

Newsletter of the Fabius Historical Society

No.14

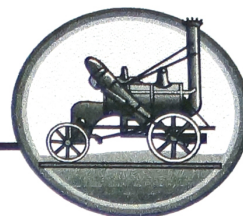
Spring, 2007



Fabius Methodist Church photo 1957

A Newsletter from the
Fabius Historical Society

PO Box 27 FABIUS, NY 13063



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PROGRAMS

From the President's Desk



Grand
Opening
At
Highland
Park
Pioneer
Museum

Dale
Sweetland
&
Al
LaFrance

This past year has been successful, with well-attended quality programs developed and scheduled thanks to Chuck Kutscher, and the utilization of the Highland Park Pioneer Museum by the Fabius Historical Society. The museum became active with the grand opening in June and remained open during the summer. It was also a major attraction during the "Valentines in the Forest" celebration, which brought in 264 visitors during the three weekends. The museum opened at 6 pm evenings to "warm up". After a scrumptious meal, visitors went on a sleigh ride that ended at the museum, where Valentine photos were taken by the organ. We had many nice comments about the museum and many folks said they would be back in the summer with their families.

I would like to thank the following people who helped me man the museum: Sandy Beglinger, Jim and Judy Conway and Mike Tilden.

A new attraction at the museum this year is Harvey Skeele's farm toy collection. We now have use of the Jacobee House for storage with the rotation of our displays.

Please come and visit us on Memorial Day at the Fabius Community Center and at the Pioneer Museum.

If you have any comments or suggestions or just want to talk about the historical society, please give me a call 662-7022.

Al LaFrance



Chuck & granddaughter gardening

Chuck Kutscher, our program chairperson, has been busy putting together the 2007 schedule of events. He has generously offered his time and has worked diligently to provide the FHS with a diverse selection of topics for our meetings, developing great power-point presentations and offering computer-generated photo duplication. We all love old photos of our town and he loves to duplicate the photographs so that others may enjoy them as well. We are always open to meeting topic ideas. If you are interested in putting on a program, please discuss it with Chuck. Chuck can be contacted at home: 683-9480, or at a meeting of the Historical Society. You can also email him (kutscher@gatling.us)

Reminder:

FHS Membership dues are due by Jan. 1st of each year. Membership contributions are the only source of income for the Fabius Historical Society. Please complete the enclosed membership form. If you are already a member, please pass the application blank along to someone who might be interested in becoming a member. Subscriptions also make great gifts.

UPCOMING FHS PROGRAMS @ COMMUNITY CENTER FABIUS, NY

Monday April 2, 7:30 pm Courtney Tucker will discuss the "Impact of the Civil War on CNY," starting with the circumstances which led to the first shot, some of the major battles, life of the soldiers and some little-known facts concerning the War.

Monday May 7, 7:30 pm Judy Conway will share her love of scrapbooks in a program based on the "Big and Small Events in Your Life." She will also share her ideas on proper preservation of ephemera.

Memorial Day Historical Display Fabius Community Center, Main St., Fabius

Sunday, May 28th 12 noon till 4 pm
Monday, May 29th 9 am till 4 pm

Open to the public for Memorial Day, FHS will have on display our collection of Veteran photographs, local historical scrapbooks, F- P Alumni information, and photos of Fabius. Come view and enjoy the exhibit, help us complete information on our Fabius graduates for our Alumni Directory (to be printed in the near future), bring photos of old images of Fabius to share, and meet some of the people and friends that you "haven't seen in many moons."

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BOTH DAYS

Monday June 4, 7:30 pm History of the Baptist Church in Fabius, with over 200 Years of Service.



"Webster Barn in which first Baptist church in town of Fabius is said to have been organized in Keeney Settlement in 1803. It was later used as a schoolhouse, and 60 years ago (in 1874) it was moved to present location behind Webster cabin to be used as a tenant house."

-Syracuse HJ 26 Aug 1934

Monday July 2, 7:30 pm A Quiz Show on Fabius History, Men against the Women. How good is your memory?

Monday Aug. 6, 7:30 pm A History of the Design and Use of Teapots.

Monday Sept. 10, 7:30 pm

Note date change because of Labor Day

Eileen Patch will share letters of a veteran who served in the Civil War. These letters give an intimate portrait of what it was like to be a soldier in this terrible conflict.

