

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

Mount Holyoke College, the oldest women's college in the United States, has played an important role in the history of South Hadley as well as women's education. It was founded by Mary Lyon in 1837 at a time when women had few opportunities to obtain a college education. Lyon believed that women must be well educated to contribute significantly to society's greater good. The prevailing belief then was that women were constitutionally unfit to handle the mental and physical demands of higher education, and that women did not need education for the domestic life they would lead.

Mary Lyon proved otherwise. She pursued the traditionally male discipline of chemistry and excelled. She was born Feb. 28, 1797 on a farm in the western Massachusetts town of Buckland. She early on displayed an interest in mathematics and natural sciences. Her father died when she was five, and she was essentially self-sufficient by age 13 when her mother remarried and moved away. At age 17 she began her first teaching job in a one-room schoolhouse.



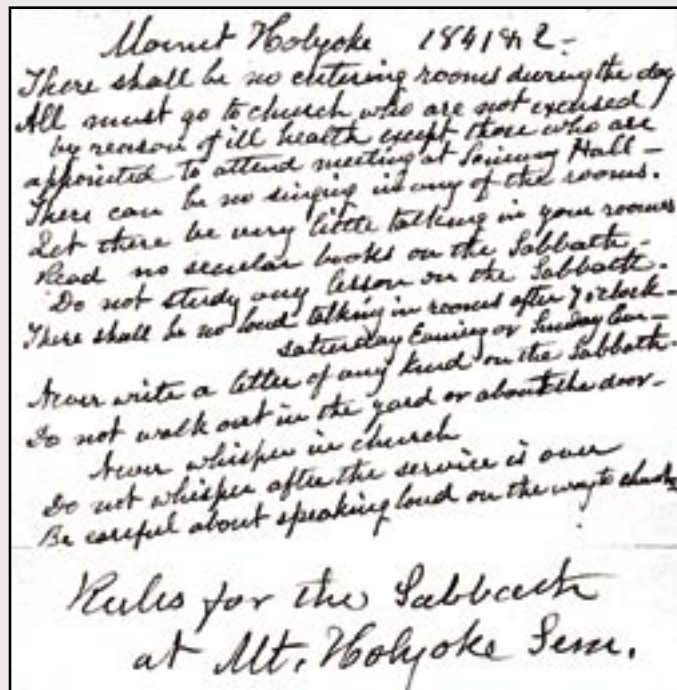
Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke College, in 1832 at age 35. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)



Mary Lyon was born in 1797 and lived in this farmhouse in Buckland. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

Lyon's struggle to obtain an education fired her determination to make higher learning available to all women, particularly those of limited means. The country was in the grip of economic depression, but Lyon traveled endlessly by stagecoach to seek contributions. They ranged from six cents to a thousand dollars. In 1835 the residents of South Hadley guaranteed a subscription of \$8,000 to locate her proposed seminary in their town, but it was only after prolonged discussion and by a bare majority that the committee of seven of Lyon's friends charged with the matter decided in favor of South Hadley.

On Feb. 10, 1836, William Bowdoin and Rev. Joseph D. Condit of South Hadley, Rev. John Todd of Northampton, Samuel Williston of Easthampton and David Choate of Boston were incorporated as trustees of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. Lyon insisted that



A Mount Holyoke student writes what is appropriate behavior on the Sabbath in 1841. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)



Mount Holyoke Seminary Building circa 1890 before 1896 fire. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

the school not be named after her, so it took the name of nearby Mount Holyoke.

When Mount Holyoke Female Seminary opened its doors Nov. 8, 1837, it embodied two major innovations in women's education. It instituted rigorous academic entrance requirements and a demanding curriculum of science, mathematics, history and theology, free of instruction in domestic pursuits. And it was endowed, thus ensuring its permanence. Mary Lyon proved herself true to the words she became renowned for: Go where no one else will go. Do what no one else will do.

Mount Holyoke's reputation grew steadily. It became known for brilliant teaching and academic excellence, especially in the natural sciences. Schools and seminaries patterned on it began to rise in the American west and foreign countries. Lyon's forward looking leadership set a pattern for future leaders. Notable among them was Elizabeth Storrs Mead who served as president from 1890-1900.



