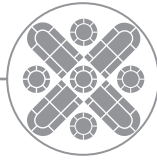


THE HISTORY, ART, AND ARCHITECTURE  
OF THE  
BOWDOIN COLLEGE CHAPEL





## CONCEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION (1844–1855)

Having recently returned from a trip to Europe, Leonard Woods, Bowdoin's fourth president, envisioned replacing the existing wooden chapel with one modeled after English collegiate chapels he had visited. In 1844, Woods began working with young English émigré Richard Upjohn to design a Gothic stone structure that would serve as a combination chapel, library, and picture gallery.

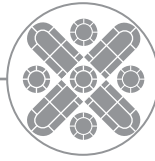
Financing the project proved to be a slow and difficult process, which resulted in a change of the proposed style to German Romanesque and many delays in construction. Major funding came from the settlement of a lawsuit involving the estate of James Bowdoin III, when his nephew and heir, James Bowdoin Temple, failed to meet the terms of the will. Maine's first governor, William King, had pledged a sizable bequest to the College, and at first the building was known as "King" Chapel; however, by the time of the governor's death his estate had diminished, resulting in a greatly reduced bequest, and the designation eventually fell into disuse. By its dedication in June 1855, construction costs had mounted to more than triple the original estimate of \$15,000.

The interior resembles English college chapels, with a broad central aisle and three ranks of lateral pews and other woodwork of black walnut. The nave is flanked by wings that, from the exterior, appear to be side aisles or chapels, but in fact are separate areas for other uses with their own entrances on the north and south sides of the building.

The exterior is faced with undressed rectangular gray granite blocks quarried in Brunswick and laid in a random pattern. The twin towers rise to a height of 118 feet, 3½ inches, almost twice as high as the peak of the nave; their walls are approximately three feet thick.



*Sculpture Gallery Downstairs, currently American Musicological Society. Courtesy Bowdoin College Archives (#1347).*



## RENOVATIONS

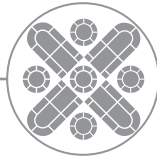
Extensive cleaning and restoration work in 1997 and 1998 returned the Chapel interior to its former glory, revealing details like the stars on the ceiling, which had been obscured by the grime of decades of heating with wood and coal. On the back wall, workers discovered the signatures of the six German artists who finished the interior as well as a caricature of a man smoking a cigar—possibly their boss, Richard Upjohn. One of the ceiling trusses bears the name of William Pendergast, Class of 1854, who evidently managed to project a rope over the rafter and climb up fifty feet in order to deposit his signature. Bullet holes discovered in the ceiling and back wall may have been the result of pigeon control. As part of the renovation, the pulpit area was redesigned to allow greater flexibility of use in performances, a side exit was added for fire safety, and the organ console was made mobile for positioning anywhere on stage.

By the conclusion of the interior work, it had become evident that major structural restoration would be necessary on the two towers: the granite facing of the towers was separating from the interior brick and fieldstone structural layer because years of water infiltration had turned the mortar in between the layers to dust. After various lesser remedies hadn't proven effective, it was determined that the towers would have to be dismantled and rebuilt. In March 2003 workers removed the first of the 2,252 stones from the North Tower. It was necessary to replace the damaged stone blocks, but it was not known where the material had been quarried. An exhaustive search for granite that would match the original ended when Professor of Geology Emeritus Art Hussey located the quarry, now inactive, right in Brunswick. Workers also restored pebbled glass to the windows of the South Tower: lightning had struck it in 1894, shattering the windows, and at the time plain glass had been used to replace them.

During the renovation, workers discovered a time capsule under one of the North Tower cornerstones. The tin box contained two silver plaques: one with the names of the College president, vice president, Richard Upjohn, the architect, and others; the second plaque held the names of the lead masons. Other materials, which had disintegrated, may have included a Bible and some information about the College.

In July 2004 the last stone was placed back on the South Tower. At a ceremony led by President Barry Mills the following spring during Alumni Weekend, a mason deposited a new time capsule containing the original items as well as a 2004 coin commemorating the Boston Red Sox's 2004 World Series victory (their first since 1918), a hammer found in the Chapel's rafters, and an iPod containing music chosen by the Class of 2005.

The \$6 million tower renovation, carried out by Consigli Construction Company, received a Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers "Craft Award" for Best Restoration and a 2005 Statewide Historic Preservation Award from Maine Preservation.



## USE

For much of its history the College had strong affiliations with the Congregationalists, especially with the adjacent First Parish Church, but stopped short of becoming a denominational school.

