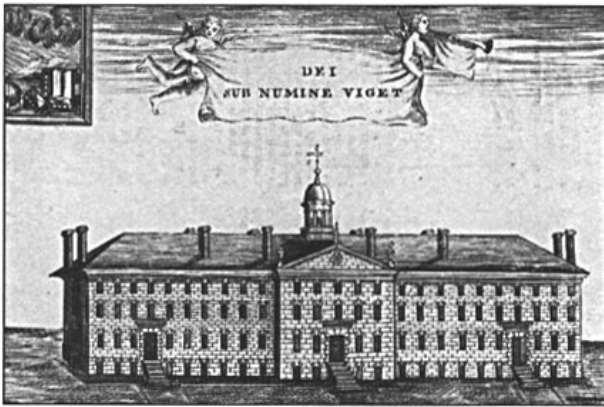


# *Nassau Hall*



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY'S  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

**William K. Selden**

*Nassau Hall*

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## *Foreword*

**I**n December 1942 a small group of retired men met on the Princeton University campus and proposed the establishment of the Old Guard of Princeton, New Jersey. By the spring of the following year their proposal had become a flourishing reality. The organization was soon comprised of men who had retired from a variety of positions in business, industry, the professions, research and teaching both at the University and at other educational institutions.

Since its founding the Old Guard, now limited to 150 members, has held all but few of its weekly meetings in one of the buildings on the Princeton University campus, frequently in the Faculty Room of Nassau Hall. At these sessions a wide diversity of subjects is presented by invited speakers who generously share their special knowledge of the topics in the discussion periods that follow their formal presentations.

To express its appreciation for the cordial hospitality that Princeton University has extended through all these years, the Old Guard has commissioned the preparation of this historical sketch of Nassau Hall that has been written by one of its distinguished members and a graduate of the University in the class of 1934. The Old Guard is proud to present this publication to the University as it celebrates its 250th anniversary.

W. James Walsh, Jr., President  
Old Guard of Princeton

## *Acknowledgements*

The suggestion for this monograph evolved from discussions with W. James Walsh, Jr., President, and John P. McCullough, Chairman of the Program Committee respectively of the Old Guard of Princeton. From its inception each has maintained continued interest and each has been very supportive of the project.

Jeremiah S. Finch, Professor of English and Secretary of the University, Emeritus, and S. Georgia Nugent, Secretary to the President, read a draft of the history and offered suggestions for significant improvement in the document. They also aided me in avoiding several factual errors that, if not corrected, would have been extremely unfortunate. However, I assume the responsibility for any errors that may not have been corrected.

As on previous occasions, it was a pleasure to be associated with Fred W. Plank and Marion Carty, Director and Associate Director of the University Office of Printing and Mailing, who generously shared with me their competence in the design and printing of the booklet. To the members of the staff of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library I am also indebted for their cooperation in assisting me to locate the appropriate reference material.

Furthermore, it has been personally gratifying to write this history of Nassau Hall as a gift to Princeton University on the 250th anniversary of its founding.

William K. Selden



Nassau Hall

Etching by Samuel Cahmaberlain  
(1895-1975)

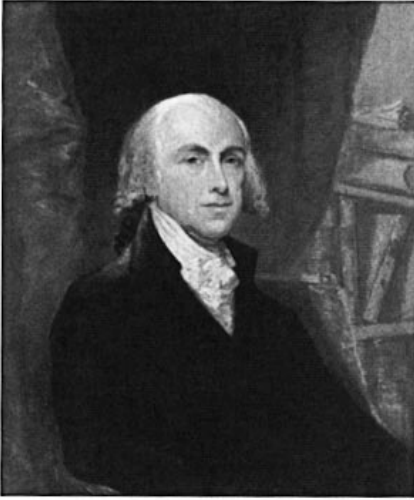
# *Nassau Hall*

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY'S  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL LANDMARK

**A**t the time of the 200th anniversary of the opening of Nassau Hall in 1756, the renowned professor of American colonial history at Princeton University, Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, wrote:

Nassau Hall is the most famous college building in the United States. Within its rough stone walls have lived and studied many eminent men -Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, John Witherspoon, James Madison, Samuel Stanhope Smith, Oliver Ellsworth, Henry Lee, Luther Martin, Richard Stockton, Benjamin Rush. Here received their education nine members of the Constitutional Convention. It was at Nassau Hall that the first legislature at the state of New Jersey assembled; that the first governor of the state was inaugurated; that British troops fleeing from the Battle of Princeton took refuge; that Washington's gins thundered. Here was quartered a detachment of British troops in 1777; here the Americans had a hospital for Continentals; here Congress received [Pieter Johan] van Berckel, the first Dutch minister to the United States. For three months Nassau Hall was the capitol of the United States, when continental congress convened there in the summer of 1783. (see Bibliography 12;p. 89 )

Despite the ravages of time, Nassau hall has been the cynosure of Princeton alumni ever since the middle of the 18th century. During its first 40 years this historic building contained all the facilities that were provided to its pious, and sometimes rebellious student body: a chapel, a library, recitation rooms, din-



James Madison  
 Class of 1771  
 President of the United States  
 1809-1817  
 Painted by Jacob Cist (1782-1825)  
 Gift of Gilbert S. McClintock, Class of 1908,  
 great grandson of the artist, in 1959

ing facilities and bedrooms. In the 1830s the construction of the East and West College buildings provided additional dormitory space and permitted the conversion of some of the bedrooms in Nassau Hall, subsequently known colloquially as North College, to classrooms. In the 20th century, Nassau Hall was transformed into the central administrative office building for what had by then become an internationally recognized research university.

The following brief history sketches the transformations that have taken place in this national historic landmark and provides a glimpse of the development of higher education during the first 250 years of the College of New Jersey, which in 1896 was renamed Princeton University.

