COMMONS

Conceived & Built By
THOMAS COCHRAN 1890

With Additional Support From
NATHANIEL STEVENS 1876
RUSSELL ALGER JR. 1893

&

DWIGHT MORROW

MCMXXX

Refurbished In 1981 With Support From
THOMAS MELLON EVANS

&

EDWARD P. EVANS 1960
PARESKY COMMONS

Restored & Renovated By
LINDA K. & DAVID S. PARESKY 1956

With Additional Support From
THOMAS C. ISRAEL 1962
DAVID & VIOLA CHAN
&
CLASS OF 1959
CLASS OF 2005
CLASS OF 2009

MMIX
In 2009 we celebrate the transformation of Commons into Paresky Commons. The beauty and grandeur of the 1930 dining hall have been preserved, yet the building has been transformed to meet the programming and dietary requirements of a new century. We owe Commons primarily to the generosity of Thomas Cochran, Class of 1890. Paresky Commons was made possible primarily by the generosity of Linda K. and David S. Paresky, Class of 1956.

 Commons of old was conceived in the boom years of the late 1920s, in the wake of the Academy's 150th anniversary celebration. Paresky Commons was planned during the boom years of this century's first decade, following the Academy's 225th anniversary. Both opened at a time of economic downturn. In each case, the vision of a prosperous beginning shaped the outcome fundamentally, preserving that vision through the lean times and for generations to come. As Thomas Cochran wrote, “The influence that beauty will have on the young lives of those to come is beyond calculation. We must carry on even if, for the moment, some of our improvements seem to be luxuries….We are building for a thousand years. Let's never forget it.”

The economic woes of 1930 or 2009 pale by comparison to the dangers and upheavals impacting Andover in 1776. Revolution raged. In that year, young Samuel Phillips Jr. took up the patriot cause, built a gunpowder mill to supply Washington's troops and launched his public career. In that same fateful year, Phillips envisioned a boarding school to teach “the great end and real business of living.” A practical visionary, he wrote about the need to provide students “a simple Diet [and] proper Exercise...which have a great Tendency to preserve Health.” Although Samuel Phillips hoped to house students in dormitories and feed them in a dining hall supplied from its own garden and adjacent farm, that was not possible when the Academy opened in April 1778. Students were housed and fed in homes approved by the Trustees.

The Academy's first dining hall was built in 1809, seven years after Phillips died. It accommodated students in both the new Andover Theological Seminary and Phillips Academy. During the 1830s, the Board erected the first PA dormitories; Academy students began taking meals in “commons” dining halls or, if they chose, in student-organized eating clubs. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Board was determined to eliminate boardinghouses and eating clubs. New and better dormitories were built and the first major dining hall was created in 1902, in today’s Bulfinch Hall. “The Beanery” to the boys, it was the primary dining hall on campus until 1930, when Thomas Cochran’s much larger Commons opened. The Cochran Commons underwent a substantial upgrade in 1980-81. The first major overhauling of the 1930 facility occurred in 2008-09, creating what is today Paresky Commons.

That is the skeleton of Andover's dining history. Let us bring it to life, beginning at the beginning, in order to better understand “boarding” at this old boarding school. ✷
Upper left: Commons construction, September 30, 1929; Phillips Academy Archives.
BEEF, BERRIES & BLUNT’S

During the eighteenth century, the “simple diet” Samuel Phillips advocated was provided at the homes on and around Andover Hill where students boarded. Josiah Quincy, a Phillips relation, was one of those original thirteen students who started school here in the spring of 1778. Quincy boarded a mile from campus with Reverend French, pastor of the South Church and an Academy Trustee. “The family table was sufficient, but simple,” Quincy wrote, “the food being of the most common kind. Beef and pork were the standing dishes, with an ample supply of vegetables. As to bread, there being little or no intercourse with the South [due to the British naval blockade], rye and Indian bread was our only supply, and that not always thoroughly baked.”

Until the 1840s, Phillips Academy was open throughout the summer months. In the early days, during that season of plenty, the boys supplemented boardinghouse meals by foraging in the surrounding countryside. On an August day in 1799, eight-year-old Samuel F.B. Morse wrote home: “I have as many blackberries as I want. I go and pick them myself.” In June 1819, ten-year-old James Burrill reported to his father, Senator James Burrill of Rhode Island, “There are a great many whortleberries and blackberries here. I could pick a quart in a few minutes.” Foraging had its hazards: in the same letter James informed Senator Burrill that he had been “poisoned” (that is, he got into poison ivy) while berry picking.

