

The Romulus Female Seminary

Starting in the early 1800s, private schools for girls were established in many towns and villages in western New York. Often referred to as “select schools”, these schools provided educational opportunities.



The Romulus Female Seminary was built in 1855 on a site west of what was the Sacred Heart Church on Silver Street (now known as Cayuga Street), east of the center of the hamlet of Romulus.¹ (The site today is occupied by the firehouse annex.) Enos Smith Vail was instrumental in its founding. He ran a store across the street from the Presbyterian Church. While the seminary was being built, \$85 was collected for the purchase of the bell.² It is not known where that bell is today.

Not a great deal is known about The Female Seminary. The building itself is a wooden Greek-Revival structure. The front porch has two square columns topped by a wide entablature and capped with a pediment with full returns. It had just one large room. James Vail was the only male student in the seminary, serving as janitor and bell ringer. In 1883, the Seminary closed and the building was purchased by the Presbyterian Church of Romulus.³

The Presbyterian Church moved the seminary building to just north of the church, with the intent of using the building as a chapel. The chapel building was dedicated January 4, 1884.⁴ A kitchen was added and still later restrooms were built at the rear of the kitchen. The chapel was used for many years for Sunday school, vacation bible school, religious instruction for students at the nearby Romulus Central School, junior church Christmas programs, public suppers, receptions for pastors and banquets as well as wedding receptions and similar social events. Prior to the organization of the fire company, the bell was used to summon volunteers to fight fires. The chapel was also often used during winter months for worship services on many Sundays “when the old coal furnace failed to heat the church to a comfortable temperature.”⁵ Use of the chapel for these various activities ceased when the Church built a Christian education annex on the Church in 1962.⁶



In 1970, the old seminary building was moved to the Genesee Country Village in Mumford, NY. The building was restored more to its original appearance, without the addition of the kitchen

and restrooms. It has been furnished as a typical girls’ small seminary of the period. The classroom has a piano, drawing table, blackboard, and wood stove. It gives the viewer a pretty good idea of what a one-room school looked like about 1855. The building is also used by the Genesee Country Village for special small receptions, etc.⁷



¹ Elroy P. Walker, *A Little History: The Henry DePue House on Cherry Hill, 1804-1989*, p 30.

² “Romulus Landmark Will Be Moved to Rochester,” *Geneva Times*, January 10, 1969.

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⁴ Elroy P. Walker, *A Little History: The Henry DePue House on Cherry Hill, 1804-1989*, p 30.

⁵ “Romulus Landmark Will Be Moved to Rochester,” *Geneva Times*, January 10, 1969.

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⁷ Information supplied by curator at time of special tour of the building on August 19, 2009. The pictures included with this article were taken by Seneca County Historian Walter Gable at that time.