



*A Harvest of Attainments*

A STUDENT'S HISTORY OF AMHERST COLLEGE



## Dear New Student:



Welcome to Amherst!

The college community that you're joining is one with a long and distinguished history. Since the College's founding, in 1821, as an institution to "educate indigent young men of piety," Amherst has sought to educate men and women of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so that they may seek, value, and advance knowledge; engage the world around them; and lead principled lives of consequence.

This new booklet—produced with the support of a generous alumnus, William McC. Vickery '57—is designed to provide you with an introduction to our history, and with a sense of how the College's traditions have evolved over time.

In particular, it is designed to convey the important role that philanthropy has played in the life of Amherst College. The College was founded through a Charity Fund that raised a remarkable \$50,000 from 275 townspeople and other benefactors. Over the centuries, gifts have allowed the College to grow, develop new programs, and add new resources, including residence halls, athletic facilities and academic buildings. Gifts from alumni, parents and friends support student scholarships, faculty research, and paid student internships with non-profit organizations. And Amherst's Annual Fund—consistently the strongest in the nation—provides ongoing support for the day-to-day operation of the College.

As new members of the Amherst College community, you benefit directly from the generosity of those who have come before you. I hope that what you read in the following pages will not only increase your understanding of the history and traditions of this remarkable institution, but also inspire you to full participation in all aspects of the life of the College.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony W. Marx". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony W. Marx

# *A Harvest of Attainments*

A STUDENT'S HISTORY OF AMHERST COLLEGE



## THE HISTORY OF THE AMHERST COLLEGE SEAL

*Terras Irradiant: "Let them give light to the world"*



1825



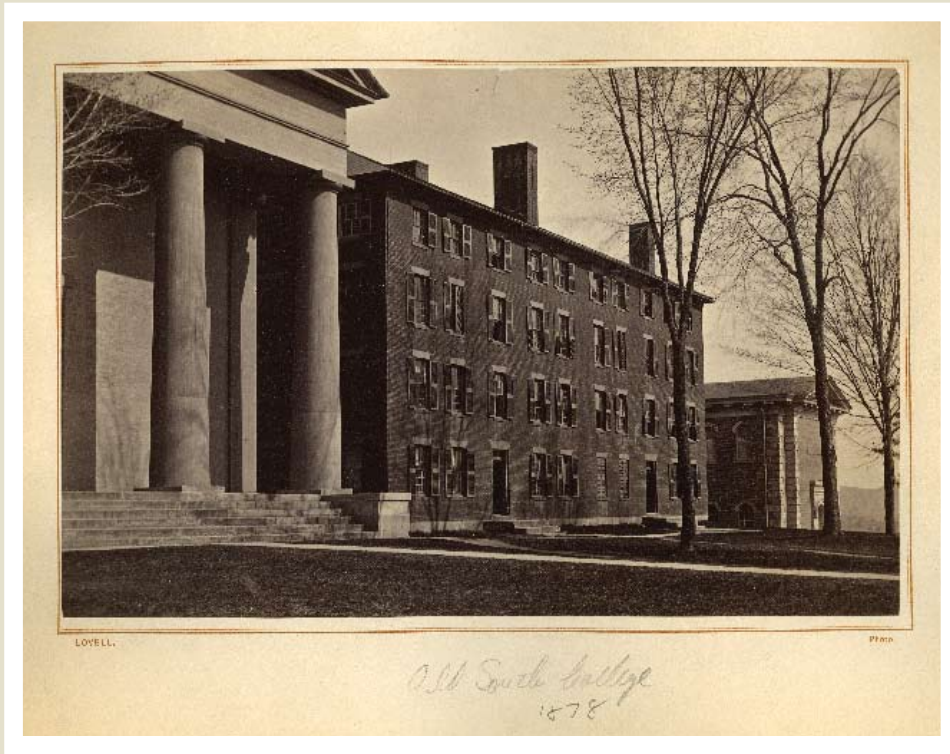
1885-86



1949



1961 - present



*“Our responsibility remains to select the best of diverse students, to learn from each other.... To inspire them to do what the College was founded for—to enlighten, care for, and advance society as a whole, and its faith, within and beyond our borders.”*

PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. MARX

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

1820

Cornerstone laid for South College, first College building.



1821

College is founded as Amherst Collegiate Institution. Zephaniah Swift Moore, clergyman and former president of Williams College, begins term as first president (1821-23).

1822

First College Catalog issued—a single sheet.



