

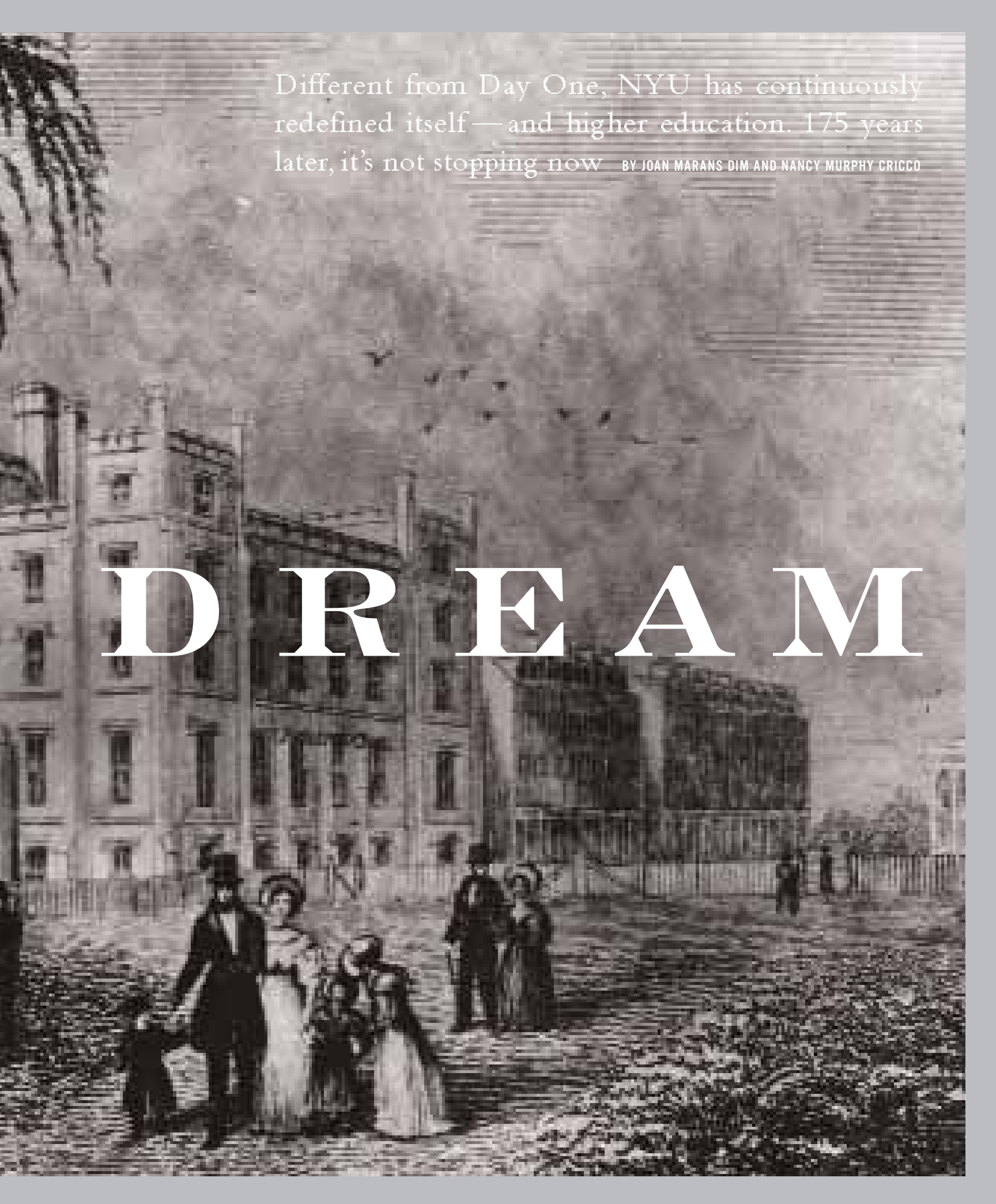
WASHINGTON SQUARE—WHEN NYU FIRST MOVED “IN”—WAS BUT A DISTANT SUBURB TO THE CENTER OF NEW YORK CITY LIFE IN LOWER MANHATTAN. BUT SOON THE FARMS WOULD DISAPPEAR AND THE AREA WOULD TRANSFORM.

