

Lovejoy's Alton Printing Office in 1837



The home of Elijah P. Lovejoy was located on Cherry Street just north of Broadway.

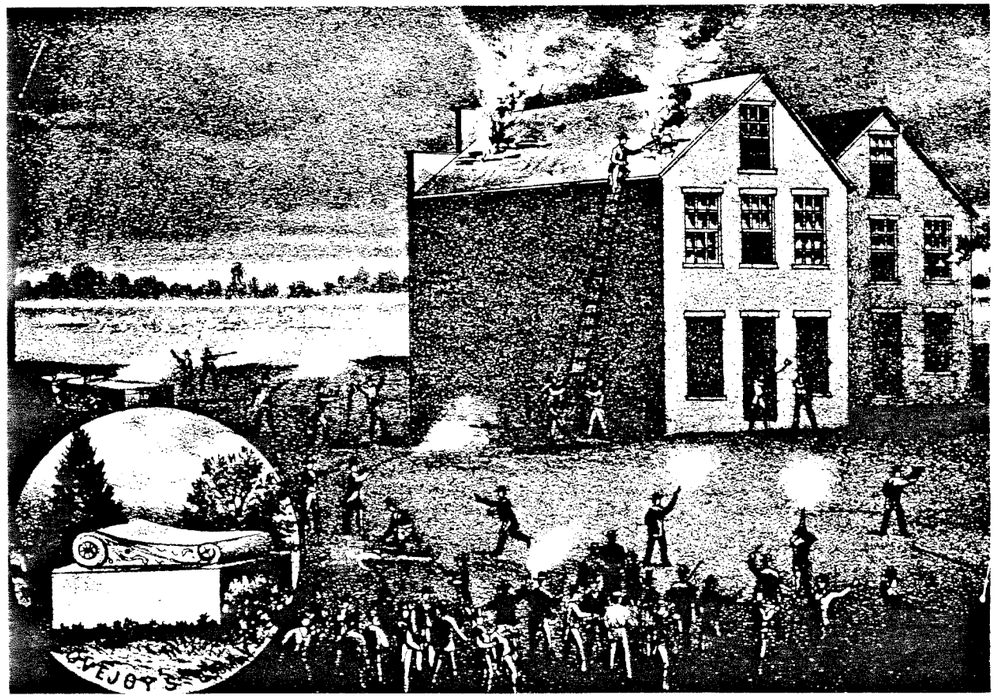
The Painful Years

A chill fell over Alton in November 1837 which was far deeper than the impending winter, as the tragic news of the death of the Rev. Elijah Parish Lovejoy shocked the nation. Overnight, as a result of the murder and as an effect of the financial Panic of 1837, the development of Alton stopped. It would be several years before the town recovered.

On May 10, 1837, sixty-seven days after Martin Van Buren became President of the United States the banks in New York closed. Speculation in lands in Illinois and the other new Western states was the cause. None of the land speculation was backed with any other collateral than the land itself, which was not being settled by those who had borrowed to buy it. Even the State of Illinois had borrowed on its own land to underwrite its great railroad and canal scheme. The banks closed and the state plunged into economic paralysis with only twenty-four miles of railroad ready for operation, a section between Meredosia on the Illinois River and Jacksonville. Alton, which in 1834 had been promised money to become the state's main railroad center in place of being the state capital, was left holding an empty bag after the depression of 1837. Furthermore, following the killing of Lovejoy, the specter of mob action and the absence of law and order to suppress it sent many sensible New England settlers into retreat. 794 pieces of property were scheduled for auction at the Courthouse on Christmas Day. At about this time the Baptists had sold their frame building for $8000 and bought a lot at the southeast corner of Easton and Second streets for $6500 and erected a fine stone church at a cost of $18,000. The depth of the "depression can best be realized from the fact that this church with lot which had cost $24,500 was sold under a mortgage and bought in by a syndicate of the congregation for $3000."

There was more than a nominal attempt made by the pastor, Mr. Graves, to revive the spirit following the death of Lovejoy.