1823

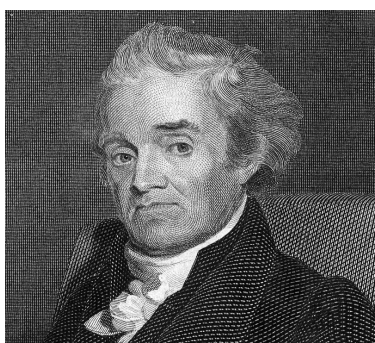
Clergyman Heman Humphrey begins term as second president (1823-45).

# Founding

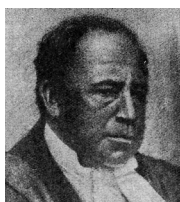
Amherst College has its roots in a public secondary school, the Amherst Academy, dedicated with much fanfare in 1815. As the coeducational Academy flourished, a Charity Fund was established to create a new, collegiate-level institution “for the education of indigent young men of piety and talents for the Christian ministry.” Early on, this plan to serve society through education included the possible incorporation of Williams College, then running a deficit and thought by some to be too isolated.

The Charity Fund enabled the Amherst Collegiate Charity Institute to construct its first building, South College, and begin operations in 1821. The official charter creating Amherst College wasn’t received until 1825. Ministers and local luminaries such as dictionary writer Noah Webster and Samuel Dickinson (grandfather of poet Emily Dickinson) played vital roles in the fundraising and shaping of the institution.

Amherst College’s first president was Zephaniah Swift Moore—previously president of Williams College. He arrived in Amherst on horseback, accompanied by 15 former Williams students, who joined 38 other students in forming the first term’s student body. In addition to educating the indigent, the new college showed awareness of and early support for others who might not commonly have had access to higher education. The college’s first African-American graduate, Edward Jones, was a member of the Class of 1826; he eventually settled in Sierra Leone and became principal of the Fourah Bay Christian Institution (forerunner of Fourah Bay College). Amherst’s first Japanese graduate, the young samurai Joseph Hardy Neesima, Class of 1870, fled Japan when foreign travel was still prohibited. Neesima



Noah Webster



Edward Jones  
Class of 1826



Joseph Hardy Neesima  
Class of 1870

returned to Japan in 1875 to found what would become Doshisha University, Amherst’s sister institution and Japan’s leading private university.

Amherst College first admitted women in 1975. Today the diverse and international student body includes men and women from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds from all over the United States and more than 40 other countries.

## Amherst College Presidents

Zephaniah Moore  
1821-1823

Heman Humphrey  
1823-1845

Edward Hitchcock  
1845-1854

William Stearns  
1854-1876

Julius Seelye  
1876-1890

Merrill Gates  
1890-1899

George Harris  
1899-1912

Alexander Meiklejohn  
1912-1924

George Olds  
1924-1927

Arthur Pease  
1927-1932

Stanley King  
1932-1946

Charles Cole  
1946-1960

Calvin Plimpton  
1960-1971

John William Ward  
1971-1979

Julian Gibbs  
1979-1983

Peter Pouncey  
1984-1994

Tom Gerety  
1994-2003

Anthony W. Marx  
2003-present

### 1825

MA Legislature grants charter to create Amherst College.  
First graduating class (25 seniors) receives degrees.  
August 24: College adopts corporate seal and motto, “Terras Irradiant” (“Let them enlighten the lands”).

### 1827

Johnson Chapel dedicated  
February 28.

### 1835

Professor of Mathematics Ebenezer S. Snell, one of the first two College graduates (AC 1822), begins to systematically keep weather records.

# How the College Grew... and Grows

The salary of the first treasurer of the College, John Leland, was never more than \$300, equal to the salary of the College's first full-time janitor.

Tuition, room and board for 1821-22 was \$30.

Trustee Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder (1780-1865) was the first person in the United States to be vaccinated against smallpox—he willingly volunteered.

David Sears of Boston gave \$10,000 in 1844 to establish the Sears Fund of Literature and Benevolence. His donation was the largest to date and the first major gift by an individual.

Dr. William J. Walker, an early and generous donor, surprised College President William A. Stearns when he called on the doctor in 1861 in his Boston home and found him wearing nothing but his slippers. Dr. Walker was practicing nudism "for his health."

Pratt Gymnasium was the first College building given by an alumnus. Charles M. Pratt (Class of 1879) gave \$35,000 in 1883. The gymnasium became housing for first-year students in 2007.

The first alumni trustee of the College was Rufus Bela Kellogg (1837-1891), '58, a banker in Green Bay, WI.

The original Charity Fund raised the amazing sum of \$50,000 from 275 local benefactors and townspeople. The largest gift was \$3,000 (a transfer of land in Maine) and the smallest \$5. This was the College's original endowment. With these first funds, Amherst built its first structure, South College. The cost of construction was \$8,000, but the building could not have been completed so well or so quickly without the generosity of the local people who dedicated their labor, bricks, mortar and services to the fledgling college.

