

# Montgomery Historical Society

P. O. Box 47 Montgomery, Vermont 05470

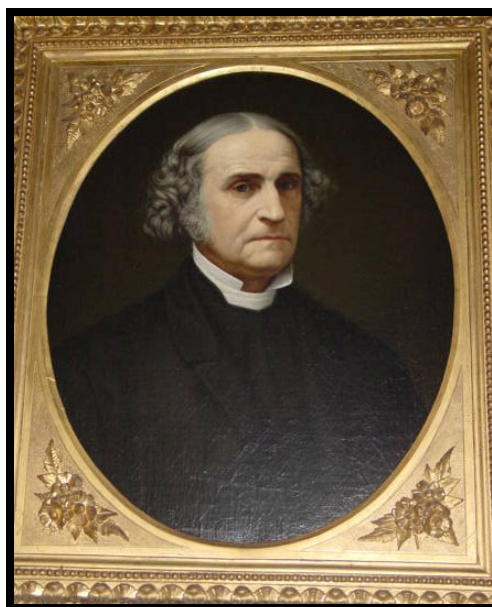
[www.montgomeryvt.us/mhs.htm](http://www.montgomeryvt.us/mhs.htm)

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Joel Clapp b. Sep 14, 1793 Montgomery, VT d. Feb 24, 1861, Claremont, NH , buried in Woodstock, VT

m. Abigail Peckham, Aug 1816, b.???, d. Mar 20, 1845

m. Sarah Hubbard, Jan 27, 1847. b.???, d. ???



## Excerpted from "the Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol 2

A.M. Hemenway

1871

Article By the Rev. John A. Hicks D.D.

There, in the heart of the primitive forest. Sept. 14, 1793, **Mrs. Clapp gave birth to a son, her first child, and the subject of this memorial**—the first white child born within the town. The loneliness of that solitary family, for 2 years the only one within the town secluded in the wilderness from civilized society, it will require no effort of imagination to conceive, when it is known that the adjoining towns of Richford, Westfield, Lowell and Enosburgh, were during that period of 2 years, entirely destitute of white inhabitants. It was amidst the hardships and privations of pioneer life, that Joel Clapp passed his childhood and youth, and received that training which fitted him so well for the duties of mature life. The effects of that hardy discipline were distinctly visible in his future character. It gave him that bodily vigor and mental energy, with that power of sturdy endurance for which he was distinguished. By the aid of such advantages as his situation afforded him, he prepared himself for college, and in the fall of 1809, at the age of 17 years, he entered the University of Vermont: but the sudden death of his father, on his return

from the legislature in the fall of the next year, recalled him home, and compelled him to discontinue his university course. But though deprived of the benefits of a collegiate education, he did not relinquish his purpose of entering one of the learned professions. He resided for a season, among his relatives in Greenfield, Mass., pursuing his academic studies, and made such advances, that early in 1813 he began to read law in the office of the late chief justice Royce, who then was in the practice in Sheldon. He also spent some time in Fairfield with the widely known legal instructor, Mr. Turner; and, in 1815, was admitted to the bar of the Franklin county court, and became a partner of Mr. Royce, who makes honorable mention of him as a "bright scholar, not only possessing the capacity to apprehend and apply legal principles with readiness, but also endowed with the substantial requisites of an advocate. He argued his cases in the county court with a clearness, precision and point, which attracted notice, and gave promise of professional success and eminence."

Though so well fitted for the practice of the law, Mr. Clapp did not find the profession congenial to his taste. "Certain considerations"—I again use the language of Judge Royce—"had already begun to weaken his partialities for the practice of law. His nice sensibilities were unfitted to relish the rough sarcasm and occasional asperity which, to some extent, characterized the early bar of the State—and not less in Franklin county than elsewhere. He moreover experienced misgivings at what seemed the mercenary nature of the profession, as involving, in effect, the indiscriminate advocacy of right and wrong, truth and falsehood. He appeared to encounter a conscientious recoil at any sober attempt to make the worse appear the better reason. But the chief motive for the important change he was about to make should doubtless be referred to his superior estimate of a life more exclusively occupied with the duties of religion. His law-office was permanently closed in 1818." This testimony from one who knew Mr. Clapp intimately, and was so capable of estimating his character, is highly honorable to his memory. For this reason I have recorded it in the very language in which it was expressed.

Mr. Clapp began the study of theology with the Rev. Abraham Beach, at that time the rector of the Episcopal church in Sheldon, and was ordained a deacon by Bishop Griswold, at Greenfield, Mass., Oct. 2, 1818—and was raised by him to the priesthood, at Windsor, in this State, Sept. 7, 1819; being then 26 years of age.