Monday Oct. 1, 7:30 pm Chuck Kutscher will present "Two Momentous Urban Tragedies: The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906." These compelling stories should be enough to scare you during Halloween month. They may also curl your hair!

Fabius Alumni Info. Wanted!

A few hardy souls from the Fabius Historical Society are assembling a Fabius-Pompey Alumni Directory for school graduates from 1899 to the present. The Tully Area Historical Society has successfully completed their 3rd edition and has graciously offered to mentor our society in publishing an edition of our own; and we are very grateful for their encouragement and assistance.

Thus far, we have been distributing a class list of student names to a graduate and/or classmate of each class. We will need your help with additional updated information on these graduates. We are also interested in photographs of the graduating classes. Please bring them along and we will photograph or scan them while you wait. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. We also welcome any information from parents or family members still living in or visiting Fabius.

On Memorial Day, along with our "Veteran Display" and Fabius Historical Scrapbooks and various old photographs of the Fabius area, we will have a "Fabius Alumni" Display. Lists of classmates will be available for you to look at, add to, correct and delete information which will be included in the Alumni Directory

If you want to volunteer or need other details, call: Julia Clancy Conway (Class of 1954) 683-5275 or Linda Skeele Meyers (Class of 1960) 683-5280.

Location: Fabius Community Center on Main Street.
Time: Sunday, May 27th, Noon – 4pm
Monday, May 28th, 9am – 4pm

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2007

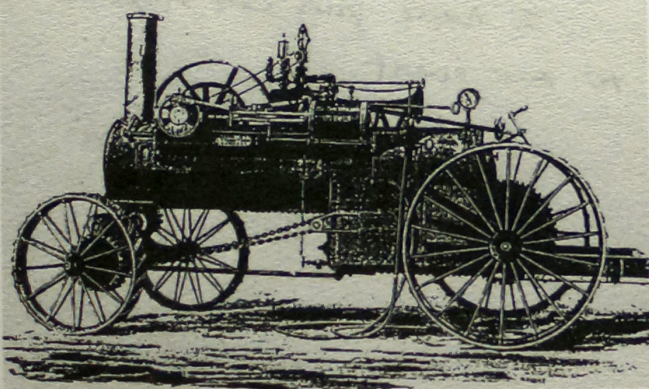
- Ruth Bryan (Secretary) 683-5806
- Joanne Casey (Civil War, Newsletter) 683-5674
- Judy Conway (Scrapbook, Treasury Audit) 683-5275
- Bill Casey (Newsletter) 683-5674
- Charles Shea (Senior Adviser) 683-5371
- Al LaFrance (Museum Chair, President) 662-7022
- Kate Cameron (Treasury Audit) 683-9485
- Cheri Gigon (Treasurer, 683-5629)
- Linda Meyers (F-P School) 677-5280
- Chuck Kutscher (Programs) 683-9480
- Sandy Beglinger (Oral History, VP) 683-5878
- Carol Gossner (Senior Advisor) 683-5293
- Lilly Berg (Museum Advisor) 683-5191
- Ginny Scida (Advertising) 683-5625

ARTICLES ALWAYS NEEDED

Please consider contributing an article for future newsletters. Our readers are always telling us that they enjoy reading the various articles submitted by Fabius residents, both past and present. You need not worry about your handwriting, punctuation or grammar; the computer works wonders.

Newsletter editors: Bill & Joanne Casey
315 683-5674, bill5308@aol.com

Eaton, Madison County, New York



TOWN OF EATON'S 200TH ANNIVERSARY

<http://centralnyhistory.com>

Event: Vintage Steam, Tractor & Snowmobile Show

Place: Hamlet of Eaton / Garrett Smith Infirmary Field

Date: Monday, May 28th Memorial Day

Parade starts @ 10 am Sharp

Info.: Mike Curtis or Mary Messere 315-684-9908

HISTORY OF THE FABIUS METHODIST CHURCH

By Chuck Kutscher

(Pre-1924 photo) The church with steeple intact, Parish house (acquired 1965) is shown on left. House on right was acquired for income in 1957. Both are no longer there.