> In the winter next succeeding the death of Lovejoy, this church experienced a revival which, in the circumstances of the time, was most striking and remarkable. The pastor, Mr. Graves, was assisted by Rev. James Gallaher. For sixty successive nights, meetings of great interest and power were held in that stone church. The spirit of prayer manifested was most remarkable. Speaking of these prayers and their results, Mr. Gilman says: "Some remarkable moral transformations occurred during those times of prayer and fasting -- changes of life from some of its lowest forms to the lovely simplicity which springs alone from the simple love of Christ. I recall one instance of conversion quite as striking as that of Paul: The individual was as wicked a man as ever I knew, and he became as meek and gentle as a weaned child upon its mother's breast. I remember another guilty sinner who was awakened



The riot, as it was called, in which a mob moved against the river-side Godfrey-Gilman Warehouse where Lovejoy's new press was stored, became the scandal of the decade. The lithograph of the night-time raid became one of the rallying symbols of the abolitionist movement, and made Alton infamous.

while playing cards in the woods. The tolling of the bell had a voice he could not resist; so he came into the crowded assembly and soon found peace and joy unknown before." The number of converts admitted to this church as fruits of that revival was just about fifty. Among them was Edward Breath, who became a missionary printer in Persia.[8]

The First Presbyterian Church was having troubles of its own before long. Slavery was not the only issue since the congregation and the whole presbytery was unanimously anti-slavery. The issue was internal. Captain Godfrey had turned the deed to the stone church over to the Trustees of his new Monticello College for women. This meant first of all that the Presbyterians had to start paying rent to use the building they assumed to be their own. Two things helped, the fact that the church had been given a handsome bell by the mother of W. S. Gilman, which was installed in the tower.[9] And then in the spring the Presbyterians had a revival. At the March 29 presbytery meeting in Collinsville it was recorded, "A revival was reported in the church at Alton from which 49 were received on the first Sabbath in March." It was also recorded, "The Presbytery by an unanimous vote placed itself on the New School side." The Presbyterian Church in America was on the road to schism. Probably all the worst effects of the twin troubles were deflected when the congregation called the Reverend Doctor Augustus T. Norton to become pastor on March 1, 1839.

Within the first decade of its existence every one of the dynamics had emerged that were to determine the destiny of the First Presbyterian Church for the next century or more. One factor that had appeared was concerning the location and nature of its house of worship; this issue would never be far from the center of the congregation's attention. A second factor, as with every church, no doubt, was the composition and expectations of the membership; indeed, this was tied to the tides of fortune for the town and the whole area. A third factor, was the relationship of the congregation to

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[8]Norton, Semi-Centennial Proceedings, p. 82.

[9]The July 30, 1896 edition of the Alton Evening Telegraph carried an account of the recollections of Capt. Hollister, one of the oldest officials of the First Presbyterian Church. "The bell, was purchased by Mr. Isaac Scarritt from the owners of the steamboat Bunker Hill No. 3. The bell, Mr. Scarritt supposed, had more silver in it than the ordinary run of bells, and therefore its purchase. The Bunker Hill was, I believe, an Ohio River boat, which made occasional trips of the Mississippi River, landing at Alton. The boat was sold and probably rebuilt. Therefore, the bell was disposed of to Mr. Scarritt for the church." The bell has a foundry stamp in bold characters around the top which reads, Kayes Bell Foundry, Louisville, Ky." It also has a ring of cherubs at play, which was not typical of bells cast for riverboats. In Ben Vine's Historical Highlights (manuscript in the church archives) the bell is described "as being 36" in height, 27" in diameter, weighed 1,100 lbs. and beautiful in shape and tone."

a parent denomination. But history has recently gained a perspective on an even more important factor, which can perhaps be called "an American consensus on the role of civilization."

There is probably no better way to appreciate what the First Presbyterian Church of Alton tried to be, than to see the church (as the members then saw it) as an instrument for building a Christian civilization. The thing which appalled early travelers to places like Shawneetown and which drew committed missionaries to early Illinois' inhospitable wilderness was the need to give the frontier a civilized form.

In the nineteenth century there was a consensus that a Christian civilization depended on three institutions: an effective educational system, a sound legal order, and a widespread network of religious institutions. It was immensely frightening and therefore impelling, that the burgeoning frontier might grow into an ignorant, irreverent, lawless giant. It was critical, and worth the greatest sacrifices, that the frontier -- and the whole country, indeed, the whole world -- become beneficiaries of Christian civilization. "For the most part, Protestant leaders...meant by civilization...an orderly, well-mannered, and moral society based on a broadly Christian system of values and code of behavior."[10] Presbyterians agreed with this general definition, and publicly insisted that the Church is a protector of civilization (meaning especially morality). In 1820 the Presbyterian General Assembly spoke of the exalted place of the central institution of religion, the Church, whose preservation is "the dearest care of Providence," and then insisted that "the presence of this Church is the best safeguard of nations, and its growth and stability the surest pledge of their prosperity and strength."[11] Earlier, the phrase "Christian civilization," had meant a Christian church-state, a theocracy. But the experience of a free and pluralistic United States had replaced that with a greater vision, one that was more individualistic and progressive. Protestants generally accepted the separation of church and state, but stoutly resisted any separation of religion and morals from public well-being. Horace Bushnell, a Presbyterian theologian, spoke for all Christians in America when he prophesied, "The wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose before us; and we will not cease, till a Christian nation throws up its temples of worship on every hill and plain, till knowledge, virtue and religion, blending their dignity and their healthful power, have filled our great country with a manly and happy race of people, and the bands of a complete Christian commonwealth are seen to span the continent."[12] Christians saw in all this the hand of God, not only ready to spread the benefits of civilization across

