

HISTORICAL PROFILE OF STONEHILL COLLEGE

Stonehill Established by the Congregation of Holy Cross

On June 20, 1948, the commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized the Congregation of Holy Cross to establish an institution of higher learning, on the former estate of Frederick Lothrop Ames in North Easton, to be known as Stonehill College. The campus includes the estate's original Georgian-style mansion. Constructed in 1905, today it houses Stonehill's administrative offices and overlooks a panorama of academic buildings and residence halls in a tranquil setting of lawns, woods, fields and ponds.

Established in France in 1837, by Rev. Basil Moreau, C.S.C., members of the Congregation first came to the United States in 1841 under the leadership of Rev. Edward Sorin, C.S.C. This 26-year-old priest and six Holy Cross brothers built a log cabin school on the Indiana frontier the following year. They called it the University of Notre Dame. During the following century, committed to educating students in the Catholic tradition, the Congregation founded several more institutions of higher education throughout the United States including St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas (1878), the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon (1902) and King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (1946.)

In 1933, at the invitation of the Most Reverend James Cassidy, Bishop of Fall River, Holy Cross priest first came to Massachusetts from Notre Dame to found a seminary. They purchased the Kirby estate in North Dartmouth and, on August 13, 1934, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts incorporated The Foundation of Our Lady of Holy Cross, Inc.

The Ames Family and Stonehill College

Increasing seminary enrollment led the priests in North Dartmouth to look for larger quarters in the autumn of 1934. Their search brought them to North Easton, Massachusetts, where the estate of the late Frederick Lothrop Ames (1876-1921) was for sale.

Frederick Lothrop Ames was the great-grandson of Oliver Ames, who came to Easton in 1803 and established the Ames Shovel Company. The Ames Family fortune and prominence in Massachusetts grew rapidly during the 19th century. A graduate of Harvard University, Frederick Lothrop Ames was a successful businessman whose interests included the family's Ames Shovel Company, railroads and banking, but his greatest interest was in the breeding of Guernsey cows.

After marrying Edith Cryder of New York City in 1904, Ames purchased property on the Easton-Brockton line and commissioned architects Parker, Thomas and Rice to design



Frederick Lothrop Ames 1876-1921

his new estate. After marrying Edith Cryder of New York City in 1904, Ames purchased property on the Easton-Brockton line and commissioned architects Parker, Thomas and Rice to design his new estate. Completed in 1905, the estate, named "Stonehill House Hill House," included a 50-room mansion; a gymnasium which housed a grass-roofed indoor clay tennis court and a marble swimming pool; a squash court; a garage; a conservatory; barns and maintenance buildings. The half-mile driveway from the main gate to the mansion was lined with rhododendrons imported from England.

The sale of the estate to the Congregation was finalized on October 17, 1935. The property was for sale because Frederick Lothrop Ames and his son were both deceased and Mrs. Frederick Lothrop Ames (Edith Cutler) had remarried. The purchase included 350 acres, the mansion house and several other buildings. Two years later, the Congregation acquired the remaining 190 acres from Mrs. Cutler.



Stone Hill House ca. 1947

From 1935-1948, the property served as the home of the Seminary of Our Lady of Holy Cross where candidates for the priesthood in the Congregation of Holy Cross trained. It also housed the Mission Band of the Holy Cross Fathers. [The Mission Band was a group of priests who conducted local parish missions.] During this time, the priests also leased the use of the Ames Flying Field, which had been built by Frederick Lothrop Ames Jr. (1905-1932) during the 1920s. The Ames Flying Field included two runways, a hanger building and an office. During World War II, the Navy used it for training exercises. It was then leased to a private company until it was closed in 1955.

After World War II ended in 1945, much thought was given to greater use of the property. Rev. Thomas C. Duffy, C.S.C. and others argued for the establishment of a Catholic college and, in 1948, the newly-created Eastern Vice-Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross petitioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for an amendment of their original charter (The Foundation of Our Lady of Holy Cross, Inc.)