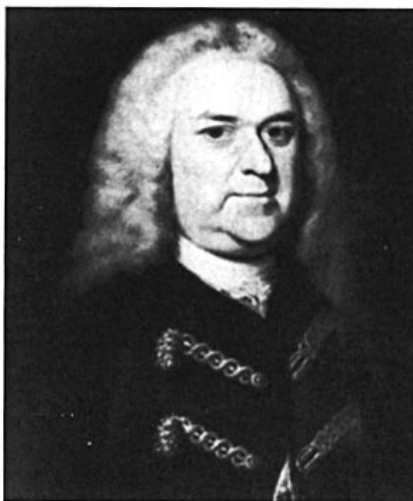
### *Selection of the Site*

**F**ollowing the founding of Harvard in Massachusetts, Yale in Connecticut, and William and Mary in Virginia, the Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies decided that to meet their theological convictions, as well as their geographical needs, they should organize a college in New Jersey, which they first located in the home of the Reverend Jonathan Dickinson in Elizabeth. Here beginning in 1746, a handful of students were instructed until Dickinson died suddenly the following year. The Reverend Aaron Burr, Senior, who had also been an original trustee

of the College, then combined the presidency of the fledgling college with his pastoral duties in Newark, and at his latter location the institution remained while the trustees explored the possibilities of a permanent site.

Encouraged by Jonathan Belcher, governor of the Province of New Jersey during these crucial early years of the College, the trustees indicated that provision of 1,000 pounds in New Jersey money, 10 acres of cleared land for the buildings, and 200 acres of woodland for firewood would have an influence on the selection of a site. Elizabeth, Newark, New Brunswick and Princeton solicited consideration, but Princeton which was favored by Governor Belcher, was chosen when local residents fulfilled the expectations of the trustees.

Four local citizens assumed the leadership in inducing the College to locate in Princeton. John Horner contributed seven acres, Thomas Leonard a 160-acre woodlot, and John Stockton 40 wooded acres, John Stockton's son, Richard, had been a member of the class of 1748, the first class to be graduated from the College. Later he was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.



Jonathan Belcher  
Governor of Province of New Jersey  
1747-1757  
Anonymous artist, 18th century  
Gift of Carl Otto von Kienbusch,  
Class of 1906, in 1953

The land on which Nassau Hall was located was donated by Nathaniel and Rebeckah FitzRandolph, who contributed 4.5 acres. In their memory their descendant, Augustus Van Wickle, bequeathed funds for the gates at the front entrance to the campus. These were designed by the architectural firm McKim,

Mead and White and constructed in 1905. In his will he also provided for the construction of the Van Wickle gates at the entrance of Brown University whose university Hall was copied after Nassau Hall. Of equal interest is the fact that Nassau Hall also serve as the model for buildings at other institutions, including Dartmouth, Dickinson, Harvard, and Rutgers.

### *Construction of Nassau Hall*

Once the site had been decided, funds were needed for construction and architectural plans had to be developed. Gilbert Tenent, a trustee, and Samuel Davies, later president from 1759-1761, were sent to England where they raised over 3,200 pounds, more than the cost of the building (amounting to approximately 2,900 pounds), and of the house for the president that was constructed nearby.

The architectural plans were likely prepared initially by Robert Smith, an architect-carpenter who had been involved in the construction of notable buildings in Philadelphia, including Carpenter's Hall, where the Continental Congress held its first meetings. Dr. William Shippen, a brother of Judge Edward Shippen, then a trustee of the College, undoubtedly was influential in developing "the charming proportions and quiet dignity of the college building." (15; p.37) Smith also served as supervisor of the construction, and William Worth was assigned responsibility for the masonry work. Worth was the son of Joseph Worth who operated a mill on Stony Brook, the remnants of which can still be seen in 1995 on the northwest side of the brook as one crosses the Stockton Street bridge.

For what was to be the largest building in the America colonies at that time ground was broken on July 29, 1754, and two months later the cornerstone was laid at its northwest corner. On November 28, 1756 President Aaron Burr, Senior with 70 students and three tutors occupied and held their first religious

service in the building, even though final construction would not be completed for several more years.

With stone walls that were 26 inches thick, the building measured 176 feet in length, 54 feet in width with a 12 foot projection in the rear to provide for a two-story prayer hall. On three floors and in the basement provision was made to house 147 students, three to a room, as well as tutors, and to provide recitation rooms at the center of the first floor, a library which was located on the second floor over the recitation rooms, and the refectory, kitchen, and storeroom in the basement. Hallways, which facilitated the activities of rebellious students, extended the full length of the building.

In addition to a basement entrance there were three doorways in the front adjacent to stairways that led to the upper floors. A cupola surmounted the pitched roof. Although the prayer hall contained the first organ to be used in a Presbyterian service in America, the building was designed in a “plain style urged upon the College by the necessity for economy and made acceptable by regard for Presbyterian austerity.” (12, p. 18)



Nassau Hall and President's House  
Engraving by Henry Dawkins, 1764

The name of Nassau Hall was adopted by the Board of Trustees on the suggestion of Governor Belcher. In refusing the honor of having it named for himself, he responded with the proposal that the name retain “the immortal memory of the glorious King William III, who was a branch of the illustrious house of Nassau.” (15; p.39)

### *Early Life in Nassau Hall*

**I**n the early years and well into the 19th century the students lived under spartan conditions. The floors in the hallways were paved with brick, and simple planking was laid in the bedrooms where plastered walls were smudged with smoke from the candles and the wood-burning (later coal-burning) fireplaces. Meager furniture, the least expensive and in the plainest style, included a washstand with a basin and pitcher filled from the college well. In 1762, following an increase in enrollment, a number of bedrooms were constructed in a part of the unoccupied, cold and damp basement. Except for special occasions, the food was simple and the cause of frequent complaints, complaints that were expressed by the students not only with verbal comments but also on occasions with some physical violence.

The rising bell was rung at five, followed a half hour later by prayers. Then an hour was assigned to study before breakfast at eight. Recitations consumed the hours from nine to one, in the afternoon at which time dinner was served. Students were expected to study from three to five, followed by a period for evening prayers with supper at seven and further study until curfew at nine when the bell was ring; a bell-ringing custom that was followed until recently for nearly two and one-half centuries. On Sundays attendance at two long services in the prayer hall were mandatory. After 1764 the students were required to attend the Sunday morning service held in the First Presbyte-

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rian Church that had been constructed that year, while all other prayer services continued to be held in Nassau Hall until the first separate chapel building was constructed in 1847.