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[10]Robert T. Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities, Second ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 26.

[11]Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly, of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, 1820, p. 316.

[12]Horace Bushnell, Barbarism the First Danger: a Discourse for Home Missions (New York: no pub., 1847) p. 32.

America but around the world. The Presbyterian General Assembly enthused, "We have the happiness to live in a day, Brethren, when the Captain of our Salvation, in a distinguishing manner, is marshalling his *mighty host*, and preparing for the moral conquest of the *world*. The grand contest that has been so long conducting, is drawing rapidly towards a termination, that shall be infinitely honorable both to our glorious leader, and to those who have fought under his banner. Not a finger shall be lifted, nor shall a devout aspiration heave the bosom of a single son or daughter of the kingdom of the Messiah, that shall not be met with smiles and crowned with the blessing of God."[13] This was the vision and the language that came to inspire George Duffield to write in 1858, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss." And Sabine Baring-Gould in 1864 to write, "Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before: Christ the royal Master Leads against the foe; Forward into battle, See, His banners go." The purpose, as Christians felt in the 1800's, was not domination and power (at least they did not think so), but that people everywhere might prosper. For Christianity is an instrument of civilization and civilization is an instrument of prosperity. It was not only for the eternal salvation of people that Christianity was brought to them, but also for their temporal blessing. This identification of prosperity with civilization (expressed in terms of morality) was expressed by the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1819, "The Assembly have [sic] no hope, that general prosperity can be restored to our country until there is a return to those habits of industry, temperance, moderation, economy and general virtue which our common Christianity inculcates."[14]

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[13]Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly, of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, 1819, p. 178.

[14]Ibid, pp. 171-172. "However, there was another populist and traditionalist view which was widespread during the Andrew Jackson era and arose in Illinois among southerners that emphasized honor and strong, uncritical loyalties to clan, church, military and political leaders. Science, technology, education, abstract thought, and innovation were not favored by the traditionalists, nor were hard work by men, elaborate planning for the future, or use of complex institutions like corporations and newspapers. ...they believed that gambling, "fate," and, more to the point, land speculation and inside political deals would help them [become rich more certainly that other ways]. They distrusted paper money, banks, railroads, distant government, and efforts to reform them or society. The modernizers had a totally different view of life, drawn in part from the cultural heritage of New England Puritanism and related religious attitudes among Scandinavian, British, and some German immigrants. The duty of the citizen, they fervently believed, was to better himself, his family, and his community. Hard work was important, but even more important was rational analysis, planning for the future, and investment in education. The hierarchical style of strong leaders that traditionalists favored was not acceptable; each person, as Emerson so often emphasized, must seek the fullest expression of humanity free from outside control. Individualized control, based upon critical self-examination, prompted by a religious

For Presbyterians in the 1840's the task of civilization was nothing less than to save the world from immorality and darkness. But there were steps along the way, or rather, indices of progress. Certain specific issues surfaced which took on the nature of crusades. The most urgent were protection of the Sabbath from public desecration, and temperance.

> The campaigns for Sabbath observance and temperance were conspicuous and controversial at the time because they emphasized distinctive and publicly visible aspects of the drive for a Christian civilization against practices deemed alien to that goal. They conjoined the characteristic evangelical emphasis on personal morality with concern for certain specific laws. The churches were also concerned with many other moral issues, such as dishonesty, profanity, gambling, dancing, smoking, the weakening of marriage ties, and the frequency of divorce. These concerns were often stressed in preaching and in popular evangelical literature. In evangelical teaching such issues were customarily treated as matters of personal morality, as part of the church's regular work of helping to mold a law-abiding citizenry. Moral standards as an inseparable part of the Christian life were stressed in the work of local congregations, in the curricula of Sunday schools, in the pages of religious publications, in the ministries of itinerant evangelists, and in the work of missionaries in the West and overseas. It was all part of the work of Christianizing a civilization, though it was less spectacular and less controversial than the crusades for the Sabbath and for temperance. In these, Protestants believed that they were defending a Protestant civilization against the forces that would destroy it, forces growing in strength through the new immigration coming from southern and eastern Europe in unprecedented waves.[15]