Under the terms of the Amended Charter (certified on June 30, 1948), the College was authorized to award "all degrees and academic honors usually granted and conferred by colleges in the Commonwealth, except for medical degrees." Rev. James Connerton, C.S.C., the first

provincial in the east, suggested the name, Stonehill College, derived from the Ames' "Stone House Hill House."

The First Students

That September, Stonehill enrolled 134 men as its first students, in courses leading to bachelor's degrees in the arts and sciences, at an annual tuition of \$420. (A curriculum in business administration was inaugurated one year later.) Rev. George Benaglia, C.S.C. was appointed as the first president of the College and continued as the local religious superior. Classes were held in the mansion house and in the Ames Gym.

Shortly after the College opened, students dubbed the main building (Ames mansion house), the "Big House" and it retains that nickname today, although it was officially named Donahue Hall in 1963 by then President Rev. Richard Sullivan, C.S.C., in honor of Rev. James Wesley Donahue, C.S.C. Superior General of the Congregation in 1935. Fr. Donahue authorized the purchase of the Ames Estate in North Easton and is recognized as the founder of Holy Cross in the eastern United States. At this time, the lower campus was nothing more than field and forest. Wooded areas covered the land of future residence halls and cows grazed in the baseball field, which was located on what now is called the quad."

Early Progress

In February 1949, the first of many buildings constructed by the College opened. It was known simply as the Science Building until 1974 when the renovated structure was named the Tracy Science Building in honor of David Tracy, a former Stonehill advisor and trustee. The building was expanded in 1980 and the addition was named in memory of student James A. Merkert (1958-1978) who was the son of long-time benefactor Eugene Merkert. Today the building is known as the Merkert-Tracy Science Center.



Summit – November 3, 1949

As Stonehill entered its second academic year, it welcomed a new president, Rev. Francis Boland, C.S.C., who was appointed in July 1949. Enrollment increased to 240 students and extracurricular activities continued to grow. Athletic programs began with basketball in 1948, but now expanded to include boxing, baseball and tennis. The school newspaper *The Summit*, was first published on November 3, 1949 and included an explanation for the paper's name, which was that a Catholic educator "teaches from the SUMMIT of a hill where he can not only examine the works and ways of men, but can also look up, with unhindered vision, to God." The masthead for the first three volumes of the paper featured a sketch of a cross on the top of a craggy mountain.

At the end of the second academic year, the College began to offer summer classes. During the second semester of its third year (1951), the Evening School Adult Education Program opened with 352 students who met once a week for non-credit classes. That fall, faced with declining enrollment because of the Korean War, Stonehill made a decision that would forever change the College when 19 women were allowed to enroll.

Stonehill graduated its first class of 64 men on the first Sunday of June 1952. The tradition of holding commencement outdoors under a striped tent began in 1953. This class of 73 graduates included the first woman, Luice Moncey of Avon, Massachusetts.

Growth and Development

During the 1950s, the College continued to grow. The Lourdes Grotto was dedicated in December 1953 with the Most Reverend James Connolly, Bishop of Fall River, presiding. In 1957, Holly Cross Hall opened as the first classroom building on lower campus. Six years later in 1963, the south wing and Hemingway Auditorium were built. In 1969, the north wing was added and the building was renamed Duffy Academic Center in honor of Rev. Thomas C. Duffy, C.S.C. who served many roles at the College. One role was as the first director of development and founder of the Century Club whose purpose was, and continues to be, to raise money for the College.

Rev. Richard Sullivan, C.S.C. was appointed the College's fourth president in 1958. His presidency brought significant changes to the College. In addition to securing accreditation for the College in 1959 by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a new library was completed in 1962. Cardinal Richard Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, donated funds for the library. The building was dedicated in the fall of 1962 and named for Cardinal Cushing and Congressman Joseph W. Martin, Jr. who agreed to donate the papers of his political career to Stonehill after his death.