Throughout this schedule the tutors were required to monitor the undergraduates, who were given no encouragement to participate in any form of athletics. It is no wonder that student unrest consumed much attention of successive presidents and the trustees. But student unrest was less destructive than revolutionary war.

### *The American Revolution*

**T**he battle in Princeton on January 3, 1777 has been considered the turning point on the struggle on the part of the American colonies for independence from Britain. In this engagement Nassau Hall suffered extensive damage as it changed hands between the British and the American forces. In the words of Varnum Lansing Collins, an alumnus in the class of 1892 and former secretary of the University.

At dawn it was a British stronghold; later in the morning it was surrendered to Washington's victorious troops, who remained only long enough to seize prisoners and destroy booty, leaving the building to be reoccupied by the British who had hastened back from Maidenhead (Lawrenceville) and Trenton. And when the enemy passed on in desperate hurry to reach New Brunswick and the base of supplies, the battered shell of the college building was left deserted for General Putnam with a large American force to occupy later in the month as a barracks, a hospital, and a military prison. During the closing engagement of the battle on January 3, a couple of round shots were fired at it by an American battery commanded by Alexander Hamilton. ...One of these shots ripped up the ceiling of the dismantled prayer-hall, and another struck the portrait of George II, giving a last touch to the wreck of the apartment. (2; p.79).



**George II**

King of Great Britain

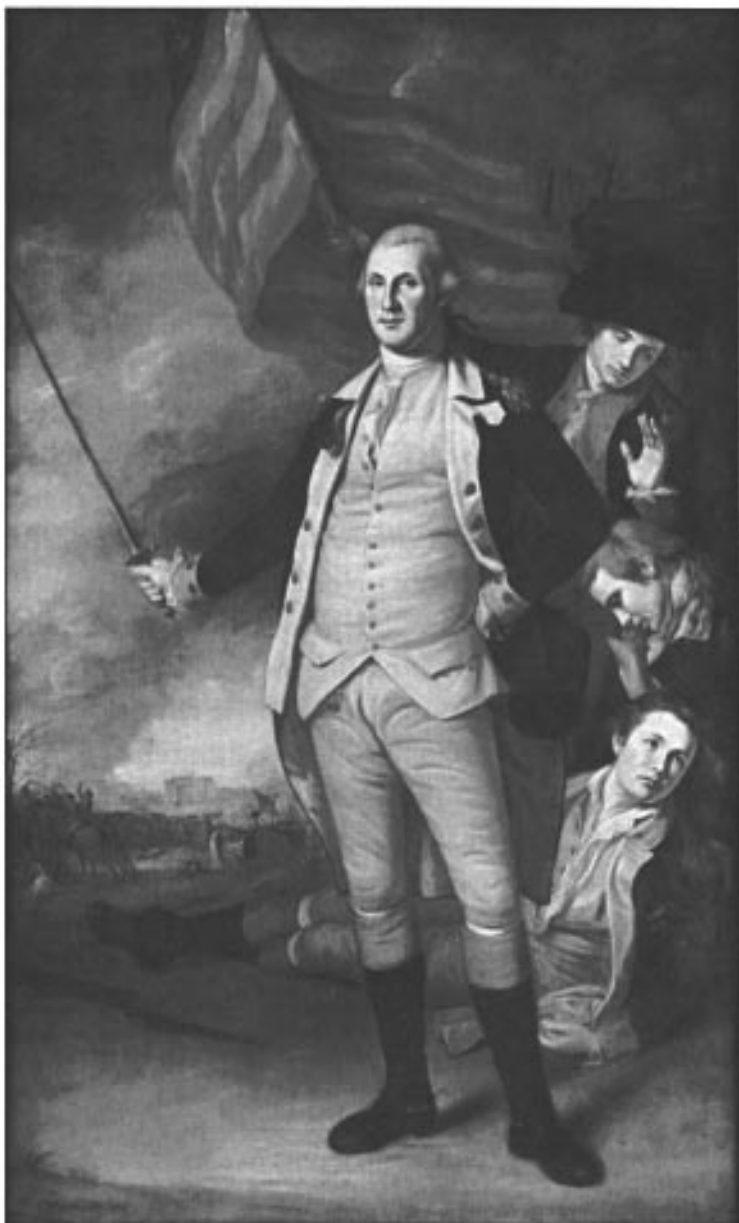
1727-1760

Painted by Charles Jervas (c. 1675-1739)

Gift of Alexander Benson, Malcom Lloyd, Jr. and

William F. Meredith, Class of 1894,

and Jay Cooke, Class of 1919, in 1936



George Washington  
at the Battle of Princeton  
January 3, 1777  
President of the United States  
1789-1797  
Painted by Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827)  
Commissioned by the Board of Trustees  
Photograph by Bruce White

In the desperate economic conditions that prevailed after the Revolutionary War assets were not readily available for reconstruction of Nassau Hall. Recalling the success that Davies and Tennent had attained a few years earlier in raising funds in Britain for the original construction, the trustees authorized President John Witherspoon to return to his native land and undertake similar solicitations. However, as an ardent supporter of the cause of independence and signer of the Declaration of Independence he was not well received. He returned with a net total of five British pounds. Nevertheless, with funds raised from local supporters and some assistance from the State of New Jersey repairs were initiated a year after the evacuation of troops. The Continental Congress appropriated funds as compensation for the damages incurred, but the value of its money depreciated so fast that the College derived little benefit from this form of assistance. By 1782 the building was only partially habitable when some 40 students were able to occupy rooms in the central part of the structure while a grammar school was conducted in one room in the basement.

Although Nassau Hall was not fully repaired until 1791, the building was sufficiently restored to serve as a national capitol when the Continental Congress fled from Philadelphia to Princeton in 1783. From June to November of that year meetings of the Congress were held in the library, while the prayer hall was reserved for such a state occasions as formal congratulation of George Washington for his leadership in the War of Independence, and receipt of word that the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain had been signed.

