SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE HISTORY OF UNITARIANISM IN OLYMPIA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In this issue of the *Spark* we introduce a series of articles researched and prepared by Jeff Goltz about the history of Unitarianism in Olympia in the 19th Century. In today's *Spark* we publish an Introduction to the topic. Then, about twice each month, starting on September 24, we will publish one of ten chapters in the series. The chapters will then be saved on the OUUC Website, accessible with this link: 19th Century History of Unitarianism in Olympia

We plan to offer an after-church forum on this history in the Spring.

Rev. Sara

OLYMPIA UNITARIANS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Jeff Goltz

INTRODUCTION AND SOURCES

OUUC traces its roots to 1952. As described on the OUUC website, in the fall of that year "a small band of like-minded folk founded the *Unitarian Fellowship of Olympia*, which went on to become the *Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation*." https://www.ouuc.org/about/who-we-are/ouuc-history/ Sixty years after that meeting, Tim Ransom and Emily Ray put together a history of that founding and the church's early years. https://www.ouuc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/OUUChistoryat60.pdf

But the history of Unitarianism in Olympia started much earlier. As reported by the *Overland Press* (one of early newspapers in the area) on August 18, 1862:

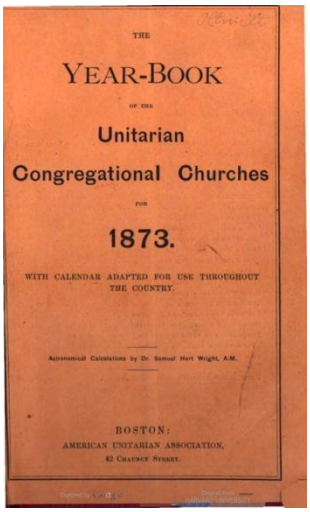
> Rev. T. Starr King of San Francisco, on the 9th and 10th inst. lectured and delivered a sermon to the largest and most delighted audiences ever assembled in Olympia, and has the honor of being the first Unitarian clergyman to address the people in this Territory.

For over three decades, Unitarianism thrived in Olympia. It is a fascinating history. In upcoming articles to be published twice a month in *The Spark*, I will describe those early years of the Unitarian Church, its founders, its ministers, the first church building and its loss to fire, the second church building, and the significant role of the church in the community until 1898 when it lost its church building to foreclosure and, as one news story reported, the congregation "scattered." The topics will include:

- Part I – Rev. John Kimball, Minister
- Part II – Founders of the Olympia Unitarian Society, 1872
- Part III – Rev. David Utter, Minister
- Part IV – The Olympia Unitarian Society's First Church Building
- Part V – Rev. Napolean Hoagland, Minister
- Part VI – The Construction of Olympia's Second Unitarian Church Building

- Part VII – Others in the Pulpit
- Part VIII – Sunday School
- Part IX – The Role of the Olympia Unitarian Church in the Community
- Part X – Hard Times and the "Scattering" of the Congregation

It was a different time, and it was a church very different than our current church. But there were a number of similarities as well.



My sources include annual yearbooks of Unitarian Congregational Churches from the American Unitarian Association, available on-line through the Harvard Divinity School (and fun reading) (https://guides.library.harvard.edu/c.php?g=253864&p=7224766); a number of newspapers in the South Sound from the late 19th century, available from the Washington State Archives digitally (searchable and also very fun reading) (https://washingtondigitalnewspapers.org); articles from the predecessor of *The Daily Olympian* available from the Washington State Library; a colorful local history, *Rogues, Buffoons and Statesmen*, and a number of articles from the Olympia Historical Society, many written by OUUC's Deb Ross (for example, https://olympiahistory.org/site-of-unitarian-church/).

Next, on September 24, Part I: Rev. John Kimball, Minister