Another major change was the completion of the College's first residence hall in 1961. Cardinal O'Hara Hall opened as a dormitory for men in 1961. With the exception of six basketball players who were housed behind the old kitchen in the 'Big House' in 1948, Stonehill was a commuter college drawing from the five counties. The building was named in honor of Cardinal John C. O'Hara, C.S.C. Archbishop of Philadelphia, and by 1963, the residence hall had become the home-away-from-home for 200 men.

Women continued to commute or live in College-approved housing until Boland Hall opened as a residence for women in 1967. Built during the tenure of the College's fifth president, the late Rev. John T. Corr, C.S.C.,



the building was named in honor of Rev. Francis Boland, C.S.C. because women were first admitted to the college during his presidency. He was also the first Holy Cross priest to be buried in the Province's cemetery on campus. This walled site near the Route 138 entrance had originally been a rose garden for the Ames family and later a vegetable garden for the seminary.

The trend towards the College's future as a residential campus continued in the late 1960s with the construction of Commonwealth (1968) and Colonial Courts (1970). These residence halls were built in a town house style and were a new concept in college housing that featured individual buildings housing twelve students. The idea was that it would promote a living situation unlike the institutional environment common in higher education. The other benefit was that the buildings could be built at significantly lower cost than traditional dormitories and in a short timeframe of six months.



Colonial Court 1970

Yet residence life was not the extent of the College's expansion, academic and extra-curricular programs grew as well. In the early 1960s, the College had nineteen clubs and organizations. A decade later that number had almost doubled and included, WSHL, the College's new FM radio station, the Greasepaint Players and the Riding Club. In 1970, the degree-granting Evening College was established as an outgrowth of the "Program of Adult education," which had started in 1951. The goal of the Evening College was to accommodate individuals who wished to continue their education while employed full-time. By the fall of 1978, three degrees – Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Associate of Science in seven major fields of study – were offered. The College also began to offer opportunities for students to study abroad, and in 1976, Army ROTC was first offered to freshman and sophomores.

Lay Board of Trustees Created

Until 1972, responsibility for the College was vested in the Eastern Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross. On February 24, 1972, responsibility was transferred to an elected and primarily lay Board of Trustees. The Congregation also transferred equity consisting of 375 acres and buildings constructed for and accommodated to educational purposes. Stonehill was incorporated as Stonehill College Inc. instead of the Foundation of Our Lady of Holy Cross, Inc. Both the spirit and letter of the transfer called for Stonehill College to continue as a Catholic institution of higher learning.

This change came about during the tenure of the Rev. Ernest Bartell, C.S.C., Stonehill's sixth president. He was the first president to be recommended for the appointment by a search committee rather than appointed by the Provincial. During his six years as president, the College operated without a deficit, the College's endowment grew from a minimal amount to two million dollars, and the campus expanded physically in many directions.

Under Fr. Bartell, the College Center was built (1973), the Anthony E. Casino Wing was added to the Library (1976) and Hemingway Auditorium was remodeled and expanded to become Hemingway Theatre (1973). Residence space increased when the Holy Cross Fathers Seminary was leased from the Congregation and renamed Holy Cross Center



Rev. Ernest Bartell, CSC
Stonehill's Sixth President 1971-1977

in 1974. Ground was also broken for the construction of St. Mary's Chapel and the Human Resources Center.

Stonehill's academic growth also continued. New majors in finance and marketing and minors in Asian, Irish and Environmental Studies were added to the Stonehill curriculum. A co-operative educational program with several other colleges in Southeastern Massachusetts (SACHEM) was started, which increased the number of courses available for students and provided expanded library services. Student service organizations, active at Stonehill from the outset, evolved to meet contemporary needs and emphasized assistance to the disadvantaged.

The MacPháidín Era

Fr. Bartell resigned as president in August 1977 and Mr. C. James Cleary, Associate Academic Dean, was appointed interim president. He was the first and only lay person to be named to the position of president and served until February 1978 when (Rev.) Bartley MacPháidín, C.S.C., a professor of religious studies, was appointed as the College's eighth president.