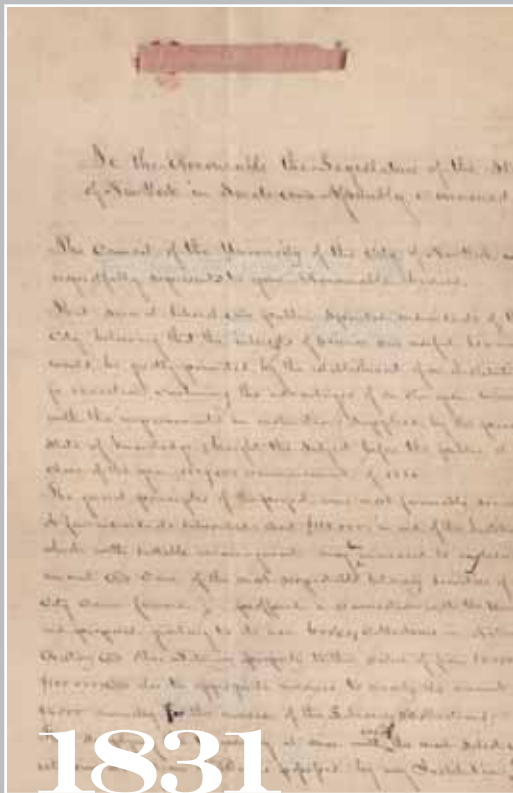
U R B A N



Different from Day One, NYU has continuously redefined itself—and higher education. 175 years later, it's not stopping now BY JOAN MARANS DIM AND NANCY MURPHY CRICCO

D R E A M





1831

THE FOUNDING FATHERS PRESENT THEIR PLANS FOR THEIR NEW "UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK" TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.



1835

THE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST PERMANENT STRUCTURE, THE ORNATE NEO-GOTHIC UNIVERSITY BUILDING, OFFICIALLY OPENS, AND ALL THE NEWSPAPERS COVER THE EVENT.

In his acclaimed book *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education*, David Kirp recently named New York University “the American success story in higher education.” Many agree. NYU receives more applications than any private university in

the nation. (More than 35,000 applications are being reviewed by the Admissions Office as this goes to press for an entering freshman class of just over 4,000.) A popular survey puts NYU among the top 10 universities that parents want their children to attend.

But to be called “the American success story” says as much about an institution’s past as it does about its future. In the case of NYU, it is a title that has not come to us because of a history of privilege, prestige and the comfort of rolling hills. It has been a title earned by dint of hard work, difficult (even daring)

choices... and not a little moxie.

In reflecting on the university’s history as it celebrates its 175th anniversary, one can detect as many plot twists as a screenplay by a Tisch film major. To be sure, it’s comforting to know that NYU is in the midst of what seems like a Hollywood ending. Students and alumni today can take more pride than ever in being members of the NYU family. Still, as President John Sexton says, “We’ve come a long, long way, but we can go further. It’s in NYU’s genetic makeup to always want to do better.”

To understand the nature of

this unique NYU spirit, one needs only to follow the footsteps of some innovative 19th-century New Yorkers, who had an idea for a different kind of university, all the way to the Sexton administration and its 21st-century efforts to redefine NYU again—as an institution of the highest academic caliber that finds its faculty and students engaging with the city, and the world, like never before. It is this capacity for boldness, this ability not only to reflect but to reinvent that is the consistent narrative line in the thrilling story of NYU.