His first labors in the ministry were devoted to his native town, and to the adjoining town of Berkshire. The Rev. Zadoc Thompson, in his Gazetteer of Vermont, says, that he preached the 1st fast-day—the 1st thanksgiving, and the 1st mother's funeral sermons which were preached in Montgomery.

October 27, 1819, he was instituted rector of Trinity church, Shelburne. During the 8 years of his rectorship in Shelburne he added to the care of that parish, the charge of the Episcopal churches in Berkshire, Montgomery, and Bethel—extending his labors over a field whose extremes wore 100 miles apart. In November, 1827, he resigned his position in Shelburne, and accepted the joint rectorship of the parishes of Bethel and Woodstock, Early in the summer of 1830, he dissolved his connection with the church in Bethel, and removed to Woodstock, to assume the charge of the Episcopal church in that town. In 1832 he accepted a call to Gardiner, Maine, where he remained until 1838, when he resumed the charge of the church in Woodstock, in which he continued to officiate until 1846, when he accepted the rectorship of Immanuel church, Bellows Falls. In 1858 he removed to Phillipsburg, N. Y., where he remained until 1860, when he was elected chaplain of the Home for the Aged and Orphans, in Brooklyn; but finding his strength, from the advance of age, unequal to his duties, he returned to Vermont, and assumed the charge of the churches in Berkshire and Montgomery—desiring to end his ministry where he had begun it 43 years before, in the quiet aonens of his early life. But his work on earth was nearly done. Having been called to Clarmont, N. H., to attend the funeral of a relative, he was seized with a disease of the heart, and died suddenly, Feb. 24, 1861, at the age of 67 years.

Dr. Clapp received repeated tokens of the respect and confidence of the church. He was Secretary of the Convention of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Vermont, from 1820 to 1832. He represented the Diocese of Vermont in 6 sessions of the Triennial General Convention, and that of Maine in two. He was made a Doctor in Divinity in 1845. He was for 7 years president of the Standing Committee—and 9 years a member of the board of Agents of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and Secretary of the board. He was twice married, his first wife was Abigail, daughter of Josiah Peckam, of Sheldon. The issue of that marriage was 2 sons and 4 daughters, all of whom survive him. He married for his second wife a daughter of Isaac Hubbard, Esq., of Claremont, N. H., who survives him, without issue.

The life of Dr. Clapp passed entirely in the humble but arduous duties of a country parson, contained but little to attract attention, and to elicit applause while he lived—or to afford striking incidents for his biography. And yet he was one of those men who exert a powerful influence on their age, and do much to mould its character and determine its destiny—men who, though honored and loved by their contemporaries, are not estimated at their true value until they have disappeared from the stage, when by thoughtfully reviewing their course, and calculating the worth of their services, we first learn to do them late justice, and assign them their true place among the benefactors of mankind. He ran no brilliant career—exhibited no displays of genius—did no acts to strike a thrill of admiration through the public mind, or warm the hearts of thousands with a glow of gratitude. He belonged to that class of plain and solid men of whom Vermont has been so prolific—men sound in judgment and wise in council—of great physical endurance, and upon occasions demanding the exercise of all their energies, terrible in execution—who, reared amid the rude employments of country life, are yet competent to guide their country's councils in times of peace, and uphold its interests and defend its honor in the hostile conflict.

His most marked characteristic was, perhaps, his restless activity and love of work.— He was not one of the drones of society, that *ignavwn pecus*, who tax it for their living, but add nothing to its strength. And his energies were expended upon his ministry. No clergyman in Vermont ever traveled over a wider surface in the exercise of his office. He left no diary or papers from which I can extract facts for illustration. I accompanied him in the fall of 1827 on one of his missionary tours across the Green Mountains, which we began to ascend about nightfall. After a few hours' rest near the summit, which we reached about midnight, we were again, before dawn, started on our journey. He then narrated to me many similar journeys, the recollection of which is now too dim to admit of their repetition.

Always punctual to his appointments, no inclemency of weather—neither summer's heat nor winter's storms, nor mountains interposed, detained him from his duties.

The character of Dr. Clapp it is easy to analyze. He was a man of unusual transparency—of remarkable sincerity and honesty of purpose. He was no enigma, but easily understood. Conscious of his own integrity, he had nothing to conceal. He paraded no feigned virtues. He spoke only to express his convictions. His outward was a true declaration of his inner life. His great cordiality of manner was the spontaneous expression of his affectionate heart. Richly endowed with the most genial social qualities, he had a keen relish for society, and was welcome in every circle. His tender native sympathies, quickened and purified by his religious faith, interested him deeply in the joys and sorrows of others. His unwearied attentions to the poor and the afflicted secured to him great popularity: not that popularity which is purchased by pandering to the follies and passions of mankind, but that which is the well-deserved reward of the kindly offices of Christian love. Many are still living who have a vivid recollection of his earnest devotion to his ministry—the abundant labors which would have soon exhausted a body not early trained to stubborn endurance—the fervor with which he preached the gospel—and especially his personal watchings by day and by night, in the chambers of the sick and dying. As might be inferred from this

description, he had great simplicity of manner. He was in no degree an artificial man. Entirely untaught in the conventional etiquette of fashionable life, he had a just appreciation of the proprieties of social intercourse, and the address of a Christian gentleman.

