son of Eugene and Emma Jucker Wehmhoff, pioneer residents of the area. In the 1858-1958 Plymouth anniversary publication, it is written: "Interesting were certificates of membership in the Sabbath school of Emma Jucker and John Jucker, mother and uncle of E. John Wehmhoff and sisters, dated March 31, 1861." In October 1916, Plymouth Church's Rev. H. C. Herring, Jr. conducted the funeral services for Emma.

Eugene John Wehmhoff practiced law in Burlington for 58 years, serving as city attorney for 20 years. He was clerk of the Union School district board when construction on Lincoln school began. Mr. Wehmhoff could often be seen at the railroad station where he made it a practice to greet the incoming trains. Purchasing and improving various lots that would be of use and pleasure to Burlington in years to come was a hobby, and in 1953 he donated one such tract to the city as a park. He died in January of 1963, Rev. Joseph Cheek officiating at his funeral from Burlington Plymouth church. Two sisters, Freda and Gertrude, survived him. Among other things, the narthex at Plymouth was built with funds willed to the church from these women, plus willed funds from Ida Bushnell and Helen Small.



EMMA JUCKER WEHMHOFF

WHITMAN SCHOOL

"18 members gathered in a little brick school in rear of the Whitman residence; changed from Presbyterian to Congregational July 30, 1858."

1843 was the year of the organization of the Protestant Church, Presbyterian, in Burlington. They met in this building, shown at the right with Rev. Luman A. Pettibone, Plymouth minister from 1880-1895. Luman's father, Rev. Philo Pettibone was the last minister of this Presbyterian church and first of the new Congregational church.





**PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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In 1986, the Burlington Society acquired and moved this first school building (used until 1856) from its original location at Madison and Dodge Streets, where it was scheduled to be demolished, to Schmaling Park on Beloit Street. It was restored as a one-room schoolhouse, and for a few years, under Alice Petracchi's (long time Plymouth member) leadership, classes were taught there as they were in the 1840s. The school is opened from time to time for scheduled tours and visitors, and the Society continues to maintain it.

Photos of Lucius O. Whitman and his wife Charlotte (nee Soule) are part of the collection of photographs given by Plymouth church members to Rev. Pettibone as a farewell gift in 1863. In 1866, Lucius and his son Chester bought the property where this school was standing, and thus it became known as Whitman School.