A DIFFERENT UNIVERSITY

Picture New York City in the 1820s. Already being called the “London of America” and with a population swelling to 200,000, the thriving business centers and busy seaport made Lower Manhattan the locus of city life. New immigrants arrived daily, eager to start a new life in a land where hard work could help any man raise his position in the world.

Energized by New York’s heady spirit of progress, some of the city’s visionaries saw the need to support a skilled and educated population. In December 1829, nine citizens, including local merchants and members of the clergy, met to discuss the formation of a different kind of university. They discussed a new institution in London that had opened the year before and emphasized practical instruction at reasonable rates for young men of the middle class. Perhaps this new



1839

IMMEDIATELY, THE UNIVERSITY SPURS SCIENTIFIC AND OTHER ADVANCES. HERE, CHEMISTRY AND NATURAL HISTORY PROFESSOR JOHN W. DRAPER'S FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT—OF AN EARLY DAGUERROTYPE. (DRAPER WENT ON TO TAKE THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MOON.)



1893

WASHINGTON SQUARE WAS HOME TO ONE OF THE NATION'S FIRST GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN ARTS AND SCIENCE, BEGUN IN 1886. A FEW YEARS LATER, STUDENTS ARE AT WORK IN THE CHEMICAL (ANALYTICAL) LABORATORY.

University of London could be the model for *their* new university.

On January 6, 1830, the founders took an audacious step: They issued a manifesto proclaiming the urgency of educating young men in modern languages, history, political economy and natural science. The goal was to create a corps of educated workers who could apply their newly acquired *useful* education to serve the metropolis. And they brought on Albert Gallatin, already distinguished for having served as the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury under two presidents, as chairman of the first University Council (today's equivalent of the Board of Trustees).

Providing students with a practical basis of knowledge may not seem all that visionary today, but in 1831—the year NYU was officially founded—it was a bold stroke. But the university was also exceptional in another equally profound way: Unlike Columbia (then the city's only institution of higher

education), which had the full support of the Anglican Church, NYU would be nonsectarian. This daring decision meant that the new university would be left to survive entirely on its own.

NYU opened its doors to 108 students at Clinton Hall near City Hall in 1832. Annual tuition was \$80, while room and board in the neighborhood was \$2 a week. The university's first students hailed mostly from upper-middle-class families, several from elite neighborhoods in the City Hall area. Clearly, they were not the strata the founders had in mind.

The university's first faculty—consisting of five salaried professors and seven part-time instructors—was almost immediately at odds with one another. One group insisted on reverting to a church-supported curriculum while the others wanted to stay true to the university's original nonsectarian mission. In much the same way that America's founding fathers fought

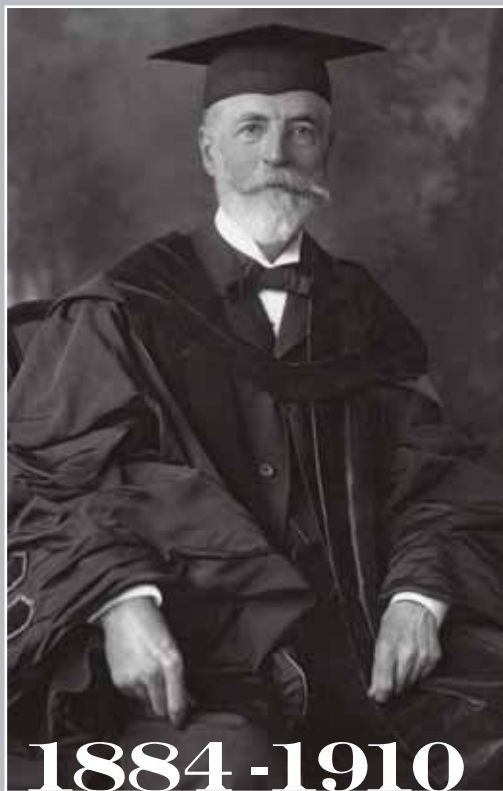
to keep religion outside the public sphere, NYU's early administrators struggled to keep their educational experiment secular as well.