Shortly after President Zephaniah Swift Moore died in 1823, a Pelham farmer named Adam Johnson passed away. To the College's surprise, in his will he left \$4,000 to the school. The funds were used to help build one of the most iconic structures on campus—Johnson Chapel, part of the original College Row.

In fact, many of the original sustaining gifts to the College were not solicited from wealthy merchants and were discovered only upon the death of the donor. Phebe Moore, the widow of President Moore, inherited \$4,000. Though she had access to both the interest and the principal, she lived on only a small portion of the interest so that upon her death, 35 years later, the fund for the College had grown to \$9,000.

Amherst graduates have continued



Treasurer John Leland's Charity Fund Book, 1821-1838

to help their alma mater develop its students' potential. One striking example is the Abele Public Service Internship, established by John Abele '59, founder of Boston Scientific. This innovative fund provides summer support for students working in non-profit organizations dedicated to providing direct assistance to underserved populations. The fund allows many Amherst students to pursue valuable service opportunities without forfeiting income to support themselves and their families.

H. Axel Schupf '57, who received the Medal for Eminent Service in 1992 and an honorary degree in 2007, has long supported the pursuit of academic excellence at Amherst. In 2007 he endowed a professorship in his father's name and is the single largest underwriter of the Faculty Research and Awards Program.



Abele recipient Megan Harlow '09, (left) holds a newborn at the Hospital San Vicente de Paul in the Dominican Republic.

## 1836

A disagreement about appointments to the Junior Exhibition sparks the Gorham Rebellion, led by William O. Gorham (AC 1838). In response to the protest, the College threatens to remove the Class of 1838.

## 1837

Amherst's first fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi, is established.

## 1842

Amherst's first Alumni Association is formed at reunion, July 27.

## 1845



Edward Hitchcock, geologist and clergyman who had taught at Amherst since 1825, begins term as third president (1845-54).

1. Johnson Chapel, 1866
2. Morgan Library, 1885
3. Earth Sciences and Museum of Natural History Building, 2006
4. Frost Library
5. Fayerweather Hall, 1904
6. Entrance to Amherst College campus, 1880



1854



William Augustus Stearns, clergyman and biblical scholar, begins term as fourth president (1854-76).

1855

*The Olio* begins in October 1855. The first versions of the publication are more a combination of college catalog and student newspaper than yearbook.

1859

In July in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Amherst and Williams play the first intercollegiate baseball game. After 3-1/2 hours and 26 innings, Amherst defeats Williams, 73-32.

1860

Barrett Gymnasium is constructed, housing the Department of Hygiene and Physical Education. The department was established in 1860 in an attempt to combat student ill health.



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. College Row, ca. 1882
2. Inside a residence hall
3. Barrett Gymnasium, 1876
4. Tree damage outside Walker Hall after the Hurricane of 1938
5. War Memorial and Field, 1947
6. Valentine Dining Hall, 2007

**1868**

Walker Hall cornerstone laid June 10. The building was completed in 1870. *The Amherst Student* publishes its first issue on February 1.

**1871**

Amherst celebrates its semicentennial. Two women apply for admission to Amherst College.

**1873**

Stearns Church dedicated July 1. While working as a student library assistant, Melvil Dewey (AC 1874) devises a decimal system for cataloguing books.

**1875**

Alpha Delta House built, the first college fraternity house in the United States.



# Where We Eat, Sleep, and Think

The original buildings of the College—North College, Johnson Chapel and South College—were constructed between 1821 and 1827 and made up the symmetrical and elegant College Row. Over the years, North and South have continued to serve as student housing. Johnson Chapel has always had multiple purposes, serving as a church, laboratory and library. For years, Williston and Appleton housed academic departments, but now the Main Quadrangle is dedicated primarily to first-year residences.

These residences are surrounded by academic buildings. Barrett Hall, originally built with stone from nearby Pelham in 1859 as a gymnasium, complete with bowling alleys and a 19th-century weight room, has long been an academic building. Webster, built as the biology-geology building early in the 20th century (with large donations from alumni as well as Andrew Carnegie), remains an academic building.

One significant change in the Main Quadrangle is the disappearance of Walker Hall. The large gothic structure once hailed as Amherst's "Temple of Science" was set on the north side of the quadrangle. Walker Hall was replaced by the Robert Frost Library in 1965, but a cornerstone of Walker remains on the southeast corner of Frost.