In the Beginning

In the year 2001, the Fabius Methodist Church celebrated 175 years of continuous service to the Fabius area. The church was organized in a meeting at the school house in District 9 in 1826. Five trustees were appointed: John Daniels Jr., John Caldwell, Jr., Reynold Wilson, Daniel Smith and Horace Fuller. This frontier group decided to build a church the following summer and collected over \$700 in cash and goods toward that aim. The church was to be 48 feet by 36 feet and was to contain gothic windows and a handsome belfry. The records kept by the Methodist Church, very meticulous at times, detail the member contributions toward this ambitious project. Here is a sample: John Cadwell gave \$65 in lumber, cash and stock; William Swift gave \$55 in work, stock and lumber; John Daniels gave \$80 in cash, work, lumber and grain; Daniel Younglove, who ran a local tannery, gave \$25 in lumber, grain, boots and shoes. One can only imagine how the local church people converted these gifts-in-kind into something useful for building, such as money, lumber and glass. Daniel Smith gave the useful contribution of two thousand feet of hemlock boards plus \$10 in cash.

We don't know exactly where this church was located. Records indicate that it was indeed built in 1827 on a road we now call Keeney Road and some think it was located near what is now the Evergreen

Cemetery. Early records indicate that it was located on the east side of the road on an eminence between Merrill and Frink's store and Bacon's Mills. The first pastor was John Sayre and the church was connected to the Genesee Conference.

Let's step back and see when these events occurred in the history of the area. The first white settlers, Timothy Jerome and Josiah Moore came to the Fabius area in 1794. They built cabins and returned east for their families the following year. By 1798, the town of Fabius was established and was geographically much larger than it is now. By 1810 the Skaneateles-Hamilton turnpike was established, providing a way to move east and west approximately along the present Route 80. No doubt this turnpike was really just a rough trail through the woods, but new settlers came to try to turn forest land into farms. The early settlers used the logs they cleared off the land to build cabins and threshing barns. The crops were sewn between the trees before the stumps became rotten enough to remove with the help of axes, fire and oxen. Sketches of early barns indicate that the siding on some barns was composed of sawn planks, which tells us that a saw mill must have been established nearby, probably powered by one of the many creeks in the area. One record tells us that the first frame house was built in Fabius in 1800, although we don't know its location.

The Baptist folk had the jump on the Methodists because the Baptist organized their society in 1803 and built their church in 1818. It still stands on Main Street as a tall, stately building with a high steeple covered with lumber which must have been sawn in a local saw mill. The Methodist Church was built in 1827, but no known sketch of it survives. It could not be photographed, because photography did not come into existence until the 1830s and then only for those with lots of glass plates, chemicals and much patience. The two Fabius churches were built during what were boom times for the area. Census figures show the population of the town to be: 1790, 0; 1800, 844; 1810, 1,865; 1820, 2,494; and 1830, 3,070.

Church building must have been very difficult back in those days. The labor promised by members must have been contributed with some difficulty by those working so hard to clear and farm the land. Stock, grain and boots must somehow be converted into lumber. Where they got the glass, we wonder. Cash may have been a rare commodity in this frontier community which probably used the barter system extensively. Getting crops to market over a very poor road system must have been slow and arduous, but somehow the Methodists and the Baptists prevailed and provided not just a center for faith-based activities, but for rural social life as well.

Moving the Church

We do know that for some reason not explained, Methodist Church members decided to

move the church to Main Street. We have copies of paperwork from 1835 which spells out the details of the sale of property from Hiram Bailey and his wife to the Methodist Church, the very same parcel of land on which the church now stands. We have the deed which was officially recorded in 1841 indicating that the entire \$185 was paid. The church was moved to its present site. Trustees at that time were Horace Fuller, John Daniels, John Doubleday, Oscar Ayres and Daniel Porter. We can only imagine the effort required to relocate the church to its Main Street location or what changes were made in the structure at this time. Major remodeling was to come later in 1865.