MOVING "UPTOWN" TO WASHINGTON SQUARE

Lower Manhattan was a cramped, chaotic place in the 1830s. NYU's first chancellor, James M. Mathews, a pastor and one of the university's founders, knew students and faculty needed a change. He anticipated the growth of the city northward and chose a site facing Washington Square Park, an area then considered a distant suburb. At the time, this land had just been converted from a burial ground and open field into a military parade ground and public park. Farms that had dotted the landscape were rapidly being divided into lots for houses, and streets were graded for the first time. Despite the crackling sound of rocks blasting, quite a few

of the city's wealthiest and most prestigious families were moving into new and elegant Greek revival row houses around the Square.

The new University Building officially opened in 1835, and all the newspapers covered the event. Fulfilling Mathews' hopes, the new building soon became a model of collegiate neo-Gothic architecture for other academic institutions, and it was the home of many early innovations in American art, science and education. It was there that Samuel F.B. Morse, a professor of sculpture and painting, perfected the telegraph and created some of his most memorable paintings. It was there that John W. Draper, professor of chemistry and natural history, produced one of the earliest daguerreotypes of the human face and also made the first photographs of the moon. They were among the first of what would be a long line of distinguished scholars and researchers to make their home at NYU.



1884-1910

HENRY MITCHELL MACCRACKEN STARTED AS A PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND EVENTUALLY BECAME CHANCELLOR. A VISIONARY, HE MASTER-MINDED NYU'S BELOVED UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CAMPUS, WHICH OPENED IN 1894 IN THE BRONX.



1896

THE DOMED BEAUX ARTS GOULD LIBRARY IS ERECTED SHORTLY AFTER "THE HEIGHTS" OPENS AND BECOMES ONE OF SEVERAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ACADEMIC SPLENDORS.

NEXT STOP: THE BUCOLIC BRONX

More than just flowers were blossoming in the newly created Washington Square Park. Throughout the 19th century, the university opened professional schools in law (1835), medicine (1841) and dentistry (1865). Yet despite this growth, the university continued to struggle with paying bills and attracting students, particularly to the undergraduate college.

One of the biggest complaints was the lack of a spirited campus life on Washington Square, particularly in the area of athletics. During the founding era, activities focused on intellectual pursuits, such as the literary and debating societies. But the wants of students were changing. Male college students of the late 1880s (the first women were admitted to the School of the Arts in 1873 and more widely by the 1890s) were anxious to participate in such newly popular team sports as baseball

and football. Scholarly lectures in a stuffy classroom, membership in the university's Eucleian or Philomathean literary societies, or even a foray to the wilder reaches of Central Park were just not adequate.

Amid the city's bustle and excitement, NYU continued to expand. Much credit goes to Henry Mitchell MacCracken, who, from 1884 to 1910, served first as professor of philosophy and then as vice chancellor and chancellor. MacCracken, still namesake for a group of NYU's most prestigious graduate fellows, proved himself to be a man of both vision and action.

If the students demanded a more pleasing environment, then he would build it. MacCracken found the perfect location—a sprawling 50-acre property in the then-distant borough of the Bronx, overlooking the Harlem River and upper Manhattan—and he tapped Stanford White, the great American architect, to design the new campus. So, in 1894, the undergraduate

college relocated to the "Heights," while the professional schools remained in Washington Square.

The University Heights campus was truly pastoral with its majestic Hall of Fame and Beaux Arts-style Gould Library. NYU's football team made Ohio Field a wildly popular place to spend crisp fall Saturday afternoons. While intercollegiate athletic competition had been introduced at Washington Square in the 1870s, the move to the Heights gave all sports an enormous boost. Soon there were also varsity teams in baseball, basketball, tennis and track.

The move had a profound effect on academic life as well. Though the traditions of the undergraduate college continued, the addition of new departments helped further widen the curriculum, particularly the expansion of the engineering program.