Not only fire, but disasters natural and man made, have changed the face of this campus. During the hurricane of September 21, 1938, dozens of trees (many of which had been planted by Treasurer Austin Dickinson) and plant life were destroyed. Students volunteered to clean up in the wake of the disaster and replanted many species in the

spring. The 20th century was witness to two world wars. The War Memorial, situated at the south end of the Main Quadrangle with a view toward the Holyoke Range, is carved with the College seal and the names of the 142 Amherst men who lost their lives in World Wars I and II.

As the College continues to strive to meet the needs of its student body, housing will be crucial. Recent examples are the new upperclass residences King and Wieland Halls. King was named after Stanley King (Class of 1908, and Amherst's president from 1932 to 1946). Wieland is named for real estate developer and philanthropist John Wieland, Class of 1958.



Wieland and King Halls



Geology classroom, 1910



James and Stearns, 1946



Museum of Natural History

1876



Julius Hawley Seelye (AC 1849), clergyman and biblical scholar, begins term as fifth president (1876-90).

1882

Walker Hall burns and is rebuilt, reopening in 1884.

1884

Amherst and Williams play their first two football games. Williams beats Amherst, 15-2 and 11-0.

1890



Merrill Edward Gates, former president of Rutgers College, begins term as sixth president (1890-99).

# Coeducation



This image—inspired by artist Andy Warhol—was created in the early '70s by students who favored admitting women.

Women students were not entirely unknown on the Amherst campus in the 1800s. Instead of degree students, however, they were librarians. College Librarian William I. Fletcher established the Fletcher Summer Library School, which offered professional training for librarians from 1891 until 1905.

Early efforts to make Amherst a coeducational college were heralded by Henry Ward Beecher, Class of 1834, in the 1870s. One hundred years later, in November 1974, after four years of formal review, the Board of Trustees determined (by a vote of 15 to 3) that Amherst would become a coeducational institution. The following fall, 94 women began classes at Amherst; 79 of them were transfer students, and 15 were Twelve College Exchange Students. Of these 15, nine chose to remain at Amherst and graduate in the Class of 1976.

The strong fraternity culture and tightly knit male literary and honor societies slowed the full integration of female students. Though many women chose to join existing all-male groups, others worked to create spaces where women felt welcome and to develop identities inside and outside the classroom.

Rose Olver, now the L. Stanton Williams '41 Professor of Psychology

and Women's and Gender Studies, was the College's first female full-time faculty member appointed to a tenure-track position, in 1962. She was the first female to receive tenure, in 1968, and to chair an academic department, in 1970. She was also the first woman to serve as Faculty Marshal (1993-2007). In 1973, the College awarded her an honorary degree.



Amherst Student announces the College's coeducation decision, November 2, 1974



Top: Today, approximately half of the students at Amherst are women.

Bottom: Anita Cilderman, Amherst's first woman graduate, receives her diploma from College President John William Ward at Commencement, June 6, 1976

1899



George Harris (AC 1866), clergyman and professor of theology, begins term as seventh president (1899-1912).

1912



Alexander Meiklejohn, Brown University dean and educator, begins term as eighth president (1912-24).

1916

Robert Frost comes to Amherst, where he teaches on and off for more than 40 years.

1917

Converse Library completed. Amherst adjusts to war efforts and is under government control during WWI.

1921

Amherst celebrates its centennial and launches the Centennial Campaign, which raises \$3,000,000.

# Student Life

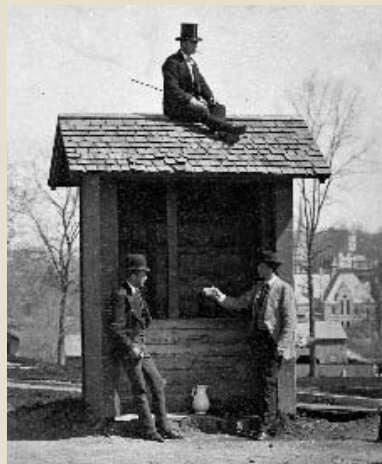
During the College's earliest years, there was little separation between residential and academic life. President Zephaniah Swift Moore met his students in their South College rooms, used for study, instruction and living. As the College grew, students soon found other places to socialize. In 1827, as Johnson Chapel was being built, workers also were digging the College Well. Students used the water for drinking and bathing. The well was a spot for socializing, though less so in the freezing winter weather.

Over the years, students began to establish traditions and class-spirit building activities. Many of the 19th-century traditions are lost, but some have been revived.

The adoption of sleek wooden canes designed by the class was a sophomore ritual in the 19th century. Other class-spirit building activities included rope pulls between the classes and the large theatrical mock funeral services for texts from particularly onerous classes. Mathematics classes were frequent targets. Hymns and dirges were composed for the pageants, where a symbolic textbook was ritually burned or, alternatively, entombed in a coffin.