Blunt’s was an eighteenth-century inn and tavern, the only one on Andover Hill. Off-limits to Academy boys, it has a place in this account because Blunt’s stood where Paresky Commons stands. Built in about 1765, it continued as a waystop and watering hole into the 1820s, afterward serving as a boardinghouse. It was demolished in 1928 to make way for Commons. For that reason, one may view the heritage of hospitality on our dining hall’s site as dating to the days of young King George III.

Why a tavern in what was then a sparsely settled location? One must understand the wholly different geographic orientation of Andover in the eighteenth century. Today, Salem Street is a road to nowhere in particular. Two-and-a-half centuries ago, it was the primary route to the center of business, law and politics: Salem, Essex County’s seat and leading port. Blunt’s Tavern marked the inland terminus of this highroad. Further indications of the significance of this spot atop Andover Hill surrounded the tavern. The town militia’s training field was just down the road; today it is the site of the Memorial Bell Tower. A small brick powder house stood nearby. Andover’s minutemen stored military supplies here, and they gathered here for training or before setting out to meet an emergency. Innkeeper Isaac Blunt owned the training field and dedicated it to militia use. He had a vested interest in bringing the local militia to Andover Hill, for where better to take refreshment on training day or before battle than at his tavern?
Blunt's Tavern, ca. 1765-1928; Phillips Academy Archives.
PIOUS LIBERALITY

Two hundred years ago, Andover’s first dining hall, the Seminary Commons, opened. It was also the first building erected by an alumnum: Col. John Phillips, Class of 1783, son of Samuel Phillips. The impetus for its construction was the founding of the Andover Theological Seminary, first Protestant seminary in America. A bastion of New England Puritanism, for complex religious and political reasons, the founders decided the Seminary would not flourish as a stand-alone institution with its own charter and board, but must become a creature of the Phillips Academy Trustees, all of whom, like the Phillips family, were old-line Calvinists. In 1809, Seminary students, their library, chapel and classroom were housed in newly built Phillips Hall – today’s Foxcroft Hall – a gift of John’s mother, widow Phebe Foxcroft Phillips. When the Trustees met in September 1809, they thanked Madame Phillips and her son for their “pious liberality” in accommodating the new institution.

Foxcroft Hall and the Seminary Commons were erected by Oliver Holden, a Charlestown architect and builder, poet, composer, preacher and some-time business partner of John Phillips. The Commons complex was described as a wood-frame steward’s house with a dining hall wing “40 feet by 20, a kitchen [and] 2 fire chambers; together with a barn 40 by 25, and a contiguous woodhouse 50 by 18.” Commons was staffed by a steward, his wife “and three active women.” The steward took charge of ordering supplies, procuring wood and planting a vegetable garden. The women cooked, washed and cleaned. Here Academy boys and theologues took their meals.

During meals an orator read Bible verses and theological texts. The dining hall was severely plain and unheated, but initially the food was well prepared, varied and plentiful. That began to change in the 1820s, in order to economize, for the Theological Seminary charged neither tuition nor board. Legends abound about how meager and monotonous the fare became, with molasses becoming a mainstay of the menu. The most famous tale concerns a theologule who took sick and went to a doctor. The doctor proceeded to bleed his patient, only to discover nothing but syrup in the young man’s veins. One can imagine how happy Andover boys were to escape the Seminary Commons.

And yet, there was a certain fitness here, recalling one of Oliver Holden’s most popular and enduring hymns, “They who seek the Throne of Grace.” The religious spirit present in Seminary Commons transcended all:

When our earthly comforts fail,
When the woes of life prevail,
’Tis the time for earnest prayer,
God is present everywhere.
Andover Hill, ca. 1828. The Seminary Commons complex stands low on the horizon at the left, partially hidden behind Foxcroft Hall. Beside Foxcroft stands Pearson Hall, in its original location, and to the right of Pearson stands Bartlett Hall. Francis Alexander lithograph; Andover Historical Society.
OF COMMONS & CLUBS

A $15,000 bequest received in 1827 from the estate of William Phillips allowed the Trustees to expand. The original academy, devoted to the classics, was joined by a second, experimental school, the English Academy & Teachers Seminary. In the 1830s, modest dormitories were built for both academies, dormitories designed to house scholarship students, and each academy had a Spartan dining commons. The “Latin Commons” occupied a house on the west side of Main Street at the southwest corner of Phillips Street; the English Commons occupied Clement House. Farms connected to both provided provisions and work for needy students. “I board in commons,” wrote Davis Smith in 1834, “For breakfast and supper we have wheat bread with milk or molasses – of each, one may choose. I take milk in the morning and molasses at night. For dinner we have rice or Indian pudding, pork, fish, potatoes, beans, etc.”