Notwithstanding the disruptions that the College encountered at the time of the war and its aftermath, instruction was suspended during this period for only a few months, albeit the number of students was small. By 1800 the enrollment had increased to more than one hundred and the trustees were con-

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templating the construction of one or more buildings and the establishing of additional professorships, when early in the new century another calamity struck the College.

## *Fire of 1802*

**A**t dinner time on March 6, 1802 fire was discovered in a room on the top floor of Nassau Hall. Abetted by a strong wind and the lack of adequate fire-fighting equipment, the conflagration spread rapidly and soon engulfed the entire interior of the building. Although students lost most of their personal possessions, the College was able to save much of its limited equipment, but only one hundred of its three-thousand books. In contrast to scores of colleges throughout the states that were engulfed in fires during the early part of the 19th century and were never able to reopen, the College of New Jersey possessed a resilience that has been one of its hallmarks for a quarter of a millennium.



Nassau Hall

Lithograph by John H. Bufford

*circa* 1840

Within a month of the fire students had found rooms in town and classes were resumed in the president's house. Forty-two thousand dollars were soon raised to rebuild the interior of the damaged structure which was ready for reoccupancy early in the following year 1803.

Benjamin H. Latrobe, considered to be the first professionally trained architect to practice in the United States and later the supervising architect for the United States Capitol in Washington, offered his services without charge to supervise the reconstruction of Nassau Hall. Though Latrobe's changes emphasized a Federal style in place of the original Colonial appearance, his main alterations involved a reduction in fire hazards. These included brick floors in place of wood, stone stairs with iron railings, and a sheet-iron roof, which was raised several feet and later had to be replaced because it permitted leaks during heavy rains. On the exterior "the horizontal lintels over the three entrances at the front of the building were replaced by triangular pediments, and the circular window in the central pediment rising from the eaves was replaced by a fan-light." (7, p. 330) In addition, the belfry was raised to provide space for a clock.

Subsequent to the reconstruction of Nassau Hall Latrobe designed Stanhope Hall, now standing to the west of Nassau Hall, and a companion building, Philosophical Hall, subsequently razed, which was located to the east of Nassau Hall. When these two buildings were completed in 1803 and 1804 the former housed the library and study halls and the latter provided space for the kitchen and student dining facilities, in addition to classrooms and a laboratory. Thus, Nassau Hall was able to house a slightly larger number of students, who on occasions expressed their frustrations and mutinous energy in unpredictable rebellions.

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## *Student Rebellions*

In an era when college students were subjected to a rigid academic regime, bored with didactic and pedantic instruction, resentful of constant supervision, and discouraged from initiating any formal athletics, youthful exuberance often manifested itself in rebellious activities that led to considerable physical damage and individual punishment. Princeton enjoyed its share of such incidents.

Regardless of the environment, pranks are the wont of youth and when groups of boys not yet men, are provided few opportunities to exercise their pent-up physical energies, eruptions will eventually emerge in one form or another. Most of the time only minor incidents disrupted the routine of life in Nassau Hall. These involved such capers as throwing a firecracker from a window to startle a tutor, or hiding another student's books before a class session in which he was to recite, or placing a pound of pepper in the stove of a bedroom. Of more serious import in the ecclesiastical atmosphere of the 18th and most of the 19th centuries at Princeton was the hanging of a chamber pot from the ceiling of the chapel.

On other occasions more rambunctious students enticed reluctant live animals, even calves, jackasses, and horses to climb the narrow stairways to the top floors from where it was more difficult for the authorities to extricate them. These less serious exploits paled in comparison to the outbursts that appeared in Nassau Hall at irregular intervals between periods of religious revivals, the latter often promoted by the college authorities.

A rebellion occurred in February 1800 after several students, who had made irreverent noises by scraping their feet in the unheated chapel, were suspended from college. Considering that this punishment was too severe the student body engaged in a riot. "Nassau Hall resounded to the report of pistols, the

crash of brickbats against walls and doors, and the rolling of barrels of stones along the hallways.” (15; p.137) Even a three-pound cannonball sped through the length of the building.

Seven years later, in March 1807, there was a great rebellion which President Samuel Stanhope Smith, class of 1769, endeavored unsuccessfully to quell with the help of local townspeople. After suspending a majority of the student body the College was closed for a period of a few weeks. These developments, accompanied by a growing feeling of distrust between students and trustees, led to the resignation of Smith a few years later. His successor, the Reverend Ashbel Green, class of 1783, had no better success.

Shortly after Green’s assumption of the presidency in 1812 there was an explosion of gunpowder in Nassau Hall, followed two years later by the “big cracker” that consisted “of a hollow log charged with two pounds of gunpowder ... set off behind the central door of Nassau Hall. The discharge cracked the adjacent walls from top to bottom, broke windowpanes in all parts of the building, and hurled a fragment of the log through the door of the Prayer Hall.: (15; p.156) Two years later a religious revival that swept through the College gave false hope to the president and trustees, a majority of whom were clergymen, that sanity has returned to the student body.

An even more serious riot developed on a Sunday morning in the middle of January 1817 which resulted in much damage to the building, the entrances to which had been barred by students nailing shut the doors and windows. The building was under siege. Tutors were imprisoned in their rooms. Firewood was thrown out windows. Outbuildings were set on fire. As a result some 25 students were expelled.

The events led eventually to Green’s resignation and a protracted period, extending until after the Civil War, in which the reputation of the College of New Jersey lost its luster and became overshadowed by the Princeton Theological Seminary.

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Founded in 1812 the Seminary became the voice of Presbyterianism and was more widely known than the College through much of the 19th century. Construction of the original building of the Seminary, which was similar in design to Nassau Hall and later named Alexander Hall, was not begun until 1815. Prior to and during the period of construction the seminary students were housed in Nassau Hall, and until 1826 they also shared in Sunday worship service with the college students.

### *Fire of 1855*

**J**ust as the fire of 1802 destroyed most of the interior of Nassau Hall, so did the fire of 1855. In the latter year, however, there were two additional dormitories to house students, two buildings providing instructional space, and a separate chapel. Despite this supplementary facilities the second fire was as disastrous and almost disrupting as the first.

