

The Fredonia Academy  
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2013

Petitions were circulated in 1821 for pledges to help put up an Academy building in Fredonia. The Academy was a kind of early prep school. The construction was begun in October 1821 and completed by 1823. It was a large framed building, 36 x 50 feet standing about where the rear portion of Village Hall is today. It reached about 30 feet in height with a stairway/bell-tower at the front facing the Common.

To help with the financing, the second floor was sold to the Presbyterian Church and, in April 1825, a room on the first floor was leased to School District No. 8. Finally, a bill was passed in Albany to help with paying for a Preceptor (Principal). The first floor interior was finished by Lathrop **Drake** in March 1826 and in October 1826, Austin **Smith** arrived and organized the first class of the Fredonia Academy.

In 1850 John **Jones** was hired to enlarge the building. He was the local architect/builder responsible for *20 Central Avenue*, the **Risley** mansions, the Baptist and Episcopal church buildings, and his own home formerly at *135 West Main* (now *403 East Main*). The Academy building was doubled in size toward the Common with two square corner towers at its front. (Barker Museum has some pictures of that version of the building.) In 1867 the Fredonia Normal School was built and took over the Academy's function. The Academy building was then used as a multi-purpose Village Hall including offices, meeting rooms and the Fire Dept.