The 1892-93 editorial board of The Mount Holyoke. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

When fire destroyed the original seminary building in 1896, Mead initiated an extensive building plan that included construction of a physics and chemistry building, a gymnasium, seven residence halls, and an administration building with adjoining chapel. She



Mount Holyoke Seminary after 1896 fire. Townspeople helped financially to rebuild and housed students. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

phased out seminary requirements and introduced electives. She lessened teachers' non-teaching responsibilities and encouraged them to pursue advanced degrees in the best universities. For the first time, students were given a voice in college governance. Mount Holyoke obtained collegiate status and was named Mount Holyoke Seminary and College in 1888, and in 1893 became formally named Mount Holyoke College.

In 1900 Mary E. Woolley began her 37 year presidency, and like her predecessors, she focused on faculty development, building needs, curricular change and the endowment. Sixteen major buildings were added, and curricular changes made. Her many activities in the educational world and participation in international affairs, especially as delegate to the 1932 Geneva Conference for Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, added greatly to the prestige of the college.



Nellie Amelia Spore, director of gymnastics, and students climbing Mount Holyoke, circa 1900. The college stressed the need for exercise to maintain physical and mental health.

Over the last 50 years, profound changes have altered every aspect of life at Mount Holyoke College, keeping the school in the vanguard of small liberal arts colleges while sweeping it forward across the threshold of the 21st century. Change and growth at



Faculty and students circa 1906

Mount Holyoke are obvious in the development of buildings and grounds, increased enrollment and curriculum change, and less apparent but, no less important, in areas such as race relations, diversity, and equipping students to live in a multicultural world.

The stunning progress and development at Mount Holyoke have come largely through an ever increasing endowment and the unflagging efforts of five presidents: Roswell Gray Ham, Richard Glenn Gettell, David B. Truman, Elizabeth Topham Kennan and Joanne V. Creighton.

Roswell Gray Ham, the college's first male president, who served from 1937 to 1957, presided during a post-World War II period of unprecedented growth. Enrollment increased by 25 percent; the endowment grew from \$5 million to more than \$8 million; and the value of the physical plant doubled.



Class of 1916 demonstrating for women's right to vote in municipal elections in Mass. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

The turmoil that swept college campuses in the 1960s marked the presidency of Richard Glenn Gettell (1957-1968). Grading policies, the curriculum, and required chapel all came under shrill attack. Resulting changes included the formation of a Russian Department, elimination of required chapel attendance and curricular change that gave students more flexibility in planning their studies.

One of the key elements of the Gettell administration was inauguration of a capital fund campaign known as the Fund for the Future. Professional fund-raising consultants told the college the effort would not produce more than \$3 million. The college campaign committee suggested \$6 million. But Janet Brewster Murrow '36 (Mrs. Edward R. Murrow), who volunteered to head



President McKinley and wife attend the 1899 commencement. (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

the drive, would have none of it. "We'll ask for \$9 million," she said optimistically.

An active campaign, fueled by the enthusiasm of hundreds of alumnae, rolled across the country to all major cities and to any area with a concentration of former students. When the dust had settled after a three-year crusade, the campaign had netted \$13 million.

The Fund for the Future provided the bedrock for major developments in the building and renovation of college facilities. Added to the campus were the Richard Glenn Gettell Amphitheater, the Ellen and Tom Reese Psychology and Education Building, the Rooke Laboratory Theatre, the Groves Health Center and Eliot House, the center for religious activity. In addition, four new dormitories were constructed: Prospect, 1837, Ham and MacGregor. At the same time plans were initiated to build a new Art Building next to Pageant Field.

In planning the new construction, much care was given to the original design of the campus created by Frederick Law Olmstead. All the new buildings were located at the back of the campus. President Gettell took pride in announcing that if one stood on



First Graduation of Marine Corps Women's Reserve officers at Mount Holyoke - May 1943 (Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

the steps of Pearson Dormitory, located on the west side of College Street, and observed the campus façade across the street, it would not be apparent that any building had taken place.

In addition to new building, the Fund for the Future also made possible extensive renovation and remodeling of older buildings. Ten residence halls were refurnished and redecorated; the administration and music buildings were remodeled; and the library underwent extensive renovation.