Methodists as Record Keepers

We do know that for much of their history, the Methodists kept extensive records with entries written out in ink, in longhand, in what resembles the old Palmer Method which was taught in schools for so many years. These records in precious, but fragile log books are still clearly legible today. We are told in records from 1835 that the church had 157 members, 8 stewards, 4 class leaders and one "exhorter". We believe that the latter was a lay member with a license to preach and lead to help the church minister (Mabel Terrill served this function in the mid 20th C, according to annual records which the church filed with the conference). Records over the years show the membership fluctuating between 100 and 150 and how members were "received". Some came with a letter of recommendation from another church, which indicated that the individual is an "acceptable" member who is "affectionately recommended" to the fellowship of another church. Other members are accepted off "probation".

The meticulous records show some other interesting things. There are listing of funerals performed at the church with dates and sometimes a guess at the cause of death. Here are some of causes listed:

- Consumption (tuberculosis)
- Crippled in body and mind
- Suicide
- Old age
- Poisoned by mistake
- Ignorant mother (baby died)
- Child birth (less than I expected)
- Hernia
- Shock (reduced circulation)
- Tumor (cancer)

The marriage records are also interesting. They give the names of bride and groom, the groom's occupation, place of residence and the age of both. Looking at records from the early 1890s, it appears that most people getting married are at least in their twenties, but there are some interesting matches. In 1891, George Kennedy (age 52) married Josephine Irvine (age 21). William Foster (age 42) married Nancy

Widger (age 16). Occupations of people are listed as farmer, teacher, merchant, laborer and stage driver.

In 1865 the Civil War finally ended and some of the Fabius sons returned to resume their lives. The Fabius Evergreen Cemetery was opened and the remains of some folks who were buried elsewhere were brought there. The Fabius Methodist Church decided it was time for a major rebuilding of the church. We don't know the details, but it seems likely that many of the interesting architectural details of the present church were added at this time, especially the Italianate features of the church. A time capsule box was placed in a niche in the masonry telling about the dedication service and people who attended. That box was found in 1930 when work was being done on the foundation. Names mentioned are Doubleday, Daniels, Cadwell, Curtiss, Andrews, Sheldon, Rowley Gallinger, and Skeele. Anson Cadwell must have prospered in the 1860s, because he gave \$900 toward the project. The pastor was paid \$440 that year. That was said to be a generous salary.

There would be other times of remodeling. In 1883 the trustees dutifully appropriated \$600 for that purpose. The work involved putting up a partition at the front of the church which created two small rooms. The choir loft was removed and the seats were rearranged. There was plastering and painting and decorating to do and then the finishing touch was a new furnace. All this ran over budget and cost \$2500. This was so shocking that two of the trustees resigned, but somehow the church managed to pay. In 1896, a carpet was laid and the lovely metal ceiling, which still exists today, was installed. A photo from April 15, 1927 shows the wedding couple, Duane Skeele and Edna Abbott, and a glimpse of the church at that time. The carpet appears to be gone and the pews are varnished, not painted as they are today. The back wall of the church is plain and appears to be wall-papered.

In 1924 neighbors thought they saw the tall, stately steeple sway in the wind and they worried it could fall and injure people and property. Several brave men climbed up the steeple to attach ropes and to cut the support timbers. The steeple was safely pulled down and examined; they found that all timbers were sound and there had been no danger. Some

church people complained of that decision for years to come and wished for another steeple. That became the dream of Carl Skeele, a well-known CNY builder and long-time patron of the Fabius Methodist Church. Finally, in 1999, thanks to a generous gift from Carl Skeele, the new steeple was finally added to the church.



Work crew at Fabius ME Church

Through the first half of the 20th century, the First World War, the terrible great depression and then the Second World War, routine maintenance was performed on the church, but no major remodeling. In 1946 at the end of the Second World War, the congregation began to dream of what they wanted their church to be and they pledged themselves and their money to a mighty effort to change the church building. But first they celebrated 120 years of continuous service. The minister was Rev. Edgar L. Kinner. His wife, Martha, served as musical director of the church and also chief musician. To celebrate, a fine meal was served including roast beef, potatoes, cole-slaw, and vegetables, followed by ice cream and cake. A former pastor, Rev. Swift addressed the group and music was provided by Lois Whitmarsh, Alfred Palmer and Ella Robbins. We know these things because Edna Skeele was such an effective saver of programs of important church events.