As the heart and soul of the university were reinvigorated uptown in the bucolic Bronx, the

campus's prestige grew formidable, drawing comparison to such stalwart institutions as Columbia, Amherst, Williams and Yale. Enrollment at the Heights grew from 280 to 1,000 students by 1910, increasing even higher as New York's subway system extended into upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

Nevertheless, MacCracken had not abandoned the Washington Square campus. He was quite active there, with innovations that would also underscore the founders' vision. Most notably, he had introduced one of the first graduate schools of arts and science in the nation—an effort that emphasized both research excellence and the interconnection between city and university. More graduate schools followed at the Square: the School of Pedagogy, which continues today as the Steinhardt School of Education; the School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance, now the Leonard N. Stern School of Business; and an extramural division, a



1945

BASKETBALL IS A FOCAL POINT, AND THE VARSITY TEAM REGULARLY PLAYS AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN. YEARS LATER, NYU WOULD BE CAUGHT UP IN A CITYWIDE POINT-SHAVING SCANDAL.



1954

WITH PLENTY OF GROUNDS, THE UPTOWN CAMPUS OFFERS UNDERGRADUATES AN ATHLETIC LIFE. HERE, STUDENTS PLAY BALL AS THE GOULD STUDENT CENTER GOES UP.



1970

AS ELSEWHERE, THE 1960S AND EARLY '70S STRUCK HARD. BUT CHICAGO 7 ABBIE HOFFMAN AND PANTHER DHARUBA DIDN'T SHOW UP JUST ANYWHERE. THE RADICALS LEAD 500 STUDENTS IN A PROTEST FOR THE RELEASE OF IMPRISONED PANTHERS AND REFORM OF BELLEVUE MEDICAL CENTER.

precursor to today's School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

By any measure, MacCracken's tenure was a great success. But ahead, unbeknownst to those reveling in those turn-of-the-century glory days, lay the university's most wrenching days... and decisions.

WELCOME BACK TO THE VILLAGE

As World War I raged overseas, NYU lent support by serving as a training ground for soldiers. Throughout the 1910s, '20s and '30s, waves of new students, many of them immigrants from Eastern Europe, enrolled. After World War II, another surge of students—returning veterans hungry for education and advancement—took advantage of the GI Bill. By 1949, NYU had a faculty of nearly 2,000 and more than 40,000 students—many part-timers who commuted on the subways to both campuses. An extensive system of individual

schools and divisions was in place, including a school in public administration (now the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service). In an affirmation of the university's growing stature as a research institution, NYU was admitted in 1950 to the prestigious ranks of the Association of American Universities, whose members include only the top public and private research universities in the nation.

Then came the 1960s.

Just 37 years old, James McNaughton Hester, a former Rhodes scholar, assumed NYU's presidency in 1962, in the last years before the onset of what would be two decades of national strife and upheaval. Student unrest broke out over civil rights issues and the war in Vietnam, causing numerous class disruptions as marches and protest meetings were staged in Washington Square Park. The once rising tide of applications in the early 1960s began to ebb, partly in response to larger national trends and, more locally, from

new competitive pressures from the City University system (CUNY). Even in the face of all this adversity, NYU managed to found additional schools in social work and performing arts (now the Tisch School of the Arts). But, tuition driven, NYU was once again threatened. Where other institutions with large endowments could sail through troubled waters, NYU could not. Hester needed to find a way to keep NYU afloat.

He realized the only way to save the university and restore its exhausted endowment was to sell one of the two campuses: either Washington Square or University Heights. Keeping both would have meant certain failure. In 1973, he picked energy over quietude; University Heights would be sold.

Hester's decision was extraordinary, given the state of New York City in the 1970s. Mired in what seemed like an insurmountable fiscal crisis and with crime at an all-time high, the city was falling apart.