In contrast to the solemn religiosity of Seminary Commons, hijinks reigned in the new academy dining halls. Meal times fostered not godly introspection but camaraderie. Decades before athletics came to Andover Hill, unsupervised, raucous, boy-friendly dining halls promoted friendship, toughening and school pride.

This was all the more true of student-managed eating clubs. They came into being in the middle of the nineteenth century. Some offered even simpler fare than the dining commons. Most provided better food at a considerably higher cost. In September 1864, Horace Deming provided his mother a bill of fare for his eating club: Sunday breakfast, chocolate & toast; dinner, cold corned beef, apple pie & tea; supper, tea & cake. Monday breakfast, corn cake & coffee; dinner, roast beef with potatoes; supper, tea. Tuesday breakfast, milk toast & coffee; dinner, beefsteak & potatoes; supper, applesauce. Wednesday breakfast, hot rolls & coffee; dinner, beans; supper, tea. Thursday breakfast, toast & chocolate; dinner, boiled dish, corn, beets & turnips; supper, tea. Friday breakfast, hash & coffee; dinner, fried fish; supper, tea. Saturday breakfast, biscuit & coffee; dinner, beefsteak & tomatoes; supper, tea & applesauce. Bread & butter always. Potatoes for dinner. Milk for breakfast & supper, except when we have chocolate. Pudding twice per week & pie three times per week. To supplement the above, Horace informed his mother he bought a watermelon and asked her to please send peaches.

Nineteenth-century Andover students created a unique dining-hall vocabulary. Pancakes were turn-over-johns, penwipes or scalers; shredded wheat biscuits were bath mats; buns gems or duffies; milk was squee; milk pitchers were cows or calves, depending on size; butter was wax; coffee mud; cheese soup; chicken crow; pork snouter; hash whonose. Pancakes were a universal favorite, consumed in vast quantities despite being “thick, spongy, pale yellow, and, like so many people in this world, cold and tough on the outside, but with somewhere a faintly warm heart, if one had only the patience to probe for it.” Pancakes also made Frisbee-like missiles, tossed gracefully from one table to the next. It was all part of the fun – an important component of the Andover experience.
Top: A Commons toast; The New Senior at Andover, 1891.
Bottom: Members of the Union Dining Club, 1872; Phillips Academy Archives.
In the present era, recycling commands great favor. At Andover, we have been recycling for centuries. The first Phillips Academy schoolhouse was a recycled joiner's shop. Paresky Commons exemplifies recycling.

But there is no building on campus approaching the recycling “cred” of Bulfinch Hall. Built to house the Academy in 1818, it served that purpose until 1842. From 1842 to 1865 it held graduation exercises and special events. It was then retrofitted as a gymnasium. The gym was gutted by fire in 1896. At first the building was simply roofed-in and floors installed; the unfinished interior became warm-up space for athletic teams and the temporary repository for the Peabody archeological collections until the “Department of Archeology” building was completed in 1901. In 1902 Bulfinch was again transformed, fitted up as a dining hall, with a service wing added on the east. It was a dining hall until 1930, then stood empty until 1936, when it was again gutted and retrofitted, this time to become the English Department known to all.

The need for a proper dining hall – proper in every sense – was articulated in 1901 by Harvard theologian and Andover Trustee James Hardy Ropes, a graduate of both PA and the Theological Seminary. “The demoralizing arrangements of the Commons dining hall...have lately been vividly set before the Board by the Treasurer. [T]he daily life of...the boys is largely out of the control of the Administration...with the result of serious moral evils and constant danger of greater ones. I believe it is absolutely essential...that the boys' life should be brought again into the hands of the authorities...and a suitable dining hall [be built]...where the influences shall be civilizing and not the reverse.”

The dining incarnation of Bulfinch was designed by Guy Lowell, whose first project on campus was the Peabody Museum. When the new dining hall opened in September of 1902, it boasted electric lights, a state-of-the-art kitchen, including a dishwasher and a bakery. Students were charged $3 per week. That bought milk and tea, bread and butter, cereal, boiled vegetables and soups. Everything else was à la carte. A 1913 dinner menu lists pickles at 3¢; chicken croquettes, 8¢; broiled mackerel, 10¢; minced ham and scrambled eggs, 7¢; cold roast beef, 10¢; prunes or bananas, 2¢; an orange, 3¢; grapefruit or apple pie, 5¢.