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sense of conversion, and internalized as guilt and a drive for achievement, was critical. Everything in Illinois needed reform, the modernizers felt. They set about their mission by establishing voluntary organizations, academies, libraries, debating societies, and colleges; by seeking compulsory public education, prohibition of liquor, and laws against gambling; by sponsoring religious revivals; and by demanding rigorous, impartial law enforcement backed up by penitentiaries to "reform" criminals." From Richard Jensen, "Sectionalism in Illinois Politics," in Roger D. Bridges and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Illinois: Its History & Legacy, (St. Louis: River City Publishers, Ltd., 1984), p. 15. This division was the difference between the political poles in Illinois, Jensen explains, between Democrats and Whigs who were later Republicans. However, it can be seen how precisely the so-called Modernists claimed the same agenda as the Protestants. The seeds of an immense civil disorder are found in these differences.

[15]Handy, p.81. For Protestants in Alton, however, one of the first challenges to the Protestant agenda came in the form of imigration from the south, and then from the Irish immigrants brought in to mine the quarries, and build Benjamin Godfrey's

A hundred and fifty years after the fact it is hard for us to see how keeping the Sabbath and temperance could have been such riveting and electrifying issues, outstripping even such matters as the break-up of the nation over the issues of slavery and states rights. At the time, Presbyterians and other Protestants saw the Sabbath and temperance as signs of progress toward the desired Christian civilization. So a Presbyterian spokesman, Samuel Miller of Princeton, wrote, "If the patriot be an intelligent *Christian*, he will perceive in this extended scene *one feature* which will fell him with anguish and deep apprehension. I refer to that deplorable profanation of the Lord's-day which is so conspicuous on *all* lines of our steamboats, Canals, and Rail-Roads, and on *some* of them so obtrusively and shamefully conspicuous as if the object were to insult as well as to rob God; and to render public feelings as speedily and as thoroughly as possible callous to the outrage on all religious decorum, by giving to it all possible familiarity and publicity."[16]

This grand agenda for action, with its specific crusades was constantly being interrupted, however. The terrible disruption of 1837 was deepened by a growing chasm in the denomination and in the country. As if it were not bad enough for the church in Alton that two differences in philosophies of life were solidifying into regional belligerence, the Presbyterian Church was also beginning to splinter.

Throughout the first two decades of the nineteenth century a rift was growing between two schools of thought in New England. In the interest of modernizing the teaching of the church, so as to make it applicable especially on the frontiers of Indiana and Illinois, where an emphasis was on practical methods of getting results, there was widespread cooperation between denominations. Joint revivals were held. And where colleges were established by one group, for instance, the other denominations stayed away. There was such widespread agreement, in fact, that Congregationalists like Salmon Giddings called themselves Congregational and Presbyterian interchangeably. Furthermore, on the frontier, in the interest of getting results, revivalism was wholeheartedly accepted. Slowly, however, a conservative voice within the Congregational and Presbyterian churches began to be heard that was worried that the Yale theologians who had sent most of the missionaries to Illinois were destroying the true faith as inherited from John Calvin. The conservatives were afraid that the revivals were becoming the work of revivalists rather than the work of God. They thought they saw an erosion of the clear distinction between doctrines of Presbyterian Calvinism and the careless Armenianism of Methodism.

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new railroad.

[16]Samuel Miller in the introduction to John Holmes Agnew, A Manual of the Christian Sabbath (Philadelphia: no pub., 1834) p. xxxv.



Princeton Theological Seminary was begun in a log building, but was the alma-mater of the middle-of-the-road Presbyterian leaders during the Nineteenth Century battle between revivalists and conservatives.



The camp meetings of the 1800's won the country for Christ and brought all the benefits of Christian moral conscience to the benighted frontier, as it seemed. The meetings could go on for days.

