

[Clinton, Oneida Co.]

...and that was yesterday...
The Universalist Church

This historical sketch was prepared by Rev. William P. Payne, [pastor?] of the society from September 1863 to July 1871.

The present Universalist Society in Clinton was originally a [branch?] of the Universalist Society of New Hartford. This latter was established in 1805, mainly through the labors of Rev. [?], included in its membership the believers in universal salvation residing in all the region round about, to the distance of [?] ten miles. Several of the most influential and devoted members of the society lived in or near Clinton. This fact [?] an early day in this village occasional services. In the year 1818, under the direction of Stephen R. Smith, then [pastor?] of the New Hartford Society, these meetings assumed a more permanent character. Under the earnest labors of [?], the Clinton branch society grew rapidly in numbers [?], so much so that in 1821 it assumed an independent [?] and through the commendable sacrifices of many, but [mainly?] through the large liberality of Joseph Stebbins, Esq., [?] to erect its first church edifice, at a cost of about [?]. It was built of brick, 52 feet by 40; and when completed [doubtless?] the comeliest house of worship belonging to the denomination in the State of New York. It still stands on [William?] street, though now used for secular purposes.

[?] in reality a Universalist Society, the church [?] was designated a Free Church, and the society worshiped [?] it as the Free Church Society of Clinton. By articles [?] and the title of the ground on which it stood, the [?] was free for the occupation of all Christian sects, when [?] by its actual proprietors. At first, it was so occupied, [?] extent, by the Methodists and Baptists of this town. [?] maintained this unsectarian character with varying [success?] until June 1831 when it assumed, by legal process, the [?] title of the First Universalist Society of Clinton. From then until the present time, the society has had an uninterrupted existence, and preserved its denominational name and [?].

The society has had but four settlements that have been of any [?] permanence. These have been the pastorates of Rev. Stephen R. Smith, Dr. Timothy Clowes, Rev. T.[Thomas] J. Sawyer, D.D., and Rev. W. P. Payne. Mr. Smith's settlement began in November [?] and continued to September 1837, with the exception of an interval of three years, from 1825 to 1828, which he [?] in Philadelphia, and during which the society was without [a pastor?]. He was the founder of the society, and his name is held in fond remembrance. Dr. Clowes, in connection with his [?] Principal of Clinton Liberal Institute, succeeded him, [?] four or five years. Dr. Sawyer, while in charge of [the Institute?] and of the theological school in connection with it, [?] for the society most of the time from 1845 to 1852, and [?] from 1861 to 1863. Reverends M.[Moses] B. Smith, H.[Henry] B. Soule, [?], H. C. Vose, J.[Joseph] A. Aspinwall, and Mr. and Mrs. [?] had brief settlements. Dr. Adolphus Skinner,

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and Rev. [?] have preached for the society for considerable [?] though residing in Utica.

Rev. William P. Payne took charge of the society in September [?]. During the last five years the society has manifested new [?] with the aid of denominational friends throughout the [?] of the General Convention of Universalists, has erected a commodious and beautiful church on William street, a [?] people who carried forth the work, and an ornament to the village in which it is located. Its value, with the [land?] is about \$18,000. Its style is Romanesque, it has 350 [?] provided with a superior organ, and is appropriately [?] throughout. Its architect was H. N. White, of Syracuse, [?] Platt & Osborne, of Clinton. The cornerstone [?] ceremony, June 29, 1869, and the work was completed in the autumn of 1870. On Sunday, October 9, 1870, the [?] appropriate services, took leave of their old church, [?] for the new one on October 12th, and enjoyed Sabbath [?] for the first time on October 16th. At the present the prospects of the parish are encouraging, more so perhaps [?] before Rev. Mr. Payne resigned his office July 1871. [The present?] minister, Rev. W. R. Chamberlin, commenced his [?] October 1872.

The Courier, Clinton NY, Thu. 6 Nov 1958

[Transcriber's note: The edge on the left margin of the scanned copy I was using was mostly not visible.]

Transcribed on 23 Dec 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY