

Clinton Academy,
East Hampton, Long Island,
New York.
Suffolk Co.

HABS No. 4-24
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 4
Southern New York State

Historic American Buildings Survey
Wm. Dewey Foster, District Officer,
25 West 45th Street, New York City.

Location, Date and History

Erected in 1784 and chartered in 1787, Clinton Academy was the first academical institution in the State of New York under State supervision. Described in 1874 as "an ancient looking structure built part of wood and part of brick, with gambrel roof and dormer windows, standing on the street directly opposite where the old church stood" (Bayles, Sketches of Suffolk County, p. 413), the Academy still stands on its original site on the west side of the main street, a little distance north of the home of John Howard Payne, (author of "Home, Sweet Home"), in the heart of the village of East Hampton, way out near the eastern end of Long Island. Although that village may seem to residents of New York City as too far away to secure the desirable advantages of metropolitan life, nevertheless this Academy was founded by men of vision, renowned as educators, who preferred the studious quiet of their distant village, undisturbed by the distractions of any near-by city, as the best environment for teaching youth of pre-collegiate age and grade.

The Academy is indebted for its existance mainly to the efforts, sagacity and influence of the Rev. Samuel Buell, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of East Hampton. More than half the amount of money secured to build and equip the edifice was contributed by the following East Hampton residents, although the names of persons residing in other places on Long Island are found on the first board of trustees:

Samuel Buell	£65
Nathaniel Gardiner	"72
Samuel Hutchinson	"59
John Miller, Jr.	"59
Jeremiah Osborne	"59
David Mulford	"25
Seth Barns	"88
Aaron Isaacs	"40
Reuben Hedges	"23
Elisha Mulford	"29
Recompense Sherrill	"29
Daniel Hedges	"29

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(From records of the Academy supplied by former State Historian George R. Howell)

From the Long Island Research Collection of early documents books, etc., preserved in the East Hampton Free Library and the local Historical Society, we are able to present (through the courtesy of Miss Ettee C. Hedges, librarian) the following extracts from personal letters of the Rev. Mr. Buell which were written during the building operations, and which present his reflections on his daily task of supervision:

To Mrs. Elisha Pitkin, Hartford, Oct. 6, 1784:

"I had come to all adventures, had there not at this time 12 or 14teen men been daily at work on the new erected Edifice designed for an Academy here. Who continually wanted my advice.

"I was so much fearing some capital error in that eligent Building that I thought best to forego a present Pleasure - rather than to sustain a future injury. And this was the entire reason for my not coming as proposed; and has hitherto prevented. and likely will yet longer, till the season will perhaps not admit of coming till next spring."

To. Mr. Elisha Pitkin, Hartford, Oct. 6, 1784:

"Our Academy has especially engrossed my attention and care.

The joiners are this week finishing off the outside work, which they have done in a very elegant manner - and done considerable part of the inside work also. It is a building fifty foot in length- of proportionable weth. There are three tier of rooms one above another. The gable ends are all brick. There are belonging to it near 40ty windows. The front faces the meeting house and town clock, and is within 8 rods thereof, and has before it a beautiful Pleaser [piazza?] It has a neat balcony with a walk around it.

" 'Tis like to be a costly business by that [time] 'tis finished. Which we are in hopes will be so far forth as to open a school in it in about three weeks.

"The Proprietors of this building propose having the best Instructors and Tutors that can possibly be obtained. There is now one of the best of English schools kept here- all the learned languages will be taught here and the French tongue- in short any gentleman may send his son here for instruction in any branch of useful knowledge for a longer or shorter term of time as he pleases and have him under best advantage for improvement. We have it in contemplation to put it under the patronage of his Excellency Governor Clinton- which he seems fond of- and of giving us a charter."

To the same, Oct. 20, 1784:

" It may seem strange that I should be [?] an Academy and yet in a sense I am so- as it claims my constant attendance. We hope in about three weeks to have it finished off so as to open a school in it. We have flattering prospects of a large accession of scholars from far and near."

To Elisha Pitkin, East Hartford, August 4, 1786:

"Ps. Our Academy appears at present to be in a flourishing situation. There are about ninety scholars that belong to it. It has growing fame abroad. Your sons I think have well improved their time while they have been here."

The Academy was named in honor of George Clinton who was governor of the State at that time, and who subsequently presented a bill to it. It was incorporated on Nov. 17, 1787, at the same time that Erasmus Hall, Flatbush, received its charter from the Regents of the University of the State of New York, these two being the first academies chartered. "The bill, adopting the system by which the board [the Regents?] was authorized, was introduced in the state legislature upon a petition from the Academy." (Bayles, Sketches of Suffolk County, 1874, p. 513.) The Regents, a corporate body having large supervisory and regulative powers, consist of all incorporated institutions for academic and higher learning in New York State, the State Library, State Museum, and such other libraries, museums, and educational institutions as may be admitted.