Theology was only part of the issue, of course. Power was another part. For a hundred years the Presbyterians of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh had run the Presbyterian Church. But as a result of mission work by New England Presbyterian and Congregational preachers in the West, and of immense revivals all over New York State and in New England, a new power base was evolving which was made up of New School thought. When Lane Seminary, opened in 1818, called Lyman Beecher from Yale to be president and then when the New School party opened Union Theological Seminary in New York City, the Old School Party felt the situation was life-threatening. Princeton Theological Seminary, which had held the balance of power, thought of Union Seminary as a slap in the face and joined the Old School Party, abandoning its neutral stance. The Old School forces were carefully organized so that in 1837 they controlled the General Assembly and in that assembly they passed resolution after resolution designed to demolish the New School wing.

Intertwined in the strife over theology and the fight for power was the issue of slavery. "The New School were substantially a unit -- holding slave holding to be a sin. On this subject the Old School were divided."[17] At its first meeting on April 4, 1837 Alton Presbytery did two things. It received Upper Alton Presbyterian Church and unanimously passed a long resolution on slavery to be brought to the General Assembly. "It concluded by asking the Assembly to adopt these three declarations. (1) "That slaveholding, or buying, selling, or holding human beings as property is sin. (2) That the General Assembly will not be responsible for its perpetuation. (3) That the judicatories of the Church ought to take suitable measures to purge the Presbyterian Church of the evil." In fact, the General Assembly had taken a strong stand against slavery twenty years earlier when it declared, "We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the Law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the Gospel of Christ, which enjoin that 'all things whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"[18] Between 1818 and 1838, however, several things had occurred to polarize the nation and divide the churches. Perhaps the two outstanding events were the opening of several new states and territories, or pressure to do so, which again and again raised the questions of states rights to self-determination and the right of states to have slaves if they wanted to do so; and the event which did more than anything to frighten the south was the Nat Turner insurrection of 1831. Between these two, from the 1830's on there was to be no successful compromise on the issue of slavery. Battle was inevitable.

This was the milieu into which Augustus T. Norton stepped on March 1, 1839. He had been enticed to come to Illinois in 1835 by his cousin Rev. Theron Baldwin of Monticello College in Alton. In 1838 Rev. Norton organized the Second Presbyterian

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[17]Norton, p. 270.

[18]Extracts of the Minutes, 1818, pp. 28-29.

Church of St. Louis and then accepted the call to become the fourth pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Alton. Rev. Norton was installed as pastor in Benjamin Godfrey's church which the Presbyterians were using while paying rent to the trustees of Monticello Seminary. As it was described by a contemporary, "It was no common structure. Its exterior and interior bore no tame aspect. The young Angelo who planned it was doubtless resolved
on a grand success or splendid failure and succeeded -- in the latter. Cold, hard, forbidding, its stiff highbacked pews, its pea green walls, who that ever saw it, can ever forget or desire to see repeated. The place and its surroundings failing to inspire pious feelings in the undevout, would scarcely awaken holy aspirations in even loyal Presbyterians. But severely plain as it undoubtedly was, within its walls at one time and another were gathered many choice spirits, and the intellectual character of the congregation was unsurpassed if equaled in any frontier settlement."[19] as the surroundings may have been, the music was just the opposite. Norton reminisced aloud at the Semi-Centennial forty years later.

> In the small, high singers' gallery, opposite the pulpit, is Samuel Wade with his clarionet; Stephen Lufkin with his bass viol; S. E. Moore, with his grave face and deep bass notes -- the beautiful Chappell sisters -- Anna, Mary and Kate -- with Sarah Treadway, all fine singers, and together making such sweet music, that stranger ministers, when assisting the pastor, thought it threw the preaching altogether in the shade."[20]

In 1834 the Baptists had moved out of the stone church, having erected a wooden building of their own on the northeast corner of Alby and Third streets. Occasional services were held in the stone church by Episcopalians, but for all intents and purposes it was home for the Presbyterians. Captain Godfrey had deeded the property to Monticello Seminary, and in the early spring of 1845 the Seminary needing the use of the money, Captain Godfrey, as agent of the Trustees, proposed to sell it. By 1845 the depression on the economy of Alton was very deep. "Houses were permitted to go to waste and the basement stories of both the Beall Howard building on Second street and the frame (Baptist) church had become but shelters for cattle."

It has been suggested that Alton recovered within a year of the worst effects of the Panic of 1837 and from the pall that hung over Alton as a result of the Lovejoy

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[19]From a booklet, The History of the Corner Stone Laying of the First Presbyterian Church, Alton, Illinois, Monday, July 5, 1897, in the collection of the First Presbyterian Church, page 9; the quote was taken from a speech made at the semi-centennial by General Lewis B. Parsons.