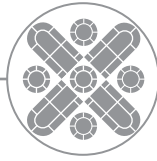
Until 1967, the College had the tradition known as “Chapel,” which was a daily required event for all Bowdoin students, originally at 8:15 a.m., later 10:00 a.m., and lasting about ten minutes. Sunday Chapel was a full church service, often with a guest lecturer. For many alumni Chapel represented some of their most vivid and important memories at the College, as important lessons were learned from the talks delivered by faculty, members of the administration, and guests. For others it was the memory of strategies employed for being counted on the attendance rolls before sneaking away. Students were seated by class, with seniors closest to the stage and exiting first after the service.

The Chapel, which has excellent acoustics for organ and a cappella choral music, is used by student groups, the Department of Music, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival for concerts. Alumni, faculty, and staff often hold weddings and memorial services there.

Before the construction of Hubbard Hall and the Walker Art Building, the “side aisle” areas housed the Peucinian and Athenaen libraries, a meeting room, and a study for the president. The east end of the building, known as Banister Hall, held the College’s art collection, with a sculpture gallery on the first floor and a painting gallery on the second. For many years these areas were home to the Department of Music and the Department of Psychology, and currently house the Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good and the American Musicological Society.



*Library, currently Banister Classroom. Courtesy Bowdoin College Archives (#1350).*

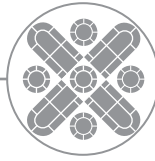


## MURALS

The murals, which are modeled on great religious paintings of the past, were completed over a period of sixty years and were commissioned through the generosity of individual donors. Some were painted directly on the wall, while others were painted on supports that were glued to the wall.

**South Wall**, starting from the organ wall—mostly Old Testament themes

- 1. *Musical Angel*, 1917**  
(after Fra Angelico's *Madonna of the Linen Drapers' Guild* [Linaiuoli])  
Artist: **Edna T. Marrett** (1887–1968)  
of Brunswick  
Donor: Class of 1906 and Dr. Frederick H. Gerrish, Class of 1866, professor at the Medical School of Maine
- 2. *St. Michael Vanquishing the Devil*, 1866**  
(after Raphael's *St. Michael*, now in the Louvre, 1518)  
Artist: **Charles Otto** of New York  
Donor: Class of 1866
- 3. *Adam and Eve*, 1886**  
(after Hippolyte Flandrin's [1809–1864] painting in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris, done in 1856–1863)  
Artist: **Frederic Vinton** (1846–1911) of Boston  
Donor: Henry J. Furber, Class of 1861
- 4. *Moses Giving the Law*, with townspeople (e.g., Elizabeth Forsaith) as models for the Hebrews, and Professor J. B. Sewall as the model for Aaron, 1877 (a composite after Bassano and Tintoretto?)**  
Artist: **Francis Lathrop** (1849–1909)  
Donor: Class of 1877, with George Little, chairman of committee collecting class donations
- 5. *David with the Head of Goliath, and Maidens of Israel Singing a Song of Joy*, 1908**  
(after J. James Tissot [1836–1902], illustration for Hebrew Bible, ca. 1896–1902, now in Jewish Museum, New York City)  
Artist: **Joseph B. Kahill** (1882–1957)  
Donor: Dr. Frederick H. Gerrish, Class of 1866, professor at the Medical School of Maine
- 6. *The Prophet Isaiah*, 1913**  
(after Michelangelo's Isaiah on the Sistine Chapel ceiling)  
Artist: **Edna T. Marrett** (1887–1968) of Brunswick  
Donor: Dr. Frederick H. Gerrish, Class of 1866, in memory of Professor Henry Leland Chapman, Class of 1866 (taught 1869–1913)
- 7. *The Delphic Sibyl*, 1915**  
(after Michelangelo's Sibyl on the Sistine Chapel ceiling)  
Artist: **Edna T. Marrett** (1887–1968) of Brunswick  
Donor: Dr. Frederick H. Gerrish, professor at the Medical School of Maine, in memory of his brother William Little Gerrish, Class of 1864



West Wall, Colored Glass over the Doorway

**8. *The Centurion***

Donor: Perhaps Dr. Lucien Howe (1848–1928), Class of 1870, in memory of his brother Captain Albion Howe (1840–1873), Class of 1861, who was killed in the Modoc Indian war, April 26, 1873

North Wall, starting from the door—mostly New Testament themes

**9. *Annunciation*, 1860**

(after Charles François Jalabert's [1819–1901] painting in the chapel of Louis Napoleon at the Tuileries)  
Artist: **Daniel Müller** (?)  
Sponsor: Rev. Leonard Woods, president of Bowdoin College  
Donor: Honorable Nathan Cummings, Class of 1817

