

## OLD WHITE SEMINARY SOLD; MATERIAL TO GO IN CHURCH

### WHERE CLARA BARTON STUDIED IN CLINTON

To-day Edwin F. Torrey, Jr.. Purchased Property and Will Erect on Site Handsome Residence—History of Famous Institution Under Different Names.

Clinton, March 13.—An important real estate deal which was closed today will remove one of the landmarks of the village of Clinton and what was one of its most widely known educational institutions, the old White Seminary, or Kirkland Hall, as it was better known during recent years. It stands at the head of William street and has become the property of Edwin F. Torrey, Jr., who will erect on the site a modern residence. The building itself has been purchased by the Rev. Father James O'Reilly of St. Mary's Catholic Church and will be torn down at once. The material will be used in the construction of the new Catholic Church, for which a fund has been growing for about ten years. The site is one of the most delightful in the town for a residence. For the past few years it has been occupied by a number of Poles and Italians who have been employed in the ore mines. The grounds cover a large territory and with a beautiful residence will be by far the most imposing piece of property in the village.

White Seminary, as it was originally called, was erected in 1851 for the female department of the Clinton Liberal Institute, the male department being located in the stone building on Utica street which was torn down a few years ago. The originator of the enterprise was the Rev. Stephen R. Smith, pastor of the Universalist Church, who was assisted by Dr. [Dolphus] Skinner of Utica and others. The site of the stone structure of the institute located on Utica street was given by Joseph Stebbins, grandfather of Elery Stebbins. The school was designed for the education of both sexes and the female department was at that time located in a wooden structure nearby, on Utica street. In the winter of 1851 the new female department at the head of William street was opened and was called White Seminary [very likely after its principal Caroline White Soule, who married Rev. Henry Soule and was tragically widowed after he died of smallpox in 1852]. The school continued here until 1878 when it was removed to Fort Plain and the two departments were put into one building which had been purchased from a Methodist society at a small figure. At the time it was deemed necessary to expend considerable money on the local buildings and at a meeting of the directors the vote was carried without [sic] hardly any thought of removal to Fort Plain.

For several years the White Seminary remained unused. Then it was rented as an Episcopal school and the late Rev. Oliver Owen was placed at the head of it. This school was carried on for a time and it was then taken by Colonel Verbeck of the St. John's Military Academy at Manilus and continued as a branch of that institution. This did not prosper as it was hoped to have it, and the school did not continue very long. Since that time it has been used as living apartments. The building is one hundred and thirty-six feet by forty-six and is two stories above the basement. At the time the seminary was discontinued there were accommodations in the building for 70 young ladies and instructors and a goodly number at that time were attending the school and boarding and rooming out of the building, being unable to get rooms there. It stands on a slight eminence commanding a delightful view of the village and the valley of the Oriskany. The school had many noted

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students, among them being Clara Barton of Red Cross renown, who was a student here, in 1852. Antoinette Sterling, the famous vocalist, was for three years a pupil within these walls, as were many other women who have made their name a memorable one in the country's history.

When the school was removed to Fort Plain it was still known as the Clinton Liberal Institute in order to retain the liberal endowments which it had. The White Seminary was purchased in 1886 by Andrew Mills, now deceased, and in 1896 was bid in by a Mrs. Howard of New York at a foreclosure sale and has since remained in the Howard family. Owing to the fact of the fire which destroyed the famous institute at Fort Plain, it is impossible to gather together further data regarding the school, as the records were burned with the buildings. In speaking of the founding of the school a writer a number of years ago says, "It is perhaps impossible in an era of more enlightened views to conceive of the narrowness and intolerance displayed by the dominant sects toward those Christians who believed that the suffering which inheres in sin as shadow in substance, is designed as a remedial agent of a Father, rather than as a token of Divine vengeance. It was manifested in a social ostracism, not easily described, but keenly felt by the young. As a protest against this intolerance the Clinton Liberal Institute was founded in 1831."

At the time the White Seminary became an Episcopal school the building now occupied by Dr. DeNike as a sanitarium was opened as Hungerford Hall and was run as a young ladies' school in connection with the boys' department at White Seminary. In 1831 Miss Louisa Barker was at the head of the female department and was one of the most earnest workers. She afterwards built the Houghton Seminary and Cottage Seminary. The work of taking down the large structure will be commenced at once and Mr. Torrey will begin his residence as soon as this is done, which is expected will take place about July 1.

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Transcribed on 11 Nov 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY