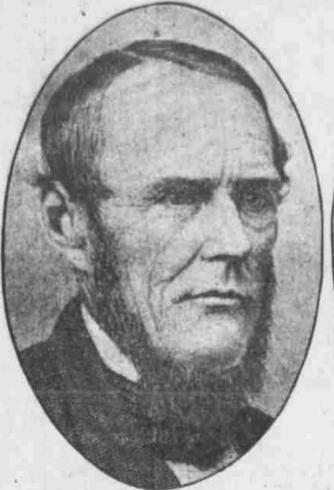


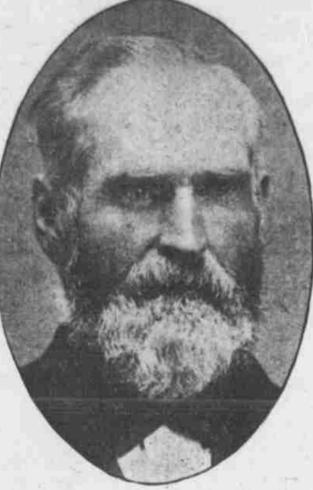
Half-Century of Activity of Omaha's First Congregational Church



REV. REUBEN GAYLORD.



REV. A. F. SHERRILL.



REV. G. W. RICE.



REV. JOSEPH T. DURYEA.



REV. F. A. WARFIELD.



REV. HUBERT H. HERRING.

MEMBERSHIP of nearly 5,000 in 23 churches; the largest denominational school property in the state; one college and four flourishing academies; a property amounting to \$175,365, with a total endowment of \$56,000 and a spiritual influence in proportion, is the record of Congregationalism in Nebraska, which will celebrate the semi-centennial anniversary of its founding May 4. The history of the Congregational church in Omaha dates back almost to the beginning of the city itself, while that in the state, which was the outgrowth of this beginning, is an inseparable part of the record of the hardships and struggle of those sturdy, steadfast pioneer men and women who extended a Christianity broader than the denominationalism that directed it and that contributed some of the most substantial influences to the very foundation upon which Nebraska was built.

Coming of Reuben Gaylord.

It was in 1856 that Reuben Gaylord, a graduate of Yale college in the class of 1854, for seventeen years a missionary in Iowa and one of the first trustees of the Iowa State college, was sent to Omaha by the American Home Mission society to begin his labors at the munificent salary of \$600 a year. Undaunted by discouragements and physical hardships such as only the pioneer missionary can know, he laid the foundation for the Congregational church in Nebraska. During the winter of 1856 he preached in the assembly room of the territorial legislature, and May 4 of the following year the Congregational church was organized with the following members: Governor and Mrs. O. D. Richardson, Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Chapman, James W. Seymour, Mrs. Allen, Miss Sara Gaylord and Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Gaylord. It was to Reuben Gaylord that Dr. George L. Miller referred as "that brave Christian soldier who brought Sunday into Omaha and the transmissouri country." Dr. Miller was one of the first trustees of the church and a valued worker and he tells the following incident in the early work of Rev. Gaylord: Passing the improvised chapel one morning he heard a noisy chapel raised in prayer. Looking in he saw Rev. Gaylord on his knees praying that the Lord would send him an audience.

Missionary Rice's Effort.

However, the way had been pre-

pared for it, beginning by Governor O. D. Richardson, for four years lieutenant governor of Michigan; Dr. George L. Miller, then a practicing physician in Omaha, and Rev. George G. Rice, pastor of the Congregational church in Council Bluffs. Governor Richardson had come to town in 1854 and was an earnest Congregationalist. It was Rev. George Rice who preached the first Congregational sermon in Nebraska, and the story of this sermon, together with much interesting information, is best told by this venerable and venerated clergyman himself, who still lives in Council Bluffs. In the following letter to the compilers of a history of the church in Nebraska, and which settles several disputed points:

"Dr. D. B. Cole, secretary of the American Home Missionary society, wrote me in July, 1864, requesting that I keep the society informed regarding the sentiment and needs of Nebraska. August 4 I replied: The Indians have not yet been removed to their reservation, and until that time the territory will not be open to settlement. The agent is hastening the removal of the Indians and the territory will likely be open to settlement in a few days. September 19 I wrote again: The Indians have been removed and there is a brisk movement into the territory. Omaha, just across the river from Council Bluffs, is to be the capital of the territory. A steam ferryboat is conveying materials across the river for the capital building, which is already under way. Omaha should have a minister as soon as a suitable man can be found, for being the capital, it will build up rapidly. Another man should be sent to the territory as general missionary."