A year after Bulfinch became the new dining commons, Oscar Fay Adams published Some Famous American Schools. In his chapter on Andover, Fay notes that “the dining hall is managed by a committee made up of the treasurer, a member of the faculty and three students, the general oversight being left almost entirely to the students. As a factor in the promotion of proper school spirit the dining hall has proved of great value.”

Decidedly student turf, habits nurtured in the old dining commons and eating clubs – loud banter, horseplay and the food games beloved by boys – were grafted to the new establishment. Tellingly, the boys gave Bulfinch an appropriately inappropriate name: the Beanery. It stuck.
First-floor dining hall in “the Beanery” (Bulfinch Hall), 1902; Phillips Academy Archives.
THOMAS COCHRAN’S COMMONS

“What the historian of the school will doubtless call the Golden Decade,” editorialized the July 1932 issue of the Andover Bulletin, “has now faded into the dim past….Thrift has become the slogan of the hour.” It was during that “exuberantly romantic” decade that the core of campus attained its present form and grandeur. Commons is part of that legacy. Like much of the rest, it was made possible by Trustee Thomas Cochran, Class of 1890, Andover’s greatest patron.

Cochran had two key partners in his Andover building program: architect Charles Adams Platt, who designed all the buildings Cochran commissioned; and the Academy treasurer James Sawyer, Cochran’s Andover classmate and Yale roommate. As treasurer in that era, Sawyer had charge of all the business matters of the school, including the physical plant and fundraising. In a thank-you note dated January 6, 1930 from Platt to Sawyer, the architect wrote, “I believe that T. Cochran, J. Sawyer & C. Platt make a notable triumvirate. I am proud to be of it.”

The Cochran Commons addressed four ends: making it possible to feed the entire school at once in an Academy owned and run facility; encouraging class unity by creating four separate dining rooms, one per class; providing an impressive setting for meals; and completing the quadrangle soon known as Flagstaff Court. Charles Platt began design work on Commons in the summer of 1927, construction began in the summer of 1928 and Commons opened in September 1930. In the following month, the Andover Bulletin observed, “The new Dining Hall…is vastly superior to its predecessor….Traditionally critical, the boys would doubtless grumble over the carte du jour at Pierre’s or Delmonico’s, if obliged to patronize those restaurants day after day. But the Andover authorities are taking every precaution to ensure palatable and nourishing food….At this moment, the dining hall, fascinating in its architecture, centrally located, and perfectly equipped, seems to fill a long-felt want.”

“The authorities” did not want Beanery behavior in Commons. On opening night, a newly hired hostess appeared to quell an incipient riot. A bun flew in her direction. She caught the bun, then hurled it back. The boys cheered. Yet, despite the efforts of the hostess and many others, mealtime manners changed little. The Phillipian took issue with efforts to teach waiters how to serve properly and declared students would not be compelled to call “the New Beanery” Commons. The 1942 Pot Pourri contained a “Dictionary of the Andover Language” in which “Beanery” was defined: “A large building containing four separate feeding stations for the inmates; called the Commons by the faculty; is the scene of a battle for existence three times a day; constitutes a problem which has worried and annoyed the Trustees, faculty, students and parents for years; the manners of eating are similar to the Zoo in Brooklyn, reports Mr. Shields, an authority.”

Adolescent humor aside, students loved Cochran’s Commons as no Andover dining hall was ever loved before, and that affection has continued to the present day.
Commons, 1930; Phillips Academy Archives.
The 1930 Commons served Andover admirably for better than 60 years. During much of that time, it was the domain of the curmudgeonly, chain-smoking, eagle-eyed Bob Leete, ever vigilant for malefactors attempting to purloin an extra piece of pie. Bob Leete was said to have supervised 10,000,000 meals.

By the late 1990s, Commons was outmoded and worn. Nothing substantive occurred, however, until Linda and David Paresky, anticipating David’s 50th Reunion in 2006, stepped forward in 2004 with an unrestricted $10,000,000 gift. The Trustees decided to apply it to the task of creating a dining hall – and a dining experience – tailored to the twenty-first century. A committee of faculty, students and staff deliberated for a year, investigating dining halls and community centers at schools and colleges, consulting experts, conducting a survey of the Andover community and brainstorming.