The remodeling was serious business. The church was closed so construction could proceed. Carl Skeele's bill for remodeling the sanctuary was \$3,946.53. Mr. Skeele listed his profit as only \$188.79 and then added a note that when paying this bill the church should subtract \$500 meaning that he was making a large personal contribution. In 1948 carpenters were paid \$1.85 per hour and masons made \$2.10. Helpers only received \$1.25. Skeele's craftsmen also repaired the belfry, painted inside and out, built a new platform in the sanctuary, built rooms on the side, installed an archway and created two rooms near the platform. The sanctuary achieved the shape we see today. Stained glass windows were proposed and were produced by the prestigious Keck Studio in Syracuse. Mrs. Eugene Terrill assumed direction of these and she collected the money and paid the bill. Each window cost \$90, according to the receipt from Keck Studio dated April 14, 1949.



Recently, the church found that to service and repair these windows would cost \$1500 each!

In 1949, the school was expanding and needed temporary classroom space. The church rented them space, but to meet state standards Carl Skeelee was called back to install bathrooms, a modern kitchen and a new lighting system.

On January 4, 1948 the church was reopened to great celebration after a year and a half. On January 29, 1948, the Clark Music Company presented a bill to the church for \$2225 for installation of an organ. Mrs. Kinner served as the church organist and must have added great dignity and splendor to the church services. New carpets were laid. How proud the congregation must have been, but they assumed a debt of about \$15,000. \$5600 was borrowed from Walter Briggs, owner of the general merchandise store in Apulia Station. By 1953 the church had paid back all loans and had a rededication service on January 4. The program listed the windows purchased by these families: Rogers, Abbott, Adsitt, Rowley, Goodrich, Terrill, Skeelee and Olcott. The children's choir participated under the direction of Mrs. Elmer Richardson. The guest speaker was Rev. Warren G. Odom and Mrs. Kinner played the organ. A presentation was made by president of the Board of Trustees, Duane Skeelee. Ushers were Merle Turner, Donald Conners, Carl Olcott and Samuel Terrill. A prayer room on the ground floor was dedicated to Helena Chase, a member since 1895, a church officer and a long-term teacher of classes. A stained glass window was installed in this room which still bears her name.

Church Celebrations

The Methodist Church was fervently observant of their anniversaries. In 1951 they celebrated 125 years of continuous service and published an interesting booklet simply entitled "Church Messenger." Trustees at the time were Duane Skeelee, David Terrill, Helena Chase (secretary), Erwin Rogers, Hinkle Lambert, Wayne Olcott, Eugene Terrill, George Young and Clifford Abbott. Kenneth Olcott was Sunday school superintendent. The Methodist Youth Fellowship included Agatha Fuller (the newest member of the church), Harvey Skeelee, Kay Svendsen, Philip Smith, Barbara Beckwith, Jane Skeelee and Beverly Beckwith. Harriet Thompson was 97 years old that year and the pastor was paid \$1000. Jesse and Ava Pilcher brought their son, Thomas Alan to be baptized.

The lovely church building you now see is the product of 180 years of evolution, change, remodeling, careful planning and excellent workmanship, in addition to financial generosity of the members. But we must not forget some of the special events which happened in that building over the years. There were, of course, many funerals and weddings.

In 1965, Linda Skeelee married John Meyers with four lovely bridesmaids and four handsome groomsmen standing witness. After the wedding, Harvey Skeelee changed into his farming clothes, but was ordered by Linda to get back into his tux for the

picture taking. This was the same church that Linda and Harvey Skeelee's parents had been married 38 years previous.



Edna Abbott and Duane Skeelee were wed on April 15, 1927. (Duane boasted that he was attracted to Edna because of the way she handled a team of horses.) The arbor shown was reconstructed for their 50th wedding anniversary celebration.

The annual church Bazaars were a major fundraiser for the church. Numerous pictures show residents having a good time purchasing finely-crafted Christmas gifts. Over the years church members assembled a float for the annual Memorial Day parade. At one time Colleen Miller and Joyce Crouch, both excellent musicians on piano and organ, were members of the church. Mary Cellucci and Muriel Newcomb (Community Singers concert leader) contributed their musical talents, as well. Many of the young people played in the high school band and participated in services and special events. In the late 1970s, under the direction of producer Mary Richards, a group of highly energetic young people presented Godspell. There were 8 musicians, 16 cast and 7 chorus members and about 20 others helping out. The production was very well received. If walls could talk, they could tell a wonderful story of stimulating sermons, rousing music, fellowship and decades of people coming together to share common beliefs.