His intellectual qualities were rather sound than showy. His memory was strong, his perceptions clear; his observation of passing events close and intelligent. Possessed of a sound judgment, he had a native tact for business, which, added to his legal training, made him a safe adviser in secular affairs.

As a preacher he was edifying rather than attractive. Plain in style, but fervid in delivery, his manifest sincerity secured to him, always, a respectful hearing. His piety no one questioned. He sought the ministry, not for its emoluments, but as the best field of usefulness. When the weight of years had impaired his material powers, and diminished his capacity for the amount of labor to which he had been accustomed—but had at the same time increased his interest in the great ends of his ministry—he was suddenly smitten with that malady which proved to be the precursor of death approaching with his discharge from earthly service.

Dr. Clapp had the rare privilege of being appreciated while he lived. His fraternal temper and address allayed, to a great extent, those prejudices and animosities, which warp the judgment, and unlit it for the just estimate of individual character. He carried with him through life the respect of all sects and classes; and as soon as he was dead, survivors were ready to write his epitaph. Of his defects I have made no mention. Vices he had none.— Let the picture which has been drawn be shaded with a moderate measure of the ordinary frailties of humanity, and you will have before you a true image of the man.

[ This estimable biography we came in possession of some six years or more past, and filed it so choicely away it could not be lost—but we regret to say when we had resumed our publication, and came to Montgomery, we simply forgot about it until our printer had commenced to set the following town, and could not, therefore, without the heavy expense of breaking up many pages, give it in immediate connection with Montgomery ; yet, as it appears in the some volume and within the limits of the Franklin county department, we presume no one may feel the little difference so much as ourself.—A. Hemenway, *Ed.*]

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**Excerpted From: Norwich University, 1819-1911; Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor  
edited by William Arba Ellis**

REV. JOEL CLAPP, A. M., D. D.

Joel Clapp, son of Capt. Joshua Clapp, was born in Montgomery, Vt., September 4, 1783, and died in Claremont, N. H., February 24, 1861, while there on a visit; was buried in Woodstock, Vt. He entered the University of Vermont in 1810, but on the death of his father in 1811, he was forced to give up his college course. He studied law with Stephen Royce, Jr., at Berkshire, Vt., 1813-15; and was admitted to the Franklin County bar in 1815. He practiced with Mr. Royce until 1818, when not finding this profession congenial, gave it up and begun studying for the Episcopal ministry with Rev. Abraham Beach in Sheldon, Vt.; was ordained deacon at Greenfield, Mass., October 2, 1818, and priest at Windsor, Vt., in September, 1819.

He preached in Montgomery, Vt., 1818-19; Shelburne, Vt., October 27, 1819. to November, 1827. During 1819-27, he did much missionary work, having charge of the parishes in Berkshire, Montgomery

and Bethel. In November, 1825, he preached his first sermon in Woodstock, Vt.; and in November, 1827, he became joint rector of the church in Woodstock and Bethel. In 1830, he relinquished the charge of the Bethel church. On July 15, 1832, he resigned the rectorship of the Woodstock church and became pastor of Christ church in Gardiner, Me. In 1840, he returned to Woodstock, remaining until December, 1847; was rector of Immanuel church in Bellows Falls, Vt., December, 1847-58; St. Philips church, Phillipstown, N. Y., 1858-60; was chaplain and superintendent of the Home of the Aged and Orphans in Brooklyn, N. Y., for a few months in 1860. His health failing and desiring a change of climate, he accepted the rectorship of his former parishes in Montgomery and Berkshire, where he remained until his death. He served as trustee of the University of Vermont, 1821-39. Middlebury College conferred upon him the degree of A. M. in 1820. and "N. U." the degree of D. D. in 1845.

He was twice married: first, in August, 1816, to Abigail, daughter of Josiah Peckham of Sheldon, Vt. She died, March 20, 1845. Six children were born to them: Charles Barnard, resides in Gardiner, Me.; George Peckham, merchant in New York city, died in Algiers, Africa, January 25, 1884; Mary M., resides in New York city; Harriet E., married William S. Baker, resides in Dunham, P. Q.; Amelia Griswold, married William Moore, died in Huntington, Long Island, March 9, 1872; Julia A., married Caleb Stevens, resides in Pittston, Me. He was again married, January 27, 1847, to Sarah Hubbard of Claremont, N. H., who survived him several years; no children.