"About this time I secured two lots—a gift from the Omaha Land company—for a Congregational church. When the church was built one of the lots was sold for \$700 and the money used in building. The latter part of January I spent a Sabbath in Omaha and preached morning and evening in the legislative hall, and Monday morning I officiated as chaplain in the same hall. This was the first Congregational sermon preached in Nebraska after the territory was organized. There were a few Congregationalists in Omaha at that time with whom I was frequently in conference, trying to aid them in securing a minister. In September, 1855, Reuben Gaylord came across the state on a vacation tour. I went with him to Omaha and we called upon Governor Richardson and made arrangements for Brother Gaylord to



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OMAHA.

preach in Omaha the next Sabbath afternoon. After Sabbath morning services in Council Bluffs we rode down to the river, tied our horses in the willows and were conveyed across the river in a canoe. At the close of that afternoon's service several persons expressed a wish that Rev. Gaylord would come and be their minister. After considerable correspondence he resigned his charge in Iowa and came to Council Bluffs with his family, December 22, 1855, on his way to Omaha, where he at once commenced his missionary labors. For eight years Reuben Gaylord served

as pastor of the Omaha church. A vigorous weekly prayer meeting and a flourishing Sabbath school was maintained and women's work in the church inaugurated and the work was well on its feet when he resigned the ministry in 1864 to become superintendent of missions in the territory. He died in 1880 at Fontanelle, Neb., and was buried from the church he had founded twenty-four years before.

Eight Pastors in Fifty Years.

During the fifty years of its existence the First Congregational church has had

eight pastors and its congregation, numbering almost 1,200, has worshipped in three churches. The ministers who have succeeded Reuben Gaylord have all been scholarly men who have retained in the congregation a goodly proportion of the city's foremost families. During the six years following Rev. Gaylord's resignation the church had three pastors: Rev. A. D. Shotwell, Rev. W. W. Rose and Rev. E. S. Palmer. In 1870 Rev. Sherrill, D. D., was ordained and entered upon a pastorate of eighteen years, during which the church grew steadily in numbers

and spiritual strength. Dr. Sherrill applied his energy unsparringly and in 1883 the church gave from its congregation its first colony for the organization of St. Mary's avenue church, Plymouth, Hillside and Park Place, or afterward, Pilgrim, following as the city and the denomination grew.

Coming of Dr. Duryea.

In 1888 Dr. Sherrill resigned to accept a call from Central Congregational church of Atlanta, Ga. After an interval of several months Rev. Joseph T. Duryea, D. D., of Boston accepted the call of the church and until 1894, when failing health compelled him to resign, Dr. Duryea's magnetic influence attracted the largest audiences in the history of the church. The congregation had just moved into the auditorium of the present church and Sunday after Sunday this, with the lecture rooms adjoining were filled to the utmost and on several occasions when special popular subjects had been announced, people were turned away unable to be admitted.

For two years following Dr. Duryea's resignation the church was without a pastor except as supplied, but in 1896 Rev. Frank A. Warfield, D. D., of Brookton, Mass., was called. Though his pastorate lasted but two years, it covered one of the most difficult periods in the church history. In common with other churches of the city the First Congregational suffered severely from the financial depression of those years, but by his practical sagacity Dr. Warfield guided the church through. Dr. Hubert C. Herring, D. D., succeeded Dr. Warfield in 1898, and is still pastor, having reclaimed all that the church lost during the years following Dr. Duryea's term and the financial depression.

Homes of the Church.