David B. Truman (1969-1978) arrived at Mount Holyoke at the height of unrest sweeping across the nation's college campuses as a result of the Vietnam War and volatile race relations. Adding to these challenges was the pressure to make the college co-educational as more and more men's schools admitted women. Finally, on Nov. 6, 1971, after reviewing an exhaustive study on co-education, the trustees of Mount Holyoke voted unanimously to keep the college founded by Mary Lyon in 1837 a women's college. A faculty panel was charged with recommending



President Richard G. Gettell (1957-1968) and wife and President Roswell G. Ham and wife (1937-1957).

(Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

curricular changes that would support that decision.



Elizabeth S. Mead (1890-1900) Mary E. Woolley (1900-1937) Elizabeth T. Kennan (1978-1995)

(Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

January Term, the Career Exploration Project and the Frances Perkins Program for non-traditional students further reflected Mount Holyoke's ability to meet the challenges and opportunities of the times. Among other major changes in the college community were the opening of a new black culture center and a black studies department established with other colleges in the valley.

In response to student protest over the parietal issue, faculty and students agreed that the responsibility for the enactment of non-academic rules, including visitors in the residence halls, should be in the hands of the Student Government Association. The faculty also authorized some students to attend faculty meetings as observers, and a committee composed of trustees, faculty, students and administrators was formed upon a request for student representation on the Board of Trustees.

On the financial front, the Truman administration saw the endowment rise from \$39,420,344 to \$48,865,035, and alumnae giving increase from \$420,700 to \$1,242,477.

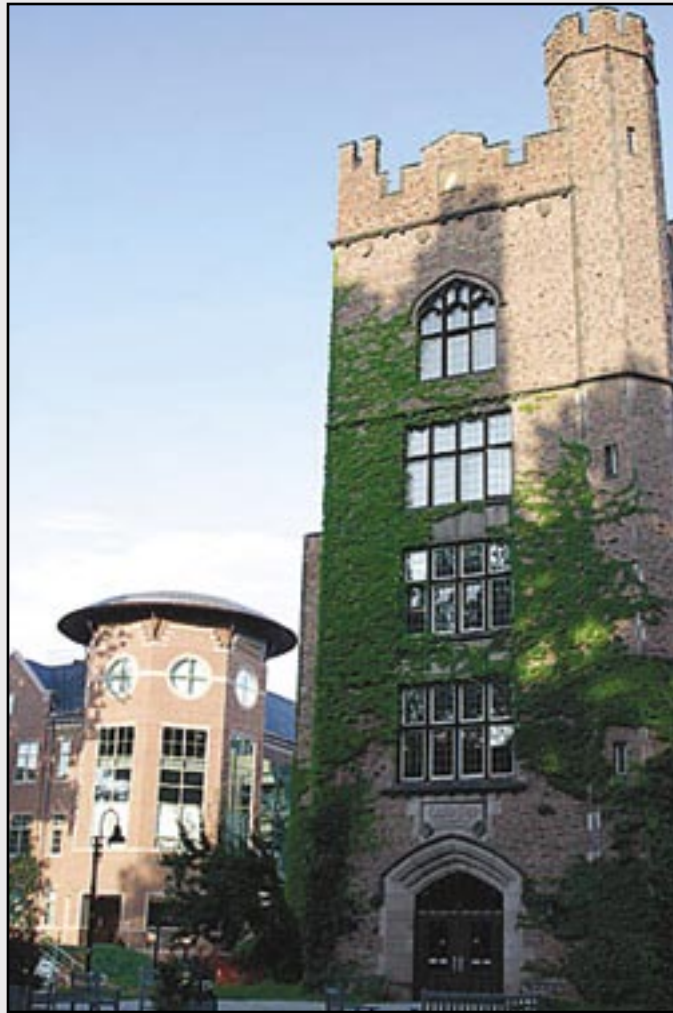
In 1978, Elizabeth Topham Kennan '60 became the first alumna in the 20th century to serve as president of Mount Holyoke College. She was to become a leading spokesman on many critical issues facing education of women in the United States and throughout the world.



President David Truman (1969-1978) and wife Elinor.

(Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections)

The increased enrollment of international students in the 1980s spurred a rededication to the study of foreign languages and study abroad. As a result, a Third World requirement was initiated and



Kendade Hall (left) a \$34.5 million science center that links the biological sciences located in Clapp and the chemical sciences in Carr with the physics dept. in Shattuck (JQS photo)

the Department of International Relations was formed. Other innovative programs included Summer Math and Summer Math for Teachers, revolutionary mathematics education programs for high school girls and for teachers of mathematics, which emphasize cooperative problem solving.