Perhaps most uniquely Amherst was the "serenely unclothed" Sabrina, a bronze garden statue given to the College by Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Joel Hayden in 1857. For roughly a century the statue was the object of pranks fueled by rivalries between even- and odd-numbered classes. The rivalries were essentially put to rest in the mid-20th century, and Sabrina's current whereabouts are largely unknown.

The College's first national fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi, held its inaugural meeting on January 9, 1837. Many other national and local fraternities followed, and Greek life became an integral part of campus society. By 1984



The College Well, ca. 1873



Students from the Class of 1980 displaying Sabrina at Commencement, 1979

the Board of Trustees decided the institutions no longer strengthened campus social life. On-campus fraternities were abolished in favor of more diverse, student-governed social activities.

CONTINUED >

The Amherst Class of 1946 entered with more than 250 students, but their numbers dwindled rapidly due to World War II military service. The College instituted a wartime accelerated program, graduating students in three years based on a three-semester year. Thus the Class of 1946 actually graduated in 1945.

In 1948, Phi Psi fraternity resigned from its national charter in order to admit Thomas Gibbs, Class of 1951. Phi Psi made national news for being one of the first traditional fraternities to pledge an African-American student.



Following the proverb of "carrying owls to Athens,"

Athenian Society President Henry Ward Beecher, Class of 1834, sent a stuffed Snowy White Owl to his former literary society in 1862. Beecher, by that time a famous preacher, believed that Athena's bird would inspire society members in their debates.

WAMH, 89.3 FM, the Amherst College student radio station, was first licensed in 1948. From its inception it has been run entirely by students; programming includes news, sports and music.

1924



George Daniel Olds, professor of mathematics and Dean of the College, who had been at Amherst since 1891, begins term as ninth president (1924-27).

1927



Arthur Stanley Pease, classics scholar who had taught Latin at Amherst since 1924, begins term as tenth president (1927-32).

1931

Folger Shakespeare Library established.

1932



Stanley King (AC 1903), begins term as eleventh president (1932-46).



Funeral Services  
 AND  
**WAKE**  
 BURIAL OF S. GUNN,  
 X—MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF '60,  
 Conducted by the Class of 1861,  
 AMHERST COLLEGE,  
 Wednesday, Oct. 6th, 1858.



1935

Amherst House is dedicated at Doshisha University in Kyoto on October 29, commemorating the special relationship between Amherst and the institution.

1938

September hurricane strikes the northeast, changing the face of the Amherst campus.

1941

Valentine Hall opens for central campus dining.



1946

War Memorial and Memorial Field dedicated June 16 in commemoration of Amherst College veterans of World Wars I and II. Economist and historian Charles Woolsey Cole (AC 1927) begins term as twelfth president (1946-60).



8



9



11



12

1. Homer C. Strong and Frank A. Hosmer (Class of 1875) with their class hats and canes, 1875
2. Students sledding on campus, 2007
3. The Sabrinas, a women's a capella group, 2000
4. Mock funeral program, 1858
5. Cast of the senior dramatic production of *The Rivals*, 1885
6. Five College students perform *Candide* during Interterm, 2006
7. First issue of Amherst College *Olio*, October 1855
8. Mountain Day, ca. 1885-88
9. Students helping with the potato harvest during World War II labor shortages, 1942
10. Banjo and Mandolin Club, ca. 1896
11. A student volunteer at the first Amherst College Habitat for Humanity home, 2007
12. Student room in Delta Upsilon fraternity house, 1910

The College's first literary societies, the Alexandrian and the Athenian, were established in 1821, at the same time as the College. Every student was assigned to one. Donations were solicited to form the clubs' first libraries. The two societies encouraged fellowship, fostered cultural studies and discipline, and spurred rivalries through debate and discussions that also served as community entertainment.

In 1855, the *College Olio* first appeared. Known today as the College yearbook, it started in newspaper form and was a collage of elements. The 1901 *Olio* was the first to showcase student photographs. What became the lasting student voice, *The Amherst Student*, published its first edition, focusing on issues of student interest, on February 1, 1868.

Literary arts have always been associated with Amherst. So have theatre and music—thus the moniker “The Singing College.” The earliest musical group, called the Paeon Band, was formed in 1824. By 1877, about one-third of Amherst students belonged to the College Musical Association, which included members of the Glee Club and other societies. The Alexandrian Society produced dramatic productions in the 1820s, though it was not until the birth of The Masquers—who first appeared in the *Olio* in 1918—that a dedicated theater group was born. The Masquers created history in 1949 when their production of *Julius Caesar* at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. (established by the will of Henry Clay Folger, Class of 1879, to be administered by the College), was televised by NBC. It was the first time that an entire Shakespeare play was televised.

