

4-4-01

Yates Academy

Before there were free, public high schools as we know them today, all secondary education was done through the academy system.

The academies, sometimes called seminaries, were private educational institutions supported by the tuition of the attending students. By the mid-19th century, we started to see a shift to free, secondary education for all.

The common schools or district schools had been free to all for grades one through eight. Therefore, educational opportunities were limited to only those who could afford an education beyond eighth grade.

By the mid-19th century in Orleans County we had a total of seven institutions of higher learning. Only one was free, that being Medina Free Academy, which was established in 1850.

The first academy in the county was established in Gaines in 1827 but was discontinued by the mid-1840s.

The Albion Academy was incorporated in 1837 and discontinued in 1876. The Millville Academy was organized in 1839. When it went out of existence, the building was then used by School District No. 7 of Shelby.

The Holley Academy was commenced in 1850 and lasted only 18 years. The Phipps Union Seminary for girls opened in 1837 in Albion and closed in 1875.

The Yates Academy was just north of Lyndonville and is pictured with this article. It was organized in 1841 and continued until 1888. It was the last one in our county to turn in its charter.

This academy enjoyed a very fine reputation as an institution of higher learning. It was through the efforts of Peter Saxe, an early Yates merchant that the school was established.

The academic year was divided into three terms of 14 weeks each. Tuition cost per term ranged from \$3 to \$6 depending on the course of

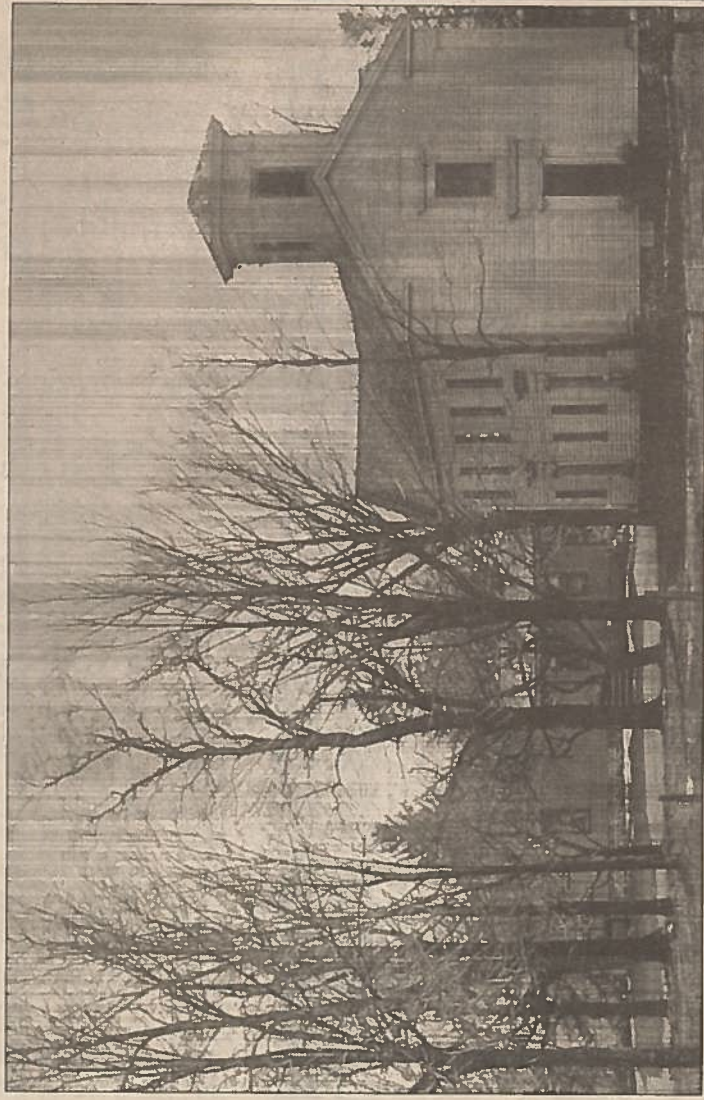
study.

The 1851 catalogue stated: "the instruction of the school is established on the principle that education is the developing of one's own powers, rather than the treasuring of facts."

The school was divided into two departments. The Classical Department prepared students for college, while the English Department offered training to teach in the rural schools. Subjects at the Academy included: Greek, Latin, French, geometry, trigonometry, natural philosophy, astrology, chemistry, botany, geology, zoology, history and American history.

Others subjects were moral science, perspective drawing, pencilling, water color, oil painting and music. Extra charges for art courses ranged from \$2 to \$10 per semester.

All students were required to attend some religious service on the Sabbath. The Academy had an average enrollment of around 130



each year

One former student who gained prominence in later life was Gen. Eli S. Parker, a Native American born on the Tonawanda Reservation. It was he who drew up the terms of agreement at Appomattox for Gen. Ulysses

S. Grant.

The Yates Academy not only educated people from Yates, but also surrounding counties. But with decreasing enrollment because of public schools, the Yates Academy also finally had to close. The old building stood idle for a

number of years and in 1916 was dismantled and shipped by railroad to near Binghamton where it was rebuilt for a Bible School.

Our photo, taken by W.C. Eaton of Jeddo, shows the Academy just before it was taken down.