But Hester saw through the immediate distress, betting on a brighter future for the city and envisioning the unique role NYU could play by being firmly set in the heart of it.

GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

By the 1980s, the city was back on its feet and NYU was poised for lofty goals: first, to reshape itself into one of the world's great urban research universities; and second, to convert what was considered a "subway campus" into a residential one that would reflect all the dazzling energy of the city. Both NYU and the city showed new signs of life.

With the inauguration of president John Brademas in 1981, the university was well positioned to ascend the peaks of higher education. Brademas, a congressman for 22 years, was a Washington insider with a passion for the arts (he was instrumental in the creation of the



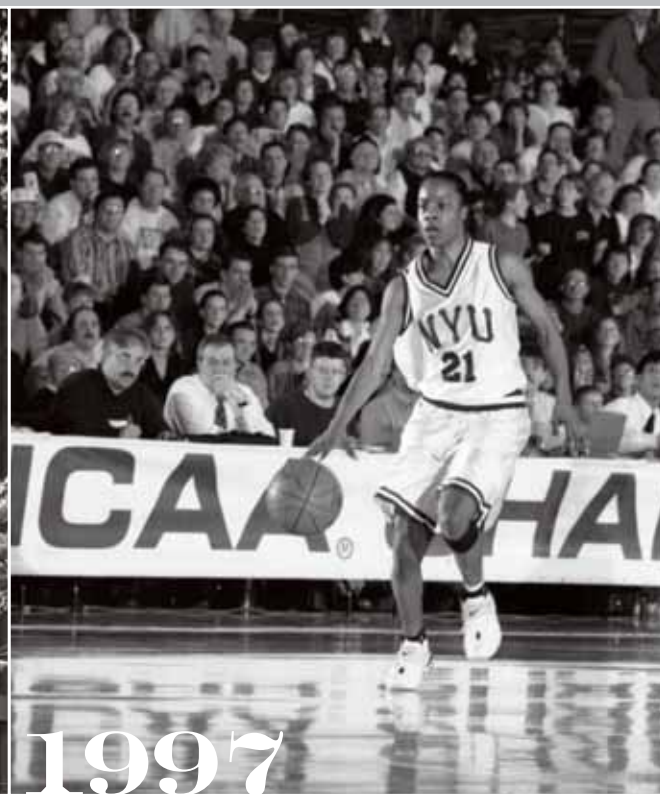
1970

MANY STUDENTS COMMUTED VIA SUBWAY TO BOTH THE HEIGHTS AND WASHINGTON SQUARE CAMPUSES.



1972

THE BOBST LIBRARY, DESIGNED BY RENOWNED ARCHITECT PHILIP JOHNSON, BECOMES A SYMBOL OF THE FUTURE OF NYU AT WASHINGTON SQUARE.



1997

NYU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL WINS THE NCAA DIVISION III CHAMPIONSHIP—THE FIRST NEW YORK CITY WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM TO EVER WIN AN NCAA TOURNAMENT. MARSHA HARRIS (CAS '98), SHOWN HERE DURING THE TITLE GAME AT COLES, WAS THE SEASON'S HIGH SCORER.

National Endowment for the Arts) and a track record of supporting higher education. Brademas was also a formidable fund-raiser. He brought visibility and excitement to the university. World leaders and renowned scholars were drawn to the campus as the university's focus began to shift toward a more global view. The university also noted an increase in foreign students; today NYU is in the forefront of institutions attracting large numbers of international students.

A major factor in NYU's ascendancy was the decision in 1985 to conduct a 15-year billion-dollar campaign to build a better university—both physically and academically. While chided at the time for spending most of the billion dollars it raised by 1995 (five years ahead of schedule), NYU saw it as investing in its own future: \$600 million for academic expansion and to endow 88 chairs; \$109 million for scholarships and fellowships; more than \$600 million worth of building and

renovations (using private gifts and construction bonds). Its meager endowment of \$384 million in 1984 was also lifted to \$1 billion by 1999.

