

[Thatcher, Martin]

MARTIN THATCHER

Martin Thatcher died at his residence in this city on Sunday. He was for many years prominent in the politics of the State. He was a coworker with President King and Silas Wright, and with them shaped much of the business of the Constitutional Convention of 1846. The aggressions of the slave power had the effect of inducing Mr. Thatcher to join with many others in protesting against it, and when their protests were found to be unavailing he was among the earliest to engage in the formation of the Republican party. He was one of the delegates from St. Lawrence County to the first Republican State Convention, held at Syracuse, and was appointed one of the Committee on Resolutions. The early friendship of Preston King and Mr. Thatcher continued until the untimely death of the former. Mr. Thatcher was for several years County Clerk of St. Lawrence County, and was afterward one of the Port Wardens of New-York. Had Preston King lived, Mr. Thatcher would have received an important appointment in the Custom House, Mr. King being Collector at the time of his death. Mr. Thatcher was during his life an administrator of many estates in Northern New-York and in this city. For several years Mr. Thatcher has been largely interested in mining enterprises. He organized the Big Pittsburg, of Colorado, and the Bremen, of New-Mexico, and at the time of his death was secretary and treasurer of the Del Monte and Eagle River Mining Companies, of Colorado. Only a few months ago Mr. Thatcher visited these properties, and it is believed that the fatigue and exposure he was compelled to undergo hastened his death. He was for twenty years a member of the Universalist Church of the Divine Paternity, and an ardent admirer of the Rev. Dr. [Edwin H.] Chapin. He was very active in raising the funds to build the society's church at Forty-fifth-st. and Fifth-ave. There was a brief service yesterday at the residence, in West Fifty-third-st., by the Rev. C. [Charles] H. Eaton, of the Church of the Divine Paternity, and the Rev. Dr. J. [James] M. Pullman, of the Church of Our Saviour [Sixth Universalist]. The body was taken to Gouverneur, N.Y., for interment.

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HOW UNIVERSITY CAME TO CANTON Martin Thatcher Was Mainspring in Move in Early '50's

Reference to the generous bequest of a Canton woman, now gone, to St. Lawrence University, has drawn the inquiry from a Canton gentleman as to what is being done to commemorate the memory of some of the men and women who figured largely in the early days of the university in Canton and who were in large measure the cause of the establishment of St. Lawrence University at Canton... These men and women live in blessed memory though their very names in time must be forgotten.

In this connection, however, it is pleasant to recall to mind the name of Martin Thatcher, who probably more than any other man now living or dead was the cause of the establishment of St. Lawrence University at Canton. The honor has been variously bestowed, but in saying this rugged son of the town of DeKalb, St. Lawrence county, was the real mainspring that placed the University on the hill at Canton, will not rob the glory from the many others who carried forward the splendid work of completing the structure. Martin Thatcher was a deeply religious man, interested not only in the church but in the schools and all matters pertaining to education, and his name must ever be held in grateful remembrance by the people of St. Lawrence County and especially by the people of Canton.

In order that we may know Mr. Thatcher more fully let us tell a little of his life. He was born in DeKalb, Dec. 23, 1811. At an early age he engaged in mercantile business at Somerville, St. Lawrence County, and here he married a sister of the late John Malterner, the Malterner family being residents of Somerville in these days. In 1843 Mr. Thatcher was elected County Clerk of St. Lawrence county, an office which he continued to hold during the years up to and including 1848. After relinquishing the county office he was admitted to the bar, but never engaged in the practice of this profession. During the next few years he became identified with important business enterprises in the City of New York where he went to reside. He held the office of Port Warden of the port of New York from 1859 to 1866. He was that type of man that makes and retains friends; the soul of honor, he never during his whole life proved unfaithful to any confidence or trust reposed in him by friend or enemy. He died following a stroke of paralysis in the city of New York, Feb. 5 1882. His remains were brought to Gouverneur for burial. At the funeral, the discourse was preached by Rev. Dr. J.[James] M. Pullman, the noted divine, and the eulogy was pronounced by the late Dr. Isaac M. Atwood. While a resident of New York Mr. Thatcher was a prominent member of the Rev. Dr. Chapin's church and was one of the most active promoters and contributors toward the building of a fine new church then up-town, for Dr. Chapin's congregation.

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But to go back to Martin Thatcher's connection with the establishment of St. Lawrence University at Canton. In the early fifties a commission, or let's put it more simply, a committee of the Universalist denomination, were seeking a site to locate a Theological School. When Mr. Thatcher became aware of this he was interested and conceived the plan of offering the Universalist body a money bonus as one of the inducements for the establishment of a theological seminary at Canton. He went over the matter with prominent Canton men and succeeded in interesting the late Levi B. Storrs, Barzillai Hodskin and Theodore Caldwell. The outcome was that Mr. Thatcher and these three gentlemen, all now long gone, executed a bond for \$15,000, binding them to the payment of that amount toward the founding of the seminary if located in Canton, and it was this pledge that brought the commission to Canton. The result of that visit was the birth of the Theological School at Canton, to be soon followed by the establishment of the College of Letters and Science. After the school was established Mr. Thatcher became one of its trustees and held such office till his death over a quarter of a century later.

The first president of the Board of Trustees was Thomas Jefferson Sawyer, D. D. LL. D., and Mr. Thatcher was the second to hold this office, occupying the presidency of the corporation 1867-68. Judge Ledyard P. Hale, now president of the Board, is the eighth to hold that official position. Of all former presidents only one is now living, Arthur Guinness Rogers, who was president during the years 1883-87, to be succeeded by the late General Edwin Atkins Merritt, LL. D. of Potsdam.

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