Note: Thanks are due for the efforts of Linda Meyers and Harvey Skeelee to find and assemble the documents and historical records which are part of the history of this great church. Thank you.

BRIEF CHURCH HISTORY OF NEW YORK

NEW YORK GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH
Geo. K Schweitzer, PhD, ScD

"In the early days of New York, many persons were not church members, although they were religious people. The most important churches in the colonial era are reflections of the two major governing groups: the Dutch Reformed Church and the Anglican (Episcopalian, Church of England). Neither ever completely became the official or the established church. The NY aristocracy (government officials, wealthy merchants, large land owners) usually were Anglicans, the center of the Anglican activity stemming from the parent church, Trinity, in New York City. However, their tolerant attitudes toward other Protestants permitted numerous other smaller church groups to settle in NY, including Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Friends, Huguenots, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Jews.

In general, freedom of worship was not granted Roman Catholics because of the English-French tensions. When full religious freedom came to be after the Revolution, Roman Catholics joined the immigration. As the frontiers expanded, many persons on the frontiers came to have no church affiliation, even though they remained religious.

The Methodists and the Baptists began working in these areas and their numbers grew considerably as the result of revivals which swept through central and western NY in the 1820s. As of 1850, the major denominations in NY, listed in the order of the number of churches, were Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Dutch Reformed, Congregational, Roman Catholic, Friends, Universalist, Lutheran, Union, Christian, Unitarian, and Jewish. The large influxes of eastern and southern Europeans and Irish in the next several decades changed the order notably. The largest religious denominations in 1890 were Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, Jewish, Congregational, and German Evangelical."

Your Toss is Our Loss

As you clean out your attics, basements, closets and garages and "toss" some of those neat old things in the garbage, please take a moment and consider if they would be welcome additions for the Fabius Historical Society. We are not doing recyclables or compost, but Grandma's "favorites" and Grandpa's "can't live withouts," just might be a delightful addition in the Pioneer Museum. So before you toss, please think of us.

Contact: Al LaFrance @ 662-7022

ROY'S READINGS

Submitted by J. Roy Dodge from the "Journal"

Summit Station

Feb. 5, 1896

"A donation will be held on Thurs. (Feb. 6) at the finishing shop of Green & Hotaling for the benefit of Rev. Frank Hamilton pastor of the Methodist E. Church."

TEMPERANCE EVANGELIST HALL TO CONDUCT A "NO LICENSE" CAMPAIGN IN FABIUS

Fabius, Jan. 18, 1896

"Mr. CJ Hall of Buffalo, an earnest temperance evangelist who worked in our county last year, will conduct a "no license" campaign in Fabius from Jan. 20 to 27 in the Fabius Free Baptist Church every evening. Friends of "good citizenship" are invited to join this rally for God and home and humanity and defeat the sale of liquor in the town."

FABIUS

Feb. 12, 1873

To the Editor of the Syracuse Journal

"The donation visit for the benefit of Rev. WJ Mills, made at the Methodist Church, of which he is the respected pastor, on Thursday evening last, was not only pleasant but a substantial affair, although there are three very prosperous churches in this little village. The receipts were \$240."

FABIUS

May 22, 1894

"Decoration day will be observed in Fabius by appropriate services at the cemetery followed by exercises at the Methodist church. An earnest appeal is made to all veterans to be present and a cordial invitation is extended to every citizen to join with them in observing the day. The procession, consisting of the veterans of this and adjoining towns, the children of the schools and the citizens, will form at the ME church and proceed promptly at 11 a.m. to the cemetery, where the usual arrangements will be followed. A detail of soldiers assisted by the children will decorate the graves of the soldiers, after which the column will form and march to the ME church where exercises will be held, consisting of singing, recitations and an address by Frank H. Hiscock of Syracuse. The speakers, clergy, band, singers and the soldiers with the families of each will be entertained at the dinner in the parlors of the church. A memorial sermon will be preached on the preceding Sunday morning at the usual hour for services by Rev. HR Smith at the ME church, to which everybody is invited and especially all old soldiers."