Chief among Kennan's accomplishments was leading a capital campaign to raise \$125 million for the sesquicentennial, marking the first time a nine-figure goal had been set by a women's college. Like the Fund for the Future, the drive exceeded its goal, raising a total of \$139.4 million. The funding made possible a multi-million dollar athletic complex, opened in 1984, followed in 1989 by a campus center in the renovated Blanchard gymnasium, and the Ciruti Center, a new language-learning complex.

It was during this period that the College Inn and other retail buildings in South Hadley were destroyed by fire, requiring rebuilding of the town center. Graham Gund, the architect who rebuilt Baltimore's business district, designed what is today the Village Commons. The buildings in the complex are joined together by walkways, bridges, and landscaped courtyards.

When Elizabeth Kennan left the presidency in 1995, the college endowment was \$246.6 million.

As Joanne V. Creighton assumed the presidency of Mount Holyoke College in 1996, one of her first goals was to bring the community together to produce a clearly articulated sense of the College's central mission, purposes, goals and aspirations. The result was the formation of "The Plan for Mount Holyoke 2003" (later to be called The Plan). A top priority of The Plan was an increase in student admissions, and the college recorded the largest applicant pool in history for the Class of 2004, which represented an increase of 22 percent from 1998.

Soon after taking office, Creighton launched a \$250 million capital fund drive, which was completed in 2003, followed by another capital drive seeking an additional \$70 million by 2010.

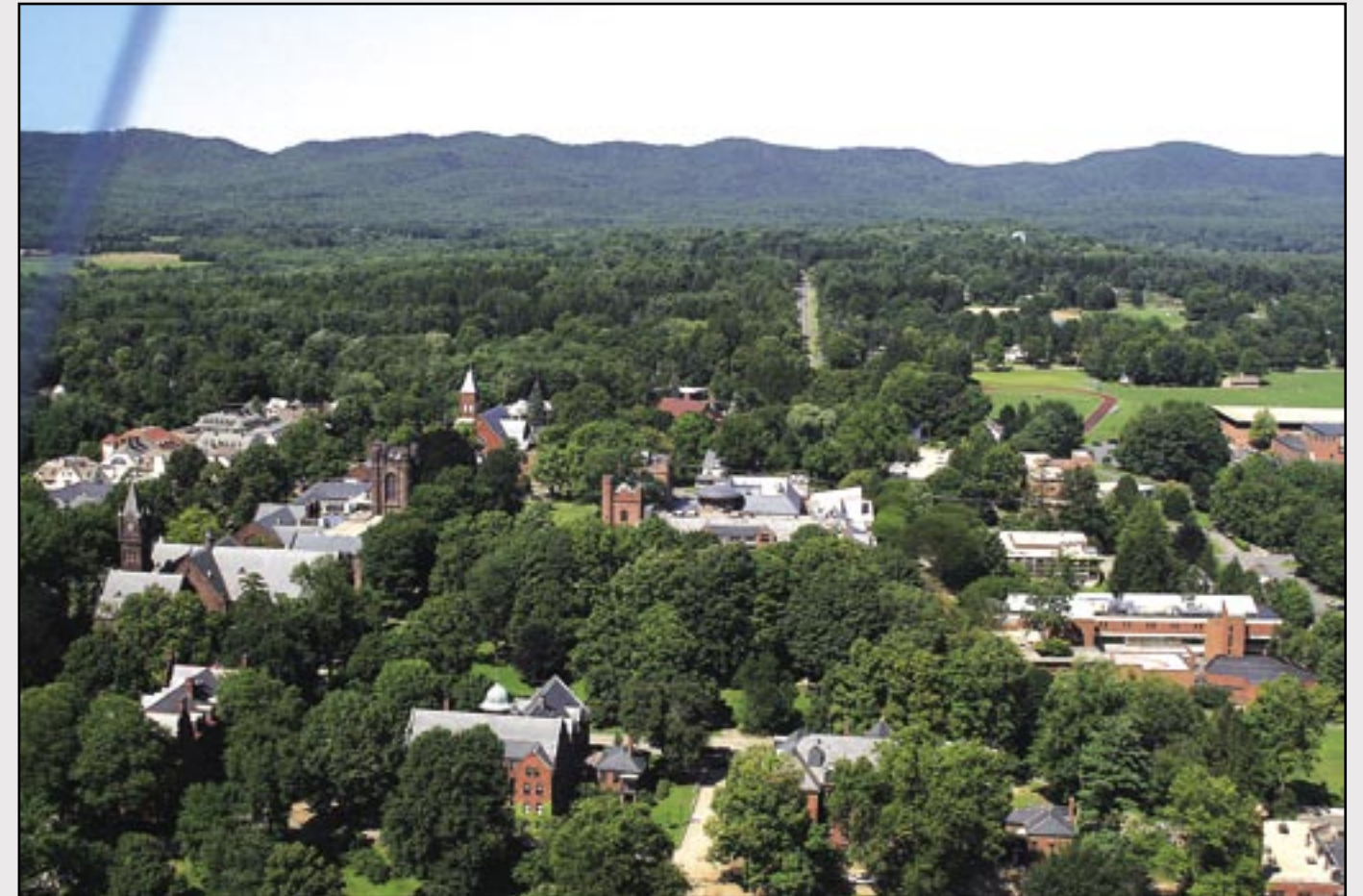
The growing financial muscle has made possible many ambitious goals such as establishing a satellite admissions office in California and a new computer student information system, making it easier for prospective students to apply to MHC, the faculty to call up class lists, and current students to register for classes via the web. Other notable projects include the Weissman Center for Leadership, the Speaking, Arguing and Writing Program, and the Center for Environmental Literacy.