[20]From a sermon by Dr. Norton, Proceedings of the Semi-Centennial, p. 86.

killing.[21] In fact economic trouble was just beginning. Gen. Lewis Parsons spoke of the matter in 1881.

> How distinct to some of us is the Alton of that day.... Crushed by the overwhelming revulsion of '37-'40 -- suddenly deprived of half its wealth and population -- overshadowed by the rising greatness of St. Louis -- its wharves deserted and silent -- its houses untenanted -- its citizens financially involved and dispirited, though still bravely struggling against great odds -- it possessed, as a citizen remarked, but a single flourishing institution -- the Penitentiary.[22]

Another church member from that era, and one of the most famous and prosperous of the settlers, Winthrop S. Gilman, partner of Benjamin Godfrey, outlined the economic reasons for the trouble.

> The business of Lower Alton, stimulated by paper money and the vain hope entertained by a few that it might become a competitor with St. Louis, grew very rapidly. Wholesale stores were established without a sufficiently settled country to back them and the product of the Galena lead mines, for a brief season, was directed to Alton. The State Bank of Illinois was established and stock in it sold at 108, which in a few years became almost worthless. The banks broke, the merchants almost universally failed, and from 1837 to 1843 times were so hard that all men had rigidly to economize.[23]

A third church member lived through the troubles and reports that not only was 1837 difficult, 1841 was disastrous financially.

> The spring of 1841 brought a disastrous change to the business of Alton. The State Bank of Illinois, and the Bank of Illinois at Shawneetown, were unable to resume -- were utterly bankrupt. Their notes were worthless, inflicting serious loss on all who held them, and completely paralyzing business and causing a serious depreciation to

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[21]Stetson, for instance, says, "By 1839, however, commerce began to revive. Area packing houses were doing extremely well. The town gained a reputation as a shipping center.... The Alton harbor was quite lively in 1838 and 1839 with a reported 697 steamboat arrivals. Godfrey, Gilman & Co. formed a partnership with Stone, Manning & Co. ...In 1841, 1100 steamboat landings were recorded." See Charlotte Stetson, Alton, Illinois: A Pictorial History (St. Louis: G. Bradley Publishing, Inc., 1986), p. 26.

[22]Parsons, p. 130.

[23]Winthrop S. Gilman, from a letter of May 30, 1881, published in the Semi-Centennial book of the church, pp. 121-122.



The present St. Paul's Episcopal Church on the northeast corner of Third and Market Streets was Godfrey's gift to Alton. The Presbyterians called it home until 1846.

> every description of property. Specie (coin) was now the only money the farmers would sell their products for. They would not look at bank notes, and that generation of men had little use for fiat money. The business and property of Alton suffered greatly from this crisis, and during my residence there of seven years, Alton did not regain its former activity and prosperity.[24]

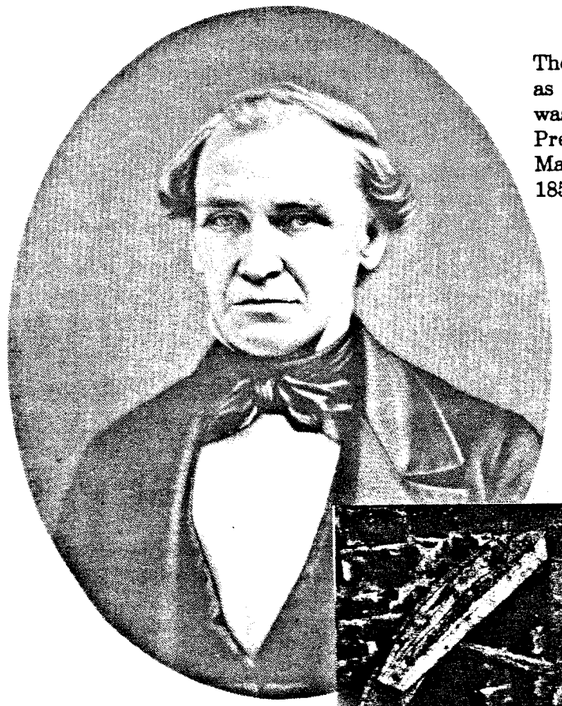
The Rev. A. T. Norton, who had been offered a salary of $1000 the first year was paid half that the next year and for several subsequent years as well, and "even this amount was with great difficulty collected." In 1844 one of Alton's historic floods caused havoc. The water rose into the valley up Piasa Street as far as Ninth. In the same year the matter of the church's building came to a head when the trustees of Monticello proposed to sell their downtown property to alleviate their own financial pressures. For a year the property was for sale but the Presbyterians, who had once thought of themselves as proprietors of the church in all but name, neglected to respond. At last Monticello sold the building to the Episcopal Church in 1846 for $2000.