About 8:30 one night in early March 1855 the cries of fire quickly alerted students and tutors rapidly expanding conflagration that within a few hours consumed most of the interior of Old North, as it was colloquially called. Cold, windy weather and inadequate water pressure hindered the volunteer fire companies from containing the rapidly expanding conflagration. By midnight glowing embers provided a sad sight of the silhouette of this century-old building which in 50 years had suffered two calamitous fires.

Whereas most of the possessions of the individual occupants were lost, much of the valuable contents that belonged to the College, including the portraits, were extricated. Although work on the enlarged library, previously the prayer hall and subsequently the faculty room, was not finally completed for another several years, the building had been largely rebuilt by August 1856 and was reopened at that time for student occupancy in 54 lodging rooms.

The cost of reconstruction amounted to approximately \$50,000 of which only \$12,000 was covered by insurance. When aid from the State of New Jersey was not forthcoming, individual subscriptions provided much of the additional funds. These were largely solicited by Charles Smith Olden, the volunteer treasurer of the College, who was elected governor of the State during the Civil War. Twenty years earlier he had built Drumthwacket as his private residence which now serves as the Governor's Mansion.

To design the reconstruction John Notman of Philadelphia was engaged by the Board of trustees. Notman had previously drawn the plans for both Lowrei House and Prospect, each of which has served as the home of the university president. The latter is now the Faculty Club. Adopting the same Italian Renaissance style that he had incorporated in these two structures, he instituted major revisions for Nassau Hall which basically altered its earlier Colonial and then Federal appearance.



Nassau Hall  
Litograph by F. Childs  
*circa* 1860

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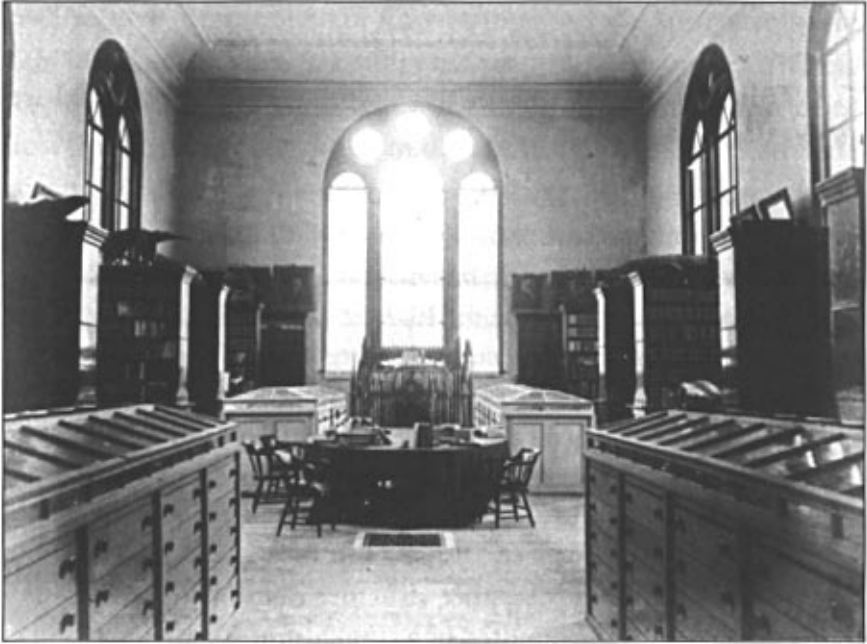
## *Italianate Remodeling*

**W**ith his predilection for the Colonial style in architecture Wertenbaker wrote—

Notman could not resist the temptation to remodel Nassau Hall in conformity with this [Italianate] mode. Fortunately he was restrained by the necessity of using the old walls, but within these limits he did his best to convert Old North into an Italian villa. The central Georgian doorway and the window above it gave way to an arched Florentine entrance. Above this was placed a stone balcony with an arched window reaching up through the cornice into the central pediment. At either end Norton erected square towers, similar to the one on “Prospect”, rising a full story above the roof line and throwing the entire structure out of proportion. The whole was surmounted by a cupola, graceful in design, but much larger than its predecessors .. the result was to dwarf Nassau Hall itself and rob it of the impressiveness which had been so noticeable in former days. (12; pp. 263-264)

Describing the changes that were incorporated inside the building Alexander Leitch, an alumnus in the class of 1924 and successor to Collins as secretary of the University, wrote —

Interior changes again [as in 1802] were chiefly concerned with fireproofing. Iron beams and brick arches were used to support the floors. The roof was made of slate, laid upon and fastened to iron-laths. Most important of all, since the 1855 fire was believed to have been caused by a spark from a stove in a student’s room, nine furnaces were installed to provide central heating. The old prayer hall, no longer needed for that purpose since the erection of a separate chapel, was extended more than twice its previous size for use as the College library. (7; pp. 330-331)



Library  
in Nassau Hall  
1860-1873

One additional and significant alteration to the interior partially addressed the issue of rebellions and riots that were facilitated by the longitudinal, brick surfaced corridors that extended from one end to the other. Partitions were installed that prevented such traditional escapades as the rolling cannon balls the full length of the former long expanse.

The reconstruction was completed in 1860 when the former prayer hall had been extended at the rear of the building to provide for the relocation from Stanhope Hall of the library which at the time included a collection of slightly over ten thousand books. In this enlarged room, which now measured 74 feet long by 36 feet wide with a height of 30 feet, the portraits were rehung and shelving was installed. However, no desks for use of the students were provided since the room, open only

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during several hours two days a week, was merely a storeroom for books and not a palce to study.

## *Post Civil War Exterior Alterations and Traditions*

W ithin a year of the completion of the restoration of Nassau Hall in 1860, the nation was engulfed in a military conflict, the influence of which extended throughout the breadth of the land. Nassau Hall was not physically harmed by the war, as it had been at the time of the American Revolution, but the enrollment in the College was immediately affected by the withdrawal of its southern students who had historically constituted a large proportion of the undergraduate enrollment.