The word on the street was that NYU was on the move academically, that the depth and breadth of its programs and its home on Washington Square offered not only educational opportunities but also adventure. The university was a magnet for leading thinkers and scholars and artists, and its campus played host to a continual stream of visiting dignitaries and world leaders. For students, a multitude of internships, drawing from Harlem to Wall Street and beyond, awaited them.

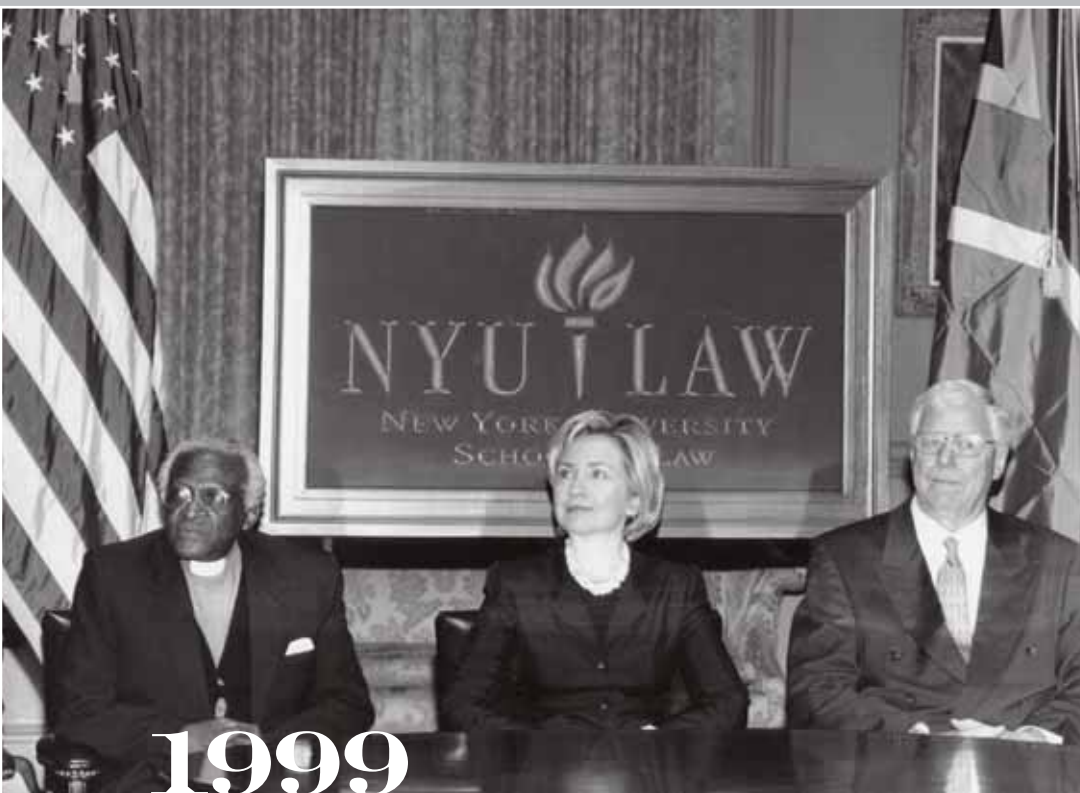
In one of the world's most expensive cities, the university's creation of new dormitories now provided safe, affordable and comfortable housing convenient to the campus. President L. Jay Oliva, the first president of NYU to be chosen from among its own faculty, oversaw the acquisition and construction of

residence halls around Washington Square and the surrounding neighborhoods—a boom that doubled NYU's residence hall beds to what is now nearly 12,000, in buildings from Union Square to Soho. Moreover, the richness and sparkle of NYU's campus life would soon enter the mythology of television and film—from *The Cosby Show* to *Felicity* to *The Freshman*—and heighten the university's reputation as the place to be. Oliva also spearheaded the notion of the global university, establishing and strengthening study centers in London, Paris, Prague, Madrid and on the flagship La Pietra campus in Florence, a gift from Sir Harold Acton, where NYU students live and attend classes on the carefully restored 57-acre estate with its five villas and renowned formal gardens.