The Presbyterians vacated the stone church immediately, but not before removing the bell which Mrs. Gilman had given the church. The Episcopalians were agitated over the disappearance of the bell as it appears the Presbyterians thought they would be, because the bell was removed late at night and taken away on a dray. A. T. Norton, who is so expansive on all other aspects of the church's history was strangely quiet about this episode. The session records, fill in some color about the event, describing even how the men dressed in black to effect their mission. Fifty years after the fact Captain Hollister remembered, "One night the late William Hayden, father of George D. Hayden, organized a party, and with block and tackle lowered the bell from the tower and removed it to another place, and when the new Presbyterian Church was built in 1846, it was placed in it."

According to the "History" prepared for the corner stone laying in 1897 Captain Godfrey offered the property for sale at a price of $2000, assuring the Presbyterians that they could probably have it for $1600 when no one could be found to pay the higher price. For some time the Presbyterians tried in every way to raise the $1600, without success. Surprisingly, the Episcopalians accepted the offer of $2000. "There is no doubt Captain Godfrey desired and intended the Presbyterians should have the church and the unexpected turn in affairs was, apart from the money consideration [which was a help to Monticello], a disappointment to him." With the loss of the bell, however, it appears that Godfrey settled with the Episcopalians for $1800, understanding that the extra $200 would help them purchase a new bell. Or perhaps, as Ben Vine suggests, Presbyterians paid the $200.

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[24]From a Letter from Jonathan C. Havens, dated June 13, 1881, contained in the Semi-Centennial book.



The Rev. Augustus T. Norton, as he appeared at the time he was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church from March 1, 1839 until May 24, 1857.



The church bell was a gift of Benjamin Godfrey's mother to the Presbyterian Church, and the Presbyterians took the bell when they left the church building that had been sold to the Episcopalians in 1846.

After the last service April 27, 1845 in the stone church, the Presbyterians occupied until June 14, 1846, the frame building sold by the Baptists to the Methodists. This had been abandoned by the Methodists until the Presbyterians took it over. These quarters were all but impossible. The building was dilapidated and almost derelict. One Sunday afternoon when the congregation reassembled, two sisters found that a large snake had crawled in through an open window and was ensconced in their pew. One of the sisters quietly found another place to sit, while the other just as quietly held her ground with great courage until the service was over when the intruder was summarily dispatched.

It was a dark time for Presbyterians. The prospect of the Presbyterian Church closing a second time came up. One early member recalled the mood of those days.

> I well remember on one occasion, after the Church had left the stone building and were worshipping in that little hall on the side of the hill, your pastor and myself were standing on the steps at the close of the weekly prayer meeting. Our conversation turned upon the prospects of "the night" -- not a gleam of light streaked the horizon. Brother Norton stood a few moments in silent thought and then remarked in a slow and intensely impressive manner, substantially: "God has not planted this Church on that mighty river, in this great valley, where millions are to be born and form character for weal or woe, and now in its infancy and helplessness to abandon it and let it die. As long as the Church will stand by me with its prayers and words of sympathy, I'll work and wait for the blessing." The next morning as I was about to leave the city I called to say good-bye to old Mother Brown. As I was leaving her I expressed a hope that the church would all keep up courage. "Na fear, na fear," said she, "Scotland had many a darker night than this, and God saved it after all. Our pastor's a brave man and he'll cheer us up."[25]

The feeling of humiliation was complete when on June 29, 1845, the windows were closed to shut out the sounds of dedication of the Roman Catholic church, the first in lower Alton, which had just been completed on the adjoining lot east. After the Presbyterians got their new building, the frame house which had been so uncomfortable was sold to the catholics and remodeled for a residence for the parish priest. Both the house and the Catholic church were consumed by fire in 1854.

It was decided to build, and the ladies were the first to move in the matter, raising the first $600. A year earlier it had been impossible to raise $1600, but now a much larger sum was not considered to be beyond reach. Mrs. Norton recalled how the matter was turned around.

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[25]From an address by the Rev. James R. Dunn, Proceedings of the Semi-Centennial, pp. 20-21.