1949

Mead Art Museum completed. The Amherst College Masquers, a dramatic society, perform television's first broadcast of a complete Shakespeare play, *Julius Caesar*.

1960



Calvin Hastings Plimpton (AC 1939), medical doctor, professor of medicine, and Dean of Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, begins term as thirteenth president (1960-71).

1963

Walker Hall razed to build Frost Library. In October U.S. President John F. Kennedy speaks at Convocation and the groundbreaking for the Robert Frost Library.

1968

Groundbreaking for creation of Hampshire College, an institution of higher education created by Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts.

# Faculty and Academic Life

The first Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree was awarded to Ebenezer Strong Snell (Class of 1822) in 1828. Snell was one of the first two graduates of Amherst College Institute; he returned to the College in 1825 to teach mathematics and natural philosophy for 50 years.



In 1853 Morgan Library (seen here ca. 1910) was completed. It had 296 donors, and the surplus funds were used for books. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was among the supporters.

“The infant college is an infant Hercules. Never was so much striving, outstretching, and advancing in a literary cause as is exhibited here. . . . The students are all divided into thriving opposition societies, which gather libraries, laboratories, mineral cabinets, etc., with an indefatigable spirit, which nothing but rivalry could inspire. Upon this impulse, they write, speak, and study in a sort of fury, which, I think, promises a harvest of attainments.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1823*

Amherst’s open curriculum encourages the exploration of ideas in the liberal arts tradition. Classes are characterized by spirited interchange among students and acclaimed faculty skilled at asking challenging questions. Students participate in sophisticated research, using of state-of-the-art equipment and facilities. Each student—with the help of a faculty adviser—charts an individual course through the 650 courses offered at the college. Honors work is encouraged and in recent years has been undertaken by nearly half of the graduating class.

In 2007 the Center for Community Engagement was founded to connect students to communities—local, national and global—through service-oriented organizations. The new center expands opportunities for volunteer and non-profit work for students of all income levels and connects that service to classroom study.

Amherst is a member of the Five Colleges, a consortium with nearby Smith, Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Students may take courses at any of the colleges and use resources at the five institutional libraries. The schools’ proximity adds to Amherst’s rich social and extracurricular life.

The College has a distinguished



Top: Robert Frost reading poetry to students in the Mead Art Museum’s Rotherwas Room, 1950

Bottom: A geology class, 2006

group of alumni. Its more than 20,000 living graduates are represented in almost every walk of life. Many alumni are or have been prominent on the world scene (including four Nobel laureates, numerous Pulitzer Prize winners, a president of the National Urban League, a chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, several National Book Award winners and a U.S. president), and countless others contribute to society in important but less public ways.

## 1969

Moratorium and period of anti-war protest on campus. Amherst establishes its Black Studies Department.



## 1971

John William Ward, professor of history, English, and American Studies who had taught at Amherst since 1964, begins term as fourteenth president (1971-79).

## 1973

Amherst establishes the nation’s first undergraduate neuroscience program.

## 1974

Coeducation is officially confirmed at Amherst. Women will be admitted as transfer students in fall 1975 and as first-year students in fall 1976.

# Athletics

Amherst was the first college to establish a department of physical education and hygiene. College physician Edward “Doc” Hitchcock, Class of 1849 and son of President Edward Hitchcock, the noted geologist, believed in creating both the strong body and the strong mind. When former Williams President Zephaniah Swift Moore rode down from the Berkshires to assume the presidency of the newly formed Amherst College an intercollegiate rivalry was born. Nowhere is this rivalry more apparent than in athletics.

On July 1, 1859, the first intercollegiate baseball game in America was played in Pittsfield, the result of a challenge to Williams from a group of Amherst students. Williams accepted and in turn challenged Amherst students to chess. The headlines read: “Williams and Amherst—Base Ball and Chess!—Muscle and Mind!” Amherst won the chess games and



Amherst football team, 1891

thumped Williams in baseball 73-32. In the decades following, Amherst established sports like crew (1872), football (1876) and tennis in the 1880s. Amherst’s Pratt Field, built in 1891, is the third oldest collegiate football field in the nation.

One unusual competition, a friendly rivalry held between Amherst College classes, was the “Cider Meet.” The first was in 1878. The Classes of ’80 and ’81 gathered in the evening, drank their cider, then participated in races such as the three-legged race, a greased pig race and a blind wheelbarrow race, to the amusement of some 800 spectators, including many from neighboring Smith College.