Since the year following its organization the church has taken pride in its houses of worship and each of the three buildings that it has occupied have been centers for educational and other progressive movements in addition to those emanating directly from the church. The first building was erected in 1856 at a cost of \$4,500, part of which was furnished by the Congregational union, part resulted from the sale of one of the church lots and the remainder was supplied by the congregation and townspeople. The building was a modest little brick structure, 27x36 feet, with basement and audience

room. It stood on the west side of Sixteenth street about ninety-five feet north of Farnam street. It had a seating capacity of 225 and was the source of much pride to the townspeople in general. In 1870, at the beginning of Dr. Sherrill's pastorate, a new church was erected at Nineteenth and Chicago streets. This was of frame and much more modern in its equipment. This building cost \$10,000 and seated on the floor and in the gallery about 600. The congregation removed to this building in 1871, but in 1887 this building was sold and torn down, the congregation moving to the chapel of the present church at Nineteenth and Davenport streets, which was completed and dedicated in 1888 at a cost of \$60,000. Dr. Duryea and Dr. Frank Gunsulius of Chicago officiated at the dedication. For some time previous to this, however, services had been held in the chapel adjoining the church auditorium. This present church has a seating capacity of 650 in its auditorium and 300 in the lecture room. In addition to these audience rooms there are parlor and class rooms on the main floor and Sabbath school rooms and a completely equipped kitchen in the basement.

Uses of the Auditorium.

For several years the Omaha Woman's club has used the auditorium and class rooms as club rooms, and these are continually in demand for lectures, public receptions and like things. Among the men and women who have made up its congregation have been some of the most prominent who have lived in Omaha, and their loyalty and service have demonstrated their affection for the institution. For twenty-five years Mrs. Charles Squires was a member of the church choir, commencing when a young girl, and later, after a prolonged season of voice culture, returned, singing for years. Later Mrs. Squires, with Mr. Nat Brigham and Mr. and Mrs. Henry D. Estabrook, formed a quartet that was one of the best in the city, and with Mr. Tabor at the organ was one of the musical attractions of the Sabbath day services. P. C. Heinbaugh, who started the subscription for the first Young Men's Christian association building, was another staunch member, while General O. O. Howard was also prominently identified with the church during his residence here.

Battle of Manila Bay Told by Dewey and Montojo in Their Reports

AS THE first of May returns to us this year we naturally recall the stirring events of '98, which aroused national interest as few crises in our personal memory have done, and gave us one of our national heroes—George Dewey—who will probably live in our memories and our children's memories when the other men who distinguished themselves in military or naval command during our short wars with the Spanish and the Filipinos are forgotten. We hear little of Admiral Dewey today, but that little is to the effect that he is quietly but efficiently doing his duty and doing it well. According to the old maxim "young men for action, old men for counsel," the admiral is sitting as the president of the naval general board; and none can say that any other officer is today performing more valuable service for his country. We have at hand the official correspondence of the Navy department with Commodore Dewey at the time of the Spanish war, and all of it is interesting. Some of it will be recognized as having been published at the

close of the war, but a good deal will be new to the readers. American Sympathy for Cuba. The excesses and outrages incident to the insurrection in Cuba stirred the people of the United States to the heart, and developed a strong sympathy for the Cubans. The demonstration of the inability of the Spanish to put down the insurrection and maintain a permanent peace in Cuba showed the condition to be hopeless and engendered a strong desire in the people of this country to end a situation felt to be intolerable. For some reason it was thought advisable by our government and that of Spain, both of which were averse to war between the two countries, to send naval vessels to exchange visits of courtesy. Many, in official as well as private life, desired war between the two countries, though it is believed that the two governments were sincere in their attempt to avoid it. Many Americans desired to make war out of sympathy with Cuba, many to put an end to the intolerable restraint exercised by the condition of perpetual war