Once again, ambitious construction projects have given tangible form to the emergence of the college as one of the top schools in the country. The most comprehensive project was the emergence of Kendade Hall, the new heart of a \$34.5 million science center that links the biological sciences located in Clapp and the chemical sciences in Carr with the physics department in Shattuck. The new center was designed to reinforce the unity of the sciences and to encourage a union across scientific disciplines.

The Pratt music building was transformed into a state of the art facility, and the art building and museum were enlarged and extensively renovated. Blanchard, the student union, was renovated and opened in September of 2003.



Blanchard Campus Center after remodeling in 2003 (JQS photo)



This aerial photo shows the Center against the backdrop of Mount Holyoke Range from which the college took its name; Village Commons on far left. (JQS photo)

The Creighton years have seen the endowment swell from \$246.6 million in 1995 to \$410 million in the summer of 2003, an impressive figure to help gird ambitious plans for the future.

"Now that we have implemented the goals of 'The Plan,'" Creighton stated, "we have drafted a Plan for 2010 in which we may become much bolder. If the first was the shoring-up plan, the next will be the soaring plan. In the years ahead Mount Holyoke will attain even more impressive levels of academic excellence and purposeful engagement in the world."



President of Mount Holyoke College Joanne V. Creighton photo - Paul Schnaittacher

Today, as one of the country's preeminent liberal arts colleges for women, Mount Holyoke enrolls approximately 1,900 undergraduates from across the country and around the world.

Relations between the town and the college were strong from the very beginning. Collapsing brickwork in the summer of 1837 created a crisis that threatened a long delay and put a strain on already slim building funds. South Hadley came through with a

loan from the town's surplus revenues; the treasurer was authorized to borrow an additional \$5,000 and the work continued. During the disastrous fire of Sept. 27, 1896 that destroyed the original seminary building, the townspeople rallied to help fight the fire, and after the fire housed the students until dormitories could be built, so that they could continue their studies. An interesting episode occurred when William McKinley advised his niece, Grace Howe McKinley, who was enrolled at Mount Holyoke, to transfer to Smith College. She refused, and he came to her graduation in June 1899, the first United States President to visit Mount Holyoke while in office.

Mount Holyoke students have done their practice teaching in South Hadley schools and have tutored local high school students. The college has offered South Hadley students enrichment courses, and many cultural and educational events have been made available to the townspeople.

During World War II, approximately 2,500 WAVE officers were trained for the Naval Reserve as well as the first women officers in the history of the Marine Corps. The college has made its facilities available to the town for graduations and other town events. In January, the college served as host for the gala held in celebration of the town's 250th anniversary.