> At length, one day, at a meeting of the sewing society, the ladies, while bemoaning our poverty and low estate, were surprised by one member who seemed inspired for the occasion and proposed that the society commence to raise funds, by the use of our needles, for the building of a new church, not at all in the spirit of Hood's song of the shirt, but cheerfully and with earnest will and work. The now familiar hum of the sewing machine had not then been heard in our homes, but it was indeed "stitch by stitch," that gentlemen's shirts, with their nicely stitched lined bosoms were made, children's dresses, aprons, etc., quilts and comforts, and we even made bean bags. At length the gentlemen began to feel that the life of the church depended on having a comfortable building in which to worship the God of their fathers, and moved in the matter, and in the course of time we had a house to call our own.[26]

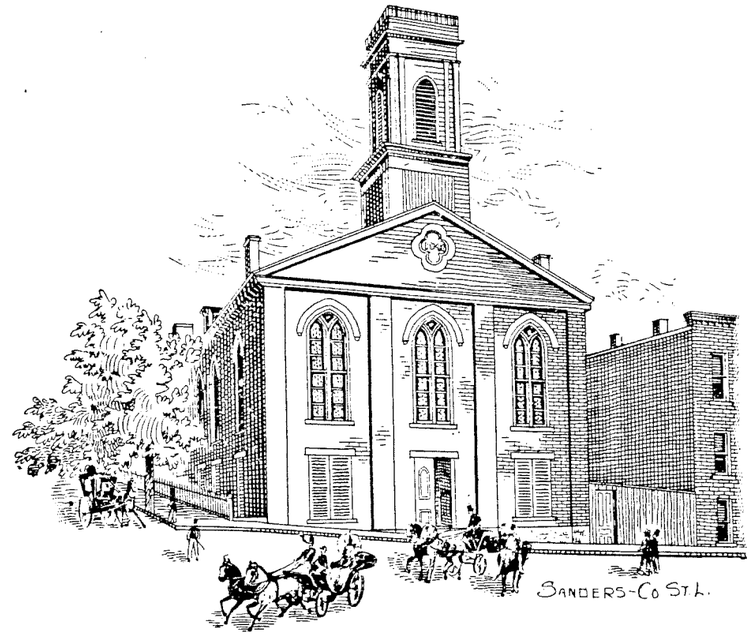
The lot selected for the new church was the southeast corner of Market and Second streets. It had been the site of the first frame house in Alton, which had been enlarged and used as a hotel. That was destroyed by fire and the lot was owned by the Illinois State Bank who sold it to the Presbyterians. The building was rectangular, the end facing Market street. The basement was divided the length of the building from west to east and the north half was unfinished for some time, the south half being used for Primary class. Later the whole basement was finished with a floor, and partitions were removed. The audience room was 40x50 feet including a "singers' gallery." The front of the building was covered by a portico supported with four corinthian columns upon which a tower was placed for the famous bell. The wood work of the interior was painted white, the pulpit trimmings and gallery curtains of mazarin blue, the pulpit velvet, the curtains moreen. The pew rails were of black walnut. There were three windows on each side and the choice pews were the eight crossing the house at the middle windows. There were two aisles, a row of pews along each side and a double row in the middle of the house, and four, so styled, amen pews on each side of the pulpit. A small pipe organ in the gallery accompanied the singing.[27] This was sold to Monticello Seminary in 1857. Each inch of space was utilized. The pulpit was so narrow that it was necessary to have a sofa made, especially adapted to the contracted space. A mahogany chair upholstered in haircloth stood at either end of the sofa, while on each side of the small mahogany table before and under the pulpit was a cane

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[26]From a paper by Mrs. A. T. Norton, who at the age of 84 years attended the cornerstone laying of the church at 4th and Alby while recalling how the predecessor church had come to be. From a booklet History of the Corner Stone Laying of the First Presbyterian Church, Alton, Illinois, Monday, July 5, 1897, in the church archives, pp. 31-32.

[27]Musical accompaniment for singing was provided up to this time by a choir and whatever instruments were available. The practice of having a band, particularly a Sunday School band, was carried on for many more decades.

seat chair. The front of the pulpit was barreled shaped and flanked by sentinel columns supporting lamps. The shape of the pulpit led some one to suggest the addition of a spigot to make it complete. The estimated cost of the completed church was $3,500.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
Used as a house of worship from June 14, 1846 until June 28, 1896.

The church building still stands on the corner of Broadway and Market Streets, although the windows have been changed over the years. It is known as the Laura Building, or the Faulstich Building.