in that island. Some Spaniards were impatient of American assistance and sympathy for Cubans, and thought that Spain would be able to chastise us. Others believed that the situation in Cuba was hopeless for Spain, and that they could save prestige by yielding to the United States what they were too proud to yield to the Cubans. Sinking of the Maine. The Spanish visit, that of the armored cruiser Infanta Maria Teresa to New York, was marked by no unpleasant incident, the usual official courtesies being exchanged. But the return visit of the armored cruiser Maine to Havana resulted in a tragedy that made the war inevitable. The Maine was destroyed at 9:40 p. m., February 15. There was a strong and almost general belief that the work was due to Spanish assassins, but the Navy department decided to conduct such an investigation as would leave no chance for reasonable doubt. A Spanish naval board of inquiry reported on March 22: Fourth—That the important facts connected with the explosion in its external appearances at every moment of its dura-

tion having been described by witnesses, necessarily accompany the explosion of a torpedo having been proved by these witnesses and experts, it can only be honestly asserted that the catastrophe was due to internal causes. Before the report of this board was made, the investigation of the United States naval court of inquiry developed unquestionable evidence that the explosion was due to external agencies—that a large mine had been exploded "under the bottom of the ship at about frame 18 and somewhat on the port side of the ship;" but it was attempted to keep secret the discoveries of the divers and the investigation was continued and completed. Of course the Navy department knew that war would necessarily follow the publication of the evidence of the divers or the findings of the court, so that as complete advantage as possible was taken of the intervening time. Arrangements for the purchase of warships in Europe were begun in February. It was necessary to purchase some vessels in order that Spain should not get them, and even then Spain did better than we, for she got the fine new Argentine armored cruiser that as the Cristobal Colon crossed the Atlantic to find a grave. Congress on April 26 declared that war had existed since April 21.

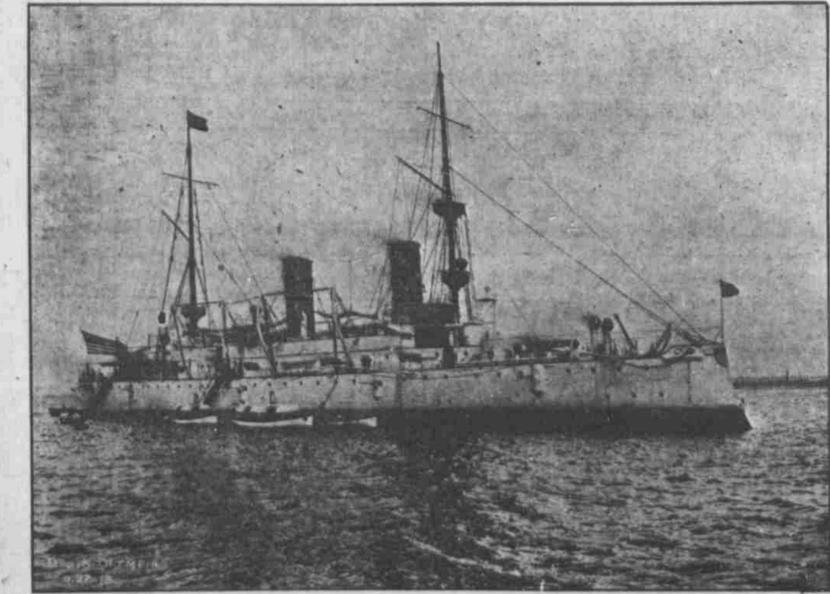
Dewey's Tremendous Task.

We know now that Dewey's task was easy, as far as the first of May was concerned—the result of the first of May depended upon the previous preparation of the squadrons—but neither Dewey nor anybody else anticipated that it would be easy; and even after the first of May he was almost constantly threatened with attack by forces nominally superior to his own—first the Germans under Admiral Diederichs and then the Spanish squadron under Admiral Camara, which started out for the reconquest of the Philippine seas. The question of the Filipinos—the insurrection—was another of the thorns that made his bed a poor one for sleep. At first Aguinaldo imposed upon his susceptibility, and the insurrecto leader seems to think that the commodore imposed somewhat upon him. It is noticeable that Aguinaldo arrived at Cavite May 15, on the naval collier Nanshan, that on June 27 the admiral had considerable confidence in the natives and Aguinaldo. On August 13 the city of Manila capitulated to the joint forces of army and navy (the day after the signing of the peace protocol), and the acting secretary intimated that the president was about to summon the admiral to Washington for advice. In reply the admiral cabled: "I trust that it may not be necessary to order me to Washington. Should regret very much to leave here while matters remain in present critical condition." The critical condition at that time was the question of Aguinaldo and his men. There is many a man in Nebraska today who could give personal testimony as to that critical condition; soldiers' photographs in other homes that give their testimony where the loved ones fell victims to that condition. It was not until the