Fr. MacPháidín, the first alumnus (Class of 1959) to hold this position, became the longest serving president in the College's history (1978-2000). His tenure brought growth and recognition to the College and a total of 20 buildings were added to the physical plant. Several new residence halls were built between 1978-1999, including Villa Theresa, Notre Dame Du Lac and the buildings of the Pilgrim Heights complex. The David Ames Clock Farm was acquired in 1979. Located directly across from the Route 138 entrance to Stonehill, this property was dedicated in 1980 and serves as the headquarters for the Facilities Management Department.

Other new buildings included the Education Building (1983) and Stanger Hall, a computer center (1986). In 1988, the Sally Blair Ames Sports Complex was built. The Joseph W. Martin, Jr. Institute for Law and Society was completed in 1990, providing a permanent home for Speaker Martin's papers and the College's Archives and Special Collections department. The Martin Institute promotes programs of education and research, public policy, and regional and policy analysis. In 1992, the Roche Dining Commons replaced the Student Union as a dining hall and, in 1998, a new library was completed and named in honor of Fr. MacPháidín.



Fr. Bartley MacPháidín, CSC
Stonehill's Eighth President 1978-2000



MacPháidín Library 1998

As the campus grew, so did various programs. During the 1980s, the College devoted more funds to athletics and several women's sports were added. The curriculum also saw additional programs from a new General Studies program to new study abroad initiatives including a program between Stonehill and Yaroslavl University in Russia. The College's Academic excellence was recognized nationally, when on November 25, 1985, *U.S. News and World Report's* annual ranking of colleges and universities placed Stonehill fifth among the larger, comprehensive colleges and universities in the East. On August 30, 1999, the magazine ranked Stonehill first in the best Regional Schools in the North-Liberal Arts Colleges category.

Fr. MacPháidín's administration also established a secure fiscal base and completed the College's first Capital Campaign in the late 1990s, which raised over \$23 million. During his tenure, the College's endowment rose from \$3 million in 1978 to \$80 million and the College operated with a balanced budget.

Yet despite its growth the College was committed to its religious roots. In the spring of 1989, a Statement of Principles was approved by both the College and the Congregation of Holy Cross. The document ensured the preservation of Stonehill's Catholic heritage and the commitment of the Congregation to an active presence in both academic and pastoral positions at the College.

A New Millennium and President

After 22 years as president, (Fr.) MacPháidín stepped down in 2000 and assumed the role of president emeritus and chancellor. His successor Rev. Mark Cregan, C.S.C. (Class of 1978) was inaugurated Stonehill's ninth president on September 29, 2000. Since taking office, Fr. Cregan has worked to enhance Stonehill's academic profile. In 2001 he modernized the College's

governance structure to make it more responsive and effective. In 2004, the College completed a 15-year master plan with the implementation beginning in 2005 with the completion of the W.B. Mason Stadium and the planning for a new science center.

As the College moves further into the new millennium, it continues its tradition of co-education with 2,300 students, 90 percent of whom live on campus. The undergraduate program offers 32 major programs in the liberal arts, natural science and business, with over 120 faculty members, 81 percent of whom hold doctoral degrees. Since its first commencement exercises in 1952, the College has graduated more than 20,000 students. The College's vision for the future is to provide a quality higher education that equips alumni for thoughtful reflection throughout their lives, for useful careers and for citizenship, service and leadership in the Church and the world.



Stonehill Campus ca. 1960



Stonehill Campus October 2006

Nicole Tourangeau '95
College Archivist and Special Collections Librarian
July 2001 (Revised 2006)

Sources:

Stonehill College Archives:

10th Anniversary Booklet 1958

Stonehill Alumni Magazines

College Catalogs

"A History of the Founding of Stonehill College: May 12, 1948," by (Rev.) David Arthur, C.S.C., November 25, 1970

Fulfilling a Dream: Stonehill College 1948-1998, by (Rev.) Richard Gribble, C.S.C. (1998)

"Remembering the Past," by Louise Kenneally (1999)

"Embracing Light & Hope: 50 Years of Stonehill College" - video (1999)