

“New” Stone Hall



The building we see today is actually "new" Stone Hall. The Delaware Literary Institute was incorporated 4/23/1835. That is only 43 years after the first "white" settlers arrived in Franklin. The "old" Stone Hall was completed in 1836 and stood directly in front of the current building. It measured 40 X 86 ft. and stood 4 stories tall. In 1855, it had an enrollment of 409 students from 30 states and territories and 6 foreign countries. On March 9, 1856, it and its contents burnt to the ground. Amazingly in 1857 the "new" Stone Hall was completed. It measures 42 X 93 ft. and stands 3 stories tall. "A cloud was looming on the horizon over DLI's future, however. During the Civil War period attendance dramatically dropped as young men were called to war. A further blow was a bill to establish a Normal School in Oneonta, which opened in 1889. Even though their valiant efforts to save the school, including making it a business college and adding a military discipline, enrollment continued to decline and it ultimately became a Union Free School." This, of course is a condensed version of a sad story. In the late 1970's, the school administration proposed tearing the building down because it needed a new roof. A committee of volunteers rallied to save the building and started fund raising efforts... this was the beginning of Old Franklin Day. Enough money was raised to remove the slate roof and replace it with a raised seam metal roof and as well as building the porches at each front door. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Please take a moment to actually look at this building and appreciate its construction, its stone work and its beautiful cupola. Imagine gathering all that stone and fitting it together perfectly, constructing the interior woodwork and beams 166 years ago. This majestic building is now used for storage... but, at least, it is still there. Its interior is certainly dated but it is truly one of the most majestic historic buildings in all of Delaware County and hopefully it is just in a holding pattern and it will find a renewed purpose... someday.