The survey generated widespread participation. Respondents overwhelmingly favored preserving the historic character of Commons, from paneled rooms to steps rubbed-down by a thousand thousand footfalls. Respondents called for improved food options, less crowding and noise, longer hours, a congenial setting for students and faculty to meet informally, wireless Internet capability, better lighting and air, an improved student hangout to replace the “dark and grimy” Ryley Room, outdoor gathering spaces, more varied and flexible seating options. The Administration and Board, aided by a trio of committees and a team of consultants, shaped the program and mix of improvements. The final design was created by Schwartz/Silver Architects, led by Robert Silver. Construction began in December 2007 and was completed in the spring of 2009.

Paresky Commons is remarkable. The most important changes include two large and handsome serveries replacing the four installed in 1981; opening the first-floor servery to the lobby; creating a new stair to the basement-level student center; transforming and doubling the size of the former Ryley Room; making the building fully handicapped accessible; creating three large terraces; and providing a variety of seating options in the dining halls, including a café with its own menu and atmosphere. Preserving and restoring the historic character of the building was central to every aspect of the renovation. Even the most radical interventions – like opening the lobby to the servery beyond – were done so artfully as to seem no change at all. Paresky Commons is not only a recycled building, recycling and sustainability were mantras throughout the design and construction, and remain mantras operationally.

We have come a long way from the “simple diet” Samuel Phillips envisioned for students as he daydreamed about launching a school in 1776. What remains unchanged is the centrality of philanthropy to the existence and success of his school and the belief, articulated by Phillips, that “Youth is the important period, on the improvement or neglect of which depend the most important consequences for the individual and the community.” To Samuel Phillips, to his son John, to his cousin William, to Thomas Cochran, and now to Linda and David Paresky, we owe our thanks. Each in turn decided to invest in youth.
PARESKY COMMONS PLANNING

2004 STUDY COMMITTEE
Paul D. Murphy '84, Committee Chair, Math Instructor, Cluster Dean
Daniel B. Adler '05, School President
Kathryn A. Birecki, Athletic Trainer, Commons Liaison Committee Member
David Chase, Director of Stewardship
Michael J. Ebner ’70, Chaplain, Director of Alumni Affairs
Marlys A. Edwards, English Instructor, Dean of Students
Cynthia R. Efinger, Director of Student Activities
Aya S. Murata, CAMD Staff, House Counselor
Robert Noyes, Director of Food Services
Morissa G. Sobelson '05, Vice-President of Student Council
Craig Thorn IV, English Instructor, House Counselor

2005 PLANNING COMMITTEE
David Chase, Director of Stewardship
Marlys A. Edwards, Dean of Students
Scott Flanagan, Director of Food Services
Paul D. Murphy ’84, Cluster Dean
Henry Moss, AIA, Bruner/Cott & Associates, Consultant

2006-2009 BUILDING COMMITTEES
Stephen D. Carter, Chief Financial Officer
David Chase, Director of Stewardship
Marlys A. Edwards, Dean of Students
Scott Flanagan, Director of Food Services
James H. Freeman '07, Vice President of Student Council
Paul D. Murphy '84, Dean of Students
Paul Robarge, Senior Food Service Director
Keith A. Robinson '96, Instructor in Biology & Chemistry, House Counselor
Valerie A. Roman, Director of Technology
Daniel F. Silk '07, School President

"Paresky Commons & Its Heritage" booklet: David Chase, author; Ellen Hardy, designer; Ruth Quattlebaum, archivist.
PARESKY COMMONS PROJECT TEAM

DESIGN, ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

Schwartz/Silver Architects
Robert H. Silver, FAIA, Principal in Charge
Peter Kleiner, AIA, Project Architect
Randolph Meiklejohn, AIA
Angela Ward Hyatt, AIA
Zackary Craun

Michael Boucher Landscape Architecture
Michael Boucher, Principal in Charge

Structural Engineer: LeMessurier Consultants
MEP Engineer: Cosentini Associates, Inc.
Civil Engineer: Nitsch Engineering, Inc.

General Contractor: Consigli Construction Company, Inc.
Anthony Consigli, President
Todd McCabe, Project Executive
Eric Thiboutot, Project Manager
Michael Boucher, Superintendent I
Tim Barry, Superintendent II

CONSULTANTS

Food Services: Ricca Newmark Design
Preservation Technology Associates, Inc.
Lighting: One Lux Studio

MANAGEMENT, OFFICE OF PHYSICAL PLANT

John A. Galanis, Project Manager
Charles J. Jacobs, HVAC Systems
Ronald V. Johnson, Grounds Manager
Michael E. Williams, Director