In the first few years after the admission of women of in 1974, several women’s Varsity sports teams were

formed. Soccer and field hockey proved to be the most successful sports among women in the early years. Most recently added were softball and ice hockey, in the mid-1990s. Though most women’s sports were initially taken over by the existing men coaches, slowly a group of women coaches grew.

Professor James. E. Ostendarp, Amherst’s legendary football coach, from 1959 to 1992, emphasized the importance of academics for his student athletes. “Amherst is looking for that high achiever—the student that has a great desire to excel,” he said. “Those individuals with that background plus a desire to achieve in athletics and participate in football, if they have some athletic ability, it’s up to us to bring out the best we can in them.”

On October 19, 1866, the students adopt school colors of mauve and white.

On April 30, 1868, students change their school colors to purple and white.



Women’s ice hockey team after winning the NESCAC Championship, 2007

## 1976

Thanks to alphabetical order, Anita Cilderman, a transfer student from Mount Holyoke College, is the first woman to receive a bachelor’s degree from Amherst.

## 1978

Amherst establishes Introduction to Liberal Studies Program.



## 1979

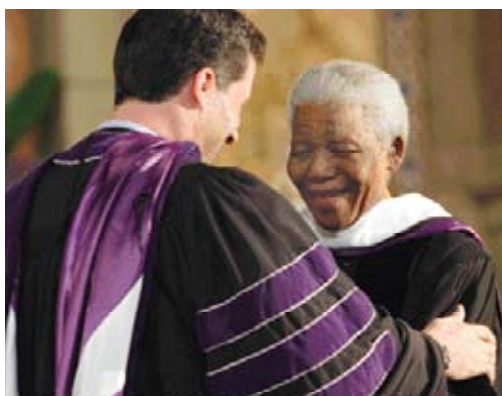
Julian Howard Gibbs (AC 1946), chemist and professor of chemistry, begins term as fifteenth president (1979-83).

## 1983

G. Armour Craig (AC 1937) serves as Acting President (1983-84) following the death of Julian Gibbs. The College establishes a Department of Asian Languages and Literatures.

# Defining Moments

Each academic year begins with the long-held tradition of Convocation, a gathering of the faculty and the incoming first-year class. The president welcomes new faculty and students. In his first Convocation speech, to the Class of 2006 in the fall of 2003, President Anthony W. Marx remarked, “Amherst College is part of the world. We must learn from it and give back to it in insight and in action. We must be provoked by the problems that face us—to study them, to be engaged by ideas, by our own experiences and by our own service in the world.”



Left: President Anthony W. Marx awards an honorary degree to Nelson Mandela, 2005



Right: President John F. Kennedy speaking at the Frost Library groundbreaking, 1963

Forty years earlier, on October 26, 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy and poet Archibald MacLeish were invited to participate in a Convocation ceremony that included a groundbreaking for the new Robert Frost Library. Both luminaries spoke and were awarded Honorary Doctor of Law Degrees. This event was one of President Kennedy’s last public appearances before he was assassinated in November. In his speech, Kennedy expanded upon two great notions. The first was the necessity of service, of putting education to use in order to better one’s community and country. Kennedy said, “Privilege is here, and with privilege comes responsibility.” Secondly, he heralded the arts. “When power leads man towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of

his limitations,” Kennedy said. “When power narrows the areas of man’s concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses.”

In 2005, Amherst awarded honorary degrees to former South African president Nelson Mandela and his wife, Graça Machel, former minister of education in Mozambique. The ceremony was held before 1,300 people in St. Bartholomew’s Church in Manhattan. Mandela spoke of the need for public education for everyone, everywhere. “We are all threatened by entrenched inequality and divisions,” he said in his address. “We all must prove ourselves equal to a better possibility. We are all South Africans now.”

1984



Peter R. Pouncey, classics scholar and former dean of Columbia University, begins term as sixteenth president (1984-94).

The Board of Trustees abolishes on-campus fraternities.

1987

The College establishes the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies.

1993

The College establishes the Department of Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought.

1994



Tom Gerety, lawyer, philosopher, and former president of Trinity College, begins term as seventeenth president (1994-2003).



# Commencement

During the 19th century, Commencement consisted of a week of celebratory activities. These included speeches, awards and the planting of ivy. In 1892, when caps and gowns were first distributed, seniors took their regalia as a sign to have a bit of fun and engage in a game of leapfrog. Seniors had their pictures taken along the “senior fence,” a part of which still remains on the hill near the Octagon, close to the statue of Henry Ward Beecher.

The procession of College faculty that prefaces the Commencement exercises and threads through a double line of seniors is led by the Sheriff of Hampshire County and the Faculty Marshal. Long-standing Amherst tradition dictates that the only Commencement speakers are the College President and a senior elected by the graduating class. Honorary degree recipients address the graduating class the previous day.

