The biographical sketch which follows was made up from an obituary prepared by William J. Bacon.

Benjamin Franklin Cooper was the son of Apollos Cooper, and was born in Utica in April 1801. As a youth he was bright, active and intelligent. He entered Hamilton College in 1816, but left that institution for Union, where he graduated. He began the study of law in the office of General Kirkland, and spent a year in the law school at Litchfield, Conn. After finishing his studies, he passed about a year in Geneva and Detroit. Returning to Utica, in the fall of 1824, he entered upon the practice of his profession in connection with Roderick N. Morrison. His constitution was delicate, and gave early indications of pulmonary disease. In the fall of 1827, he was obliged to leave home for a more congelial climate. He went through the Southern States to New Orleans, and thence to Cuba. The winter of 1829 he also spent in the South. In the summer of that year he was at home, and in the fall he married the daughter of Rev. Dr. Brantley, a distinguished divine of Philadelphia and of Charleston. He went with his wife to Tallahassee in Florida, where he remained between two and three years, actively engaged in his profession; and had his health permitted, could easily have attained eminence. He came back to Utica in 1832, and (with the exception of a year or two in Detroit, commencing in 1840) continued to reside here until his death. The earlier portion of this time he was associated with Ward Hunt, next with E. A. Graham, and subsequently, after coming back from Detroit, he was alone. In 1846 he was a member of the Legislature, and was one of its most intelligent, active and laborious members.

Mr. Cooper was possessed of a keen intellect, a ready and fluent elocution, and habits of diligence, and seemed prepared to take a marked position in his chosen profession. It is believed that, if his health had not been taken away at a comparatively early period, he would have left decided evidence of both ability and success. Some of his early efforts were distinguished by earnest and able argument, by keen analysis and penetration, and by forcible and courageous assertion of what he believed to be the right of his clients. In the suits brought with reference to the distribution of the stock of the Oneida Bank, and that of the partition of the stock of the Utica & Schenectady Railroad, --- in both of which cases subscribers who failed of receiving stock they had subscribed for, brought suits to compel a re-distribution, --- he took the leading part in the arguments, and attracted to himself a large share of public attention. His special quality of mind was great and incessant activity. There seemed to be never a moment when his brain was not in
seemed to be never a moment when his brain was not in restless exercise,—engaged in endeavoring to solve some abstruse legal problem, and perhaps too often for practical usefulness, some airy speculation. What he doubtless lacked was the steady application of principles to the practical emergencies of his profession. He thought with rapidity, was uncommonly gifted both in conversation, and in oral debate, and wrote with fluency. His natural inaptitude to mingle easily with the world at large subjected him to the imputation of being unfriendly in disposition. But to those who knew him well, he manifested strong social qualities and the tenderest sympathy. In his own house his hospitality was overflowing. He was earnest and truthful in character, and no influence could draw him from the strict line of honor and integrity. His honest convictions he maintained with frankness and tenacity, and without regard to personal consequences. For some years before his death he had withdrawn from professional avocations, though delighting always in the perusal of works of law. He died May 4, 1864. Besides his widow he left a family of two sons and one daughter.

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M. M. Bagg
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1820 Benjamin F. Cooper
Non-graduate Hamilton College, 1820.
Hamilton College Alumni Register, 1812-1922.