In spite of the reduction in the size of the already small student body and the distractions and divisions caused by the bitter Civil War, a loyalty to Princeton by its alumni was demonstrated when the 50 member graduating class of 1866 donated a clock with four faces to replace a single faced clock that had originally been installed sometime after the restoration of Nassau Hall in 1802. In 1864, when these same students were undergraduates, a tradition was established by which enterprising freshmen endeavored to reach the cupola and undetected make off with the clapper from the bell before it would be scheduled to ring. This tradition was ended when a few years ago the clapper was removed so that there would no longer be temptation for students to undertake the risk entailed in climbing on a precarious roof, and, if injured, then filing in this litigious era a multi-million law suit against the University.

The bell itself has never been stolen but several have had to be replaced. In both the fires of 1802 and 1855 the bells were destroyed. The replacement for the latter lasted until 1955 when it was supplanted by the current bell. By 1962 an electric timer

was installed and replaced the bell rope that had for decades been tugged by a campus policeman. But now even the timer is quiet, since there is no clapper to be timed.

While some traditions associated with Nassau Hall have been perished, others continued to survive for many years. One may observe such a tradition by walking around the building and noting the stones that have been carved with class numerals. Over 75 classes, commencing with the class of 1870, have been so memorialized when at commencement time they planted ivy at the base of the stones.

Class loyalty has also been demonstrated by the two tigers that sit astride the front steps. Originally two lions, which were donated at the time of the graduation by the members of the class of 1879, graced this special place. The lions had been designed by Frederick-Auguste Bartholdi, who had also designed the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. A few years later, in

the 1880s, New York sports writers applied the term “tigers” to Princeton athletic teams in recognition of their uniforms which contained the colors of orange and black. Recognizing the incongruity of lions at the entrance of Nassau Hall, in 1911 the class of 1879 donated the two tigers that were designed by A. Phinister Proctor. The lions were removed at that time to steps of Seventy-Nine Hall, named for the class that was also its donor.



Face of Tiger  
on front steps of  
Nassau Hall

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Another tradition intimately associated with Nassau Hall since 1922 is commencement. From 1764 to 1843 graduation exercises for the College were held in the First (now the Nassau) Presbyterian Church at the end of the harvest season in the fall. The event was not only a time of rejoicing for the graduating students and their families, but also became a public and boisterous holiday for the residents of the surrounding area. In 1844, in order to remove the bacchanalian atmosphere from this more formal occasion, the faculty recommended to the trustees that the date of the graduation exercises be advanced to June where they have remained ever since; that is, until 1995 when commencement was held at the end of May.

The Presbyterian Church building continued to be the site of commencement until 1892, at which time Alexander Hall was constructed and provided an auditorium that was more commodious for the expanding graduating classes. Here the ceremonies remained until 1922 when the number of participants became too large even for Alexander Hall. It was then decided that the campus in front of Nassau Hall could be converted to an impressive outdoor auditorium. Subsequently, now for more than 70 years, with the exception of the few years that have been marred by inclement weather, the members of each graduating class, their families, friends and guess have enjoyed the pleasure of attending commencement exercises on the front lawn of the University. At the same time those attendance have been able to survey Princeton's national historic landmark as it has appeared following the Civil War; that is with one exception.

Since the 1860s the single major external change that Nassau Hall has undergone has been the reduction in the height of the "pepper pots." These were so called in derision because of the incompatibility of the towers that Notman affixed to each end of Nassau Hall at the time of its restoration after the fire of

1855. Moses Taylor Pyne, class of 1877, unquestionably one of the most influential men ever to serve as a trustee of the University, concluded that the exterior appearance and architectural proportions of Nassau hall could be improved if the height of these stairwells at the ends of the building were reduced to roof level. Pyne was very conscious of architectural beauty, especially with respect to the University campus and his personal home at Drumthwacket. Acquiring Drumthwacket following the deaths of Charles Smith Olden and Olden's widow, Pyne had converted that property into a magnificent country state. His recommendations for the improvement in the aesthetic appearance of Nassau Hall were implemented in 1905. With that one exception the exterior of Nassau Hall has remained basically unaltered since its restoration following the fire of 1855. In contrast, the interior of the building has undergone many alterations.



Nassau Hall  
Photograph *circa* 1870

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## *Interior Modifications*

Commencing in the latter part of the 19th and throughout the 20th centuries many modifications to the interior were necessitated by changing demands for the use of the building. These later, more drastic changes were preceded by minor adjustments that were made in the 18th century.

In 1756 when Nassau Hall was initially occupied, student feeding was provided entirely within the building. A few years later a connecting addition was constructed where meals were served, thus leaving space in the basement for the housing of additional students. By the beginning of the 19th century, until the fire of 1855, all meals were prepared and served in separate building, called Philosophical Hall so named because it also housed the philosophical (scientific) apparatus, as well as classrooms, and an observatory. Thus Nassau Hall was used primarily as a dormitory for students during most of the 19th century. Despite action by the Board of Trustees in 1878 that declared students should no longer be housed in the building, a decreasing number of undergraduates did continue to reside in Nassau Hall until the academic year 1902-1903.

Throughout the entire existence of this historic building one area has never been employed for dormitory purposes; namely, the prayer hall. It was however, a temporary hospital for the wounded during the American Revolution. After the room had been expanded following the fire of 1855, it housed both the portrait gallery and the library, which consisted of some 10,400 books. The college catalogues of the period noted that "the library was opened on Monday of each week for the accommodation of the students," and later extended to one hour each weekday. In this location the library was maintained from 1860 until the construction in 1873 of Chancellor Green Library, located immediately to the east of Nassau Hall where Philosophi-

cal Hall had been situated. When the library had been relocated the room was converted to serve as repository for the E.M. Museum of Geology and Archeology.