following February that the plans of the natives to massacre the Americans in Manila were discovered and hostilities commenced at Marikina. Dewey's Story of the Fight. U. S. Naval Force on Asiatic Station. Flagship Olympia, Cavite Philippine Islands, May 1, 1898.—Sir: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the squadron under my command: The squadron left Mies Bay on April 27, immediately on the arrival of O. F. Williams, United States consul at Manila, who brought important information and who accompanies the squadron. Arrived off Bolinao on the morning of April 30 and, finding no vessels there, proceeded down the coast and arrived off the entrance to Manila bay on the same afternoon. The Boston and Concord were sent to reconnoiter Fort Bullo, I having been informed that the enemy intended to take position there. A thorough search of the fort was made by the Boston and Concord, but the Spanish fleet was not found, although from a letter afterwards found in the arsenal (concealed with translation) it appears that it had been their intention to go there. Entered the Boca Grande, or south channel, at 11:30 p. m., steaming in column at

distance (1,200 feet from mainmast of one ship to that of ship next ahead) at eight knots. After half the squadron had passed, a battery on the south side of the channel opened fire, none of the shots taking effect. The Boston and McCullough returned the fire. The squadron proceeded across the bay at slow speed and arrived off Manila at daylight and was met by three batteries at Cavite and by the Spanish fleet anchored in an approximately east and west line across the mouth of Baker bay, with their left in shoal water in Canacao bay. The squadron then proceeded to the attack, the flagship Olympia, under my personal direction, leading, followed at distance by the Baltimore, Raleigh, Petrel, Concord and Boston, in the order named, which formation was maintained throughout the action. The squadron opened fire at 5:41 a. m. While advancing to the attack two mines were exploded ahead of the flagship, too far to be effective. The squadron maintained a continuous and precise range varying from 5,000 to 2,000 yards, countermarching in a line approximately parallel with the Spanish fleet. The enemy fire was vigorous, but generally ineffective. Early in the engagement two launches put out toward the Olympia with the apparent intention of using torpedoes. One was sunk and the other disabled by our fire and beached before an opportunity occurred to fire torpedoes. At 7 a. m.

the Spanish flagship Reina Christina made a desperate effort to leave the line and come out to engage at short range, but was received with such galling fire, that the entire battery of the Olympia being concentrated upon it, that it was barely able to return to the shelter of the point. The fires started in it by our shell at this time were not extinguished until it sank. At 7:36 a. m. it having been erroneously reported to me that only fifteen rounds per gun remained for the five-inch rapid fire battery, I ceased firing and withdrew the squadron for consultation and a redistribution of ammunition if necessary. The three batteries at Manila had kept up a continuous fire from the beginning of the engagement, which fire was not returned by this squadron. The first of these batteries was situated on the south mole head of the entrance to the Pasig river, the second on the south bastion of the walled city of Manila, and the third at Malate, about one-half mile further south. At this point I sent a message to the governor general to the effect that if the batteries do not cease firing the city would be shelled. This had the effect of silencing them. At 11:16 a. m., finding that the report of scarcity of ammunition was incorrect, I returned with the squadron to the attack. By this time the flagship and almost the entire Spanish fleet were in flames, and at 12:30 p. m. the squadron ceased firing. (Continued on Page Seven.)



U. S. S. OLYMPIA, DEWEY'S FLAGSHIP.



DEWEY'S FLEET IN HONG KONG HARBOR, 1898.