**10. *Adoration of the Magi*, 1858**

(a variation after Peter Cornelius's [1783–1867, German Nazarene painter] *Adoration of the Magi* from the Ludwigskirche, Munich)  
Artist: **Daniel Müller**, German artist from Canada  
Donor: Harrison Otis Apthorp, Class of 1829

**11. *Baptism of Christ*, 1877–1878**

(after Carlo Maratti)  
Artist: **Francis Lathrop** (1849–1909)  
Donor: Class of 1843 in memory of Dr. John D. Lincoln (1821–1877)

**12. *The Transfiguration*, 1877**

(after Raphael's *Transfiguration*, now in the Vatican, 1517)  
Artist: **Francis Lathrop**  
Donor: Mrs. William Perry of Brunswick in memory of her husband

**13. *Peter Healing the Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate*, 1856**

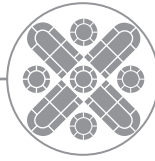
(after Raphael's tapestry cartoon for the Sistine Chapel)  
Artist: **Daniel Müller**, German artist from Canada  
Donor: Bellamy Storer, Esq., Class of 1813

**14. *St. Paul Preaching on Mars Hill in Athens*, 1856**

(after Raphael's tapestry cartoon for the Sistine Chapel)  
Artist: **Daniel Müller**, German artist from Canada  
Donor: Mrs. Jared Sparks (née Mary Silisbee Browninshield [b. 1809]), second wife of the Harvard president

**15. *Musical Angel*, 1917**

(from Fra Angelico's *Madonna of the Linen Drapers' Guild* [Linaiuoli])  
Artist: **Edna T. Marrett** (1887–1968) of Brunswick  
Donor: Class of 1906 and Dr. Frederick H. Gerrish, professor at the Medical School of Maine



## INSTRUMENTS

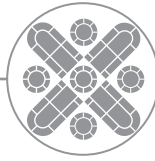
Two small pipe organs in the west gallery preceded the installation of the 1927 Austin organ, their opus 1507. The pipes and wind chest occupy the majority of the spacious east gallery, which formerly housed the College's art collection. This three-manual electro-pneumatic instrument has 47 ranks with a total of 2,567 pipes. The organ was a gift of Cyrus Hermann Kotzschmar Curtis, founder of the Curtis Publishing Company and also donor of both Bowdoin's Curtis Pool (now Studzinski Recital Hall) and the Kotzschmar Memorial Organ at Merrill Auditorium in Portland.

The Chapel is home to a 1975 Cooper two-manual tracker organ in the style of the German Baroque, and a 2007 Steinway grand piano. The renovation of the Austin and the purchase of the other two keyboard instruments were made possible by gifts from Chester W. Cooke III, Class of 1957.

The South Tower houses the Payson Memorial chimes, which were installed in 1924, a gift of Edward Payson, Class of 1869, and William Payson, Class of 1874. The bells, now numbering fifteen, were formerly played from a mechanical console in the tower; every morning before Chapel and in the afternoon, a ringer climbed the South Tower stairway and played hymns, Bowdoin songs, and even popular songs. Now played by a digital electronic controller, they ring the Westminster Chime every quarter hour and play songs for important campus events. Three new bells, made in Holland, were added in 2004 to extend the musical repertoire possibilities. One bell, which used to be in the North Tower and was rung with a pull rope, was used to signal the change of classes and to celebrate football victories.



*Banister Hall, second floor gallery, currently the Austin Organ windchest and pipes. Courtesy Bowdoin College Archives (#1360).*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“The Chapel of Bowdoin College”  
Leaflet, undated

Patricia McGraw Anderson: *The Architecture of Bowdoin College*  
(Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College Museum of Art, 1988) © Bowdoin College

Susan Rayfield: “Restorers Uncover Colorful History in Bowdoin Chapel”  
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Edgar Allen Beem: “Written in Stone”  
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Aaron Smith: “Surprises found in Bowdoin Chapel”  
*The Times Record*, May 12, 1999

“Chapel Towers Restoration Completed”  
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Professor Susan Wegner: “Donors, Artists, and Subjects of the Murals”  
Research as of June 4, 2005  
(For more information: [swegner@bowdoin.edu](mailto:swegner@bowdoin.edu))

President Barry Mills: Remarks at the Bowdoin College Chapel Rededication  
October 21, 2004

*Please report any corrections to this narrative to [dsmall@bowdoin.edu](mailto:dsmall@bowdoin.edu).*