This natural history museum, which included mineralogy and paleontology among its several departments, soon became too large to be accommodated in the former library space. Part of the growing collections were moved and a skylight installed in the roof, similar to the one over the room that had been converted from the library to house the museum. In this manner prior to the installation of electricity some years later, adequate illumination was provided for the archeological and geological exhibits. Surrounding the exhibits on the second and third floors of the east wing were offices for both the registrar and some members of the faculty. When a new building, named for



Museum of Geology and Archeology  
in Nassau Hall  
1875-1909

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Professor Arnold Guyot who had started the museum, was completed in 1909, the museum was moved there.

As fewer students were assigned to live in Nassau Hall during the latter half of the 19th century, the former dormitory space was reassigned for the use of classrooms, faculty offices, and laboratories for biology and psychology. Subsequently, to meet the demands of an expanding university, additional academic buildings were constructed which provided facilities for the classrooms and laboratories that were removed from Nassau Hall, and thus even more space became available for the rapidly growing administration. In 1911 the first administrative offices were located in the building, and by 1914 all the administrative offices of the University were located there with the exception of the treasurer and business offices, which were situated in Stanhope Hall.

By the 1960s the pressures for administrative offices in Nassau Hall had increased to such an extent that major changes were required. The east wing of Nassau Hall was reconstructed to provide for the installation of a floor over the open space from which the museum had been evacuated in 1909. The offices that provided services to undergraduate students were moved to West College. A new office Building, New South, was built to house some administrative functions that had been located in Nassau Hall (or Old North as it was called in earlier years), in addition to several other locations.

Throughout the many transformations of the interior of the east wing of the historic structure, the west end with its brick flooring has remained very similar to the way in which it was restored after the fire of 1855.

## *Stately Rooms*

**T**he two rooms that are seen and admired by most individuals are Memorial Hall and Faculty Room. They were designed to be dignified and stately, and for most individuals the rooms create such impressions.

Memorial Hall was created after World War I to remember those Princetonians who had died in this nation's wars. The room was remodeled by Day and Klauder and dedicated on Alumni Day, February 21, 1920. On the wall next to the Faculty Room was placed a Latin inscription *Memoria Aeterne Retinet Alma Mater filios Pro Patria Animas Ponentes*. (Alma Mater keeps in eternal memory her sons who laid down their lives for their country.) The marble panels contain the names of 10 from the American Revolution, one from the War of 1812, 70 from the War between States (35 from the south, 35 from the north), 152 from World War I, 353 from World War II, 29 from the Korean War, and 24 from the war in Southeast Asia.

The previous prayer hall, then the college library, and subsequently the museum was redesigned as the Faculty Room by Raleigh C. Gildersleeve, who had earlier been engaged by Moses Taylor Pyne in the reconstruction of Drumthwacket and had also served as the architect for several of the upperclass eating clubs on Prospect Avenue. The room was dedicated on November 2, 1906 on which occasion the former president of the United States, Grover Cleveland, then resident of Princeton and trustee of the University, presented the dedicatory address.

This impressively splendid room, paneled with oak imported from England, was remodeled after the British House of Commons. The two most influential individuals effecting this decision were Woodrow Wilson, class of 1879, who had been elected president of the university in 1902 and was an authority on the parliamentary form of government and Pyne, who had been



Memorial Hall  
in Nassau Hall



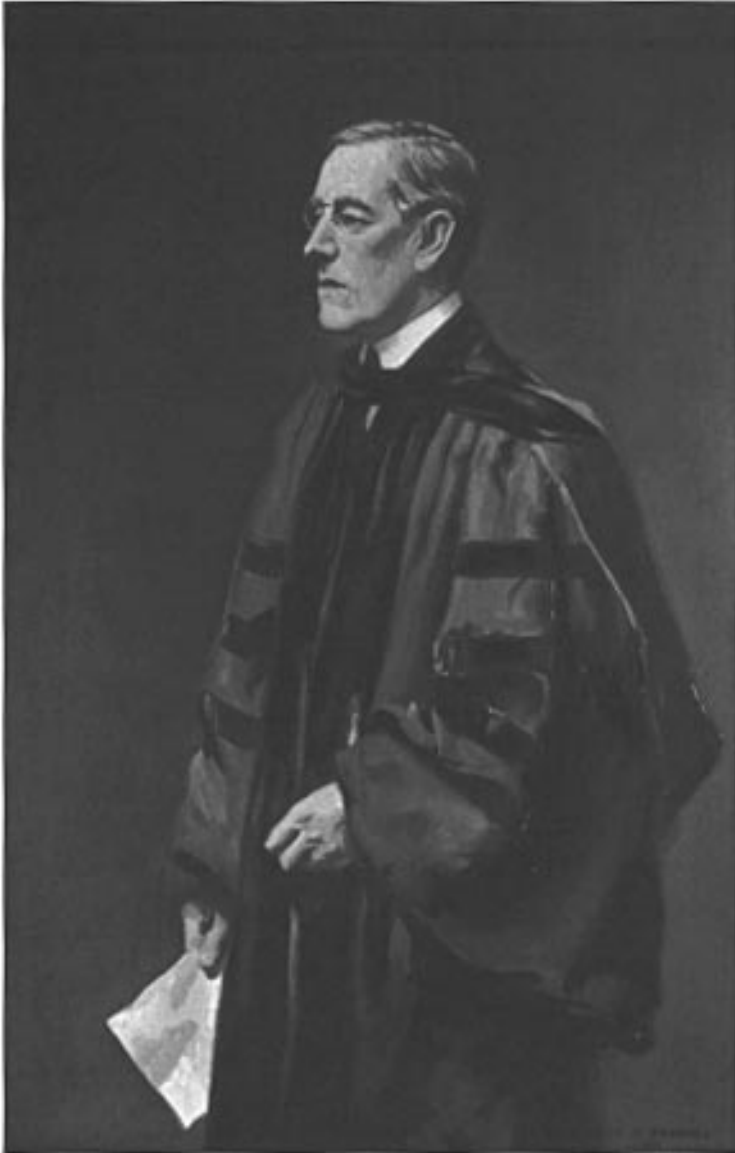
Faculty Room  
in Nassau Hall

elected trustee in 1884 at a very young age and was devoted of English traditions.