The Rev. Samuel Buell, who made the application for the Academy's charter, remained pastor of the Presbyterian Church in East Hampton for nearly 52 years.

Clinton Academy was opened at the beginning of the year 1785 with Jabez Peck as master of the classical department and William Payne (father of John Howard Payne) as master of English and writing, these men having been elected by the

proprietors December 28, 1784.

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In a chapter presenting a detailed account of the educational facilities, resources and expenses of the academies of New York State near the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was published, in the Historical and Statistical Record of the University of the State of New York, by Franklin B. Hough, M.D., Ph.D., 1885, p. 413, the following items regarding Clinton Academy in the year 1805:

"Value of lot and building ($\frac{1}{4}$ acre) \$2,000; of personal estate (lot donation), \$200; of library and apparatus, \$400; total, \$2,600. The academy was 50 feet by 22 feet, and two stories high, the ends of brick and the sides of wood. The first story had a hall of the size of the building. The second story had two rooms, each 22 feet square. The apparatus consisted of an air pump, telescope, microscope, small hand orrey, pair of globes, compass and chain, quadrant and prism. Tuition, \$1.50 for Reading and Writing; \$2.50 for English Grammar and Ciphering; \$5 for Mathamatics and Book-keeping; \$5 for dead languages, and \$5 for Logic, Rhetoric and Composition; \$5 for Moral Philosophy; \$5 for French Language."

In a later chapter (Ibid., p. 604), an "imperfect list" (explained on p. 575) of the principals of the Academy is published as follows:

William Payne
Lyman Beecher, 1804
David Gardiner and
Richard Storrs, 1805
Ebenezer Phillips, 1807
Abraham Parsons, 1810-14
Russell Greene, 1815
Samuel Wade, 1816

Isaac A. Hawley, 1817-18
Nehemiah Brown, 1818-19
David Gardiner, 1820-22
David Gardiner Jr. and
David Barker, 1823
James M. Hunting, 1824-25
Joseph D. Condit, 1826-27
Randolph Cammel, 1830-31

Roger G. Ely, 1833
Robert D. Gardiner, 1834-35
James M. Harlow, 1836
Jarvis McDuffie, 1837
Addison L. Hunt, 1838
Ralph Dayton, 1839-40
Henry G.L. Livingston, 1841-42
Howland Dawes, 1843
Elias T. White, 1844-45
Charles D. Buck, 1846-47

Charles S. Williams, 1848
Thomas Jefferson King, 1849
Charles S. Williams, A.B. 1850-51
C.B. Dorrance, A.B., 1852
C.S. Williams, A.B., 1855-56
Geo. R. Howell, A.B., 1859
J.L. Fordham, A.M., 1861, 63
S.W. Gardiner, 1864-66
C.S. Joslyn, A.M., 1867-68

"Under a succession of able instructors, the school has maintained a creditable rank among kindred institutions, and done much, not only to diffuse a taste for literature in the neighborhood, but to elevate the standard of education in this part of the island." (Thompson, Hist. Of Long Island, 1843, Vol. I, p. 323.)

For the first forty years of its existence the Academy had ~~an~~ an attendance of over 80 students, including a night school which was sustained for a few years.

The Academy ceased to report to the Regents in 1868. The upper floor of the building was then rented by its trustees to teachers of private schools or to artists for summer studios, and the lower floor to the town for town meetings, for exhibitions and similar affairs. When Hough (cited above) wrote (in 1885), the trustees still maintained their organization in the hope that there might be a revival of the Academy.

In 1887 an extension was added at the back of the southern end. This was used for a village hall and was called Clinton Hall. The ground floor of the northern end became the home of the village newspaper, the East Hampton Star, and in 1898, when the Star had moved elsewhere, that floor was occupied by the newly organized East Hampton Free Library. Later the

Library used also a room upstairs, and in 1912 removed into its new building.

The Academy building was restored in 1921 to its original design by Lorenzo E. Woodhouse, who spared neither pains nor money to make the restoration as nearly correct as possible in every particular. This accounts for the new appearance of the building in present photographs.

At the time of the restoration, the East Hampton Historical Society was organized with the old Academy trustees as part of the membership, and the building was leased to the new organization. It is now occupied by a small historical collection on the upper floors, while the first floor is used for meetings of societies, lectures, art exhibitions, and for other educational purposes. (From memoranda supplied by former State Historian George. R. Howell from Regents reports and from East Hampton and Clinton Academy records.)

Written, June 14th, 1934, by

Thos. W. Hetchkiss

Thos. W. Hetchkiss,
118 Pine St.
Peekskill, N.Y.

Approved: *Chas. Dewey Foster*

Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.