In 2003, a group of seniors revived the 19th-century tradition of class canes. Instead of distributing them to the sophomore class, however, they decided to hand them out at graduation. Each cane has a brass plate with an historic College emblem and class

year. Another new Amherst tradition is giving students the choice of vellum or paper diplomas.



Commencement, ca. 1990



Seniors playing leap frog in the Commencement “Gambol on the Green,” 1910



Faculty Marshal  
Rose Olver, 1994



Class canes



Planting ivy during  
Commencement Week,  
1932

## 1996

Amherst College celebrates its 175th anniversary.



## 2003

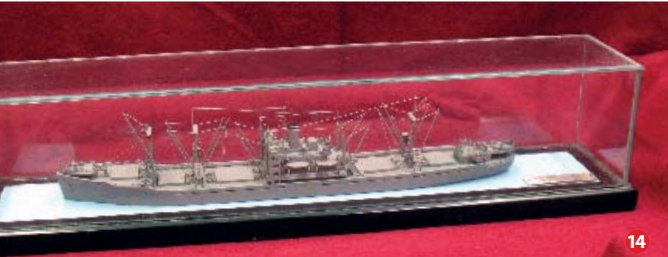
Anthony W. (Tony) Marx, Columbia University professor of political science and educational innovator, begins term as Amherst’s eighteenth president.

## 2005

Amherst awards honorary degrees to former South African president Nelson Mandela and his wife Graça Machel, former minister of education in Mozambique.

## 2007

The Center for Community Engagement is founded.



1. Mid-20th century mug featuring an 1828 view of College Row by Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892).
2. Plaque from Woods Cabinet, opened in 1848 as a natural history museum, in the building now known as the Octagon.
3. Wooden crate used to ship astronomical equipment for Professor David Peck Todd's 1896 Amherst Expedition to Japan to observe a total eclipse of the sun.
4. Robert Frost Fork Award, awarded to the student "who had done the most to promote academics" on the campus.
5. Orange hard hats used by geology students and their professors doing field work.
6. A 19th-century ice skate, designed to be strapped onto the shoe with three leather straps.
7. "The Sprinter" by R. Tait McKenzie (1867-1938), a gift from George D. Pratt (Class of 1893).
8. Lock box that once held the records of the Social Union, the College's first literary society.
9. The 'Acorn': the top of the flag staff which stood on College Tower during the Civil War.
10. A 19th-century Phi Beta Kappa key.
11. Wooden gavel made from roof timbers of the White House, presented to the College in 1929 by H. L. Bravo (Class of 1911).
12. Machine-woven silks bearing the Amherst seal, part of a popular series of Egyptienne Luxury brand cigarettes featuring American colleges and universities.
13. This piece of tree arrived with the following note: "Grape Shot taken from a tree on the battlefield of Waterloo near the Chateau Hougoumont May 1st 1892."
14. Model ship commemorating the commissioning of the World War II Amherst Victory, launched on February 28, 1945.
15. Political campaign materials of Francisco Flores (Class of 1981), elected president of El Salvador in 1999.
16. The Amherst College Flying Club, founded in 1932, was one of the oldest collegiate flying clubs in the U.S.
17. Two baseballs used in the first intercollegiate baseball game held on July 1, 1859, in Pittsfield.
18. A 19th-century machine capable of basic arithmetic, the Arithmometer.
19. Aside from the steeple that still stands at the entrance to the Mead Art Building, this door knocker is one of the only surviving relics of Stearns Church, built in 1873 and razed in 1948.
20. Painted wooden sign that marked the entrance to James and Stearns Halls from their opening in 1946 until their closing in 2004.
21. A 9-inch-tall foot warmer from the 18th or early-19th century.
22. 19th-century wooden dumbbells.
23. This 19th-century plaster bust was one tool of phrenology, the study of the conformation of the skull as indicative of character traits and mental faculties. Orson Fowler (Class of 1834) became fascinated with the "science" and practiced and published in the area.
24. The rulers, compasses, square and other instruments variously crafted from brass, wood and ivory belonged to the collection of Ebenezer Strong Snell (Class of 1822), professor of mathematics and natural philosophy from 1827 to 1876.

Produced with the support of William McC. Vickery '57

Design: Mary Zyskowski

Text: Jennifer Acker '00 and Daria D'Arienzo

Photography: Amherst College Archives and Special Collections,  
Mead Art Museum, and the Office of Public Affairs, including  
photographers Frank Ward and Samuel Masinter '04

Cover: Amherst College in 1821 by Orra White Hitchcock, ca. 1821