The Faculty Room, which is now used for meetings of the Faculty, the quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees, and with special permission for meetings of other organizations, such as the Old Guard of Princeton, also serves as a portrait gallery. Although seldom in recent years has the University awarded honorary degrees at times others than a commencement day, when in the past such degrees have been awarded in camera the setting has usually been in the Faculty Room.

Before enlargement to its present size the prayer hall was the site of memorable events. In the 18th century the English evangelist, George Whitefield, preached there one morning before dawn. In 1836, three years after Andrew Jackson, followed by Henry Clay, had visited the room, it served as the site of the funeral service for Aaron Burr, Jr., class of 1772, the duplicitous and guileful vice-president of the United States (1801-1805). Funeral services had also been held here for early presidents of the College: Aaron Burr, Senior, Samuel Davies, Jonathan Edwards, John Witherspoon, as well as for Richard Stockton on his death of 1781. With the exception of Jonathan Dickinson, Samuel Finley and Woodrow Wilson, who was buried at the National Cathedral in Washington, all presidents of Princeton have been buried in the local community cemetery.

Until 1878 each president, commencing with Aaron Burr, Senior, resided in the President's House which was built at the same time as Nassau Hall. Later this house located at the northwest corner of Nassau Hall became the residence of successive Deans of the Faculty. In 1968 it was renamed Maclean House in honor of John Maclean, Jr., class of 1816, Princeton's 10th president who founded the Alumni Association, the offices of which now occupy the building.



Woodrow Wilson

Class of 1879

President of Princeton University

1902-1908

President of the United States

1913-1921

Painted by Sidney E. Dickinson (1890-1980)

Gift of William Church Osborn, Class of 1883, and friends,  
on the occasion of Whig Hall's 160th anniversary, in 1929

In 1878 the College received possession of Prospect, a house located at the center of the campus and designed by John Notman, the architect who supervised the reconstruction of Nassau Hall in 1855. Prospect then served as the home of James McCosh, the 11th president, and his successors until 1968 when Robert F. Goheen, class of 1940 and the 16th president, moved to Walter Lowrie House, also designed by Notman.

### *Princeton's Historic Landmark*

**I**n the extensive literature that has been written about the history of Princeton, reference is invariably made to Nassau Hall and its part in the history of this nation. Its historical importance was noted by the United States Postal Department when in 1956, on the 200th anniversary of the construction of the building, a three cents commemorative stamp was issued. Its national importance was reinforced in October, 1960, when it was declared a national Historic Landmark by the United States Department of Interior.

Visitor came from far and near to see this historic site and tour the beautiful campus. But for none does Nassau Hall retain more vivid meaning than for the alumni of Princeton University who express their devotion when they sing-

*Going back, going back,  
Going back to Nassau Hall  
Going back, going back,  
To the best old place of all.*



Cannon Green  
at rear of Nassau Hall  
*circa 1900*

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*Portraits in the Faculty Room*

1995

PRIOR TO 1896 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY WAS OFFICIALLY  
THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

**Jonathan Belcher**, Governor of Province of New Jersey (1747-1757)

**Elias Boudinot**, Trustee of College of New Jersey (1772-1821), and  
President of the Continental Congress (1782-1783)

**William Gordon Bowen**, Ph. D. Princeton University, 1958,  
seventeenth President of the University (1972-1988)

**Aaron Burr, Sr.**, second President of College of New Jersey  
(1748-1757)

**James Carnahan**, class of 1800, ninth President of College of New  
Jersey (1823-1854)

**Ira Condict**, Class of 1784, Trustee of College of New Jersey  
(1804-1809), President *pro tem*, Rutgers University (1794-1810)

**Samuel Davies**, fourth President of College of New Jersey  
(1759-1761)

**Harold Willis Dodds**, A.M., Princeton University, 1914, and fifteenth  
President of the University

**Edward Dickinson Duffield**, Class of 1892, Acting President of  
Princeton University (1932-1933)

**Jonathan Edwards**, third President of College of New Jersey (1758)

**Oliver Ellsworth**, Class of 1766, Chief Justice of United States  
Supreme Court (1796-1801)

**Samuel Finley**, fifth President of College of New Jersey (1761-1766)

**George II**, King of Great Britain (1727-1760)

**Robert Francis Goheen**, Class of 1940, Ph.D., Princeton  
University, 1948, and sixteenth President of the University  
(1957-1972)

**Ashbel Green**, Class of 1783, eighth President of College of New  
Jersey (1812-1822)

**John Grier Hibben**, Class of 1882 and Ph.D., Princeton University, 1893, and fourteenth President of the University (1912-1932)

**Philip Lindsly**, Class of 1804, Vice President (1817-1824) and Acting President of College of New Jersey (1822-1823)

**John Maclean, Jr.**, Class of 1816, tenth President of College of New Jersey (1854-1868)

**James Madison**, Class of 1771, fourth President of United States (1809-1817)

**James McCosh**, eleventh President of College of New Jersey (1868-1888)

**Francis Landey Patton**, twelfth President of College of New Jersey and of Princeton University (1888-1902)

**William Paterson**, Class of 1763, Trustee of College of New Jersey (1787-1803), and Associate Justice of United States Supreme Court (1793-1806)

**Ebenezer Pemberton**, Trustee of College of New Jersey (1746-1754)

**Benjamin Rush**, Class of 1760, Signer of Declaration of Independence

**Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant**, Class of 1762, and Member of Continental Congress (1795-1812)

**Samuel Stanhope Smith**, Class of 1769, seventh President of College of New Jersey (1795-1812)

**Richard Stockton**, Class of 1748, Signer of Declaration of Independence, Member of Continental Congress, 1776-1777, and Trustee of College of New Jersey, 1757-1781

**Gilbert Tennent**, Trustee of College of New Jersey (1746-1764)

**George Washington**, first President of United States (1789-1797)

**William III**, King of Great Britain (1689-1702)

**Woodrow Wilson**, Class of 1879, thirteenth President of Princeton University (1902-1910), and twenty-eighth President of United States (1913-1921)

**John Witherspoon**, sixth President of College of New Jersey (1768-1794), and Signer of Declaration of Independence

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