Students in Washington Square made instant use of such newly built facilities as the Coles Sports and Recreation Center, with its full-size indoor pool and rooftop

track. The university community came together at Coles in March 1997 to cheer its women's basketball team on to an NCAA Division III national championship, the only women's basketball team in New York City history to win an NCAA tournament. After Hester discontinued intercollegiate basketball in 1971—putting aside NYU's sports fame of the 1940s, '50s and '60s as part of his move to rescue the university financially—NYU had not been an athletic force in years. But Oliva successfully pushed for the reestablishment of NYU basketball—this time as a lower-profile Division III team—in the early 1980s and later founded the University Athletic Association, which emphasized academic achievement as much as athletic talent.

The 1980s and '90s were also a period of impressive academic progress as C. Duncan Rice, then vice chancellor of NYU, embarked on a plan to recruit to NYU and especially to the arts-



1999

THE LAW SCHOOL, CONSIDERED AMONG THE NATION'S FINEST, MAKES INTERNATIONAL LAW A PRIORITY. FROM LEFT: DESMOND TUTU, HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (FIRST LADY AT THE TIME) AND PROFESSOR ALEX BORAINÉ AT A GLOBAL LAW SCHOOL PROGRAM EVENT.



2005

TODAY NYU IS OF THE CITY, JUST AS THE CITY IS OF NYU. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS TAKES ART HISTORY STUDENTS TO THE SOURCE: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

and-science core, some of the finest faculty in the nation. The effort paid off; department by department, NYU's stature in scholarship and research rose.

By the mid-1990s, NYU's trajectory was soaring. A second major athletic complex was added in the newly built Palladium residence hall on Union Square and a new, much expanded Kimmel student center was erected on Washington Square South, complete with a 900-plus-seat theater. With each year dwarfing the previous in terms of undergraduate applications, NYU was becoming known as a "hot school." More important, it had achieved a place in the upper echelon of higher education.

IN AND OF THE CITY

In September 2001, students, faculty and staff witnessed with horror the attack upon the World Trade Center, which, among the unprece-

dedented damage to the city and region, displaced 3,000 NYU students from their residence halls and temporarily limited access to the main campus. The law school, helmed by then-dean John Sexton, had a groundbreaking ceremony planned two weeks later for its new building, Furman Hall. After much discussion, Sexton and the law school's trustees decided to go ahead with the groundbreaking, and the event took place on a glittering fall day. As it turned out, the new law school building was the first in the city to break ground post-9/11.

Far from distancing itself from New York in those fateful days, newly appointed President John Sexton declared that henceforth NYU should see itself as "the New York University."

Today, NYU stands as the largest private university in the nation. With more than 6,400 faculty (and 125 more to be added as a result of the current Campaign for NYU),

50,000 students who hail from 160 countries, and 14 schools, colleges and divisions, the university occupies five major centers in Manhattan, study-abroad programs in more than 25 countries, and with the recent addition of Ghana and Berlin, seven full-fledged international sites. Always looking forward for the next opportunity, NYU will next make its presence felt in Asia when a new center is opened in Shanghai within the year.

Yet with all of these advances, the university has stayed true to the founders' vision—one of a "private university in the public service"—that provides an egalitarian education to students from all walks of life who would then join the city's professional ranks. Not surprisingly, those ranks—some 350,000 alumni—are now spread across the nation and globe. They excel in sectors as diverse as the arts, business, government, technology, social work, entertain-

ment, medicine and law.

"It is a humbling honor to be charged with helping to shape the NYU of today and tomorrow," Sexton says. "NYU has a palpable energy. It emanates from the faculty members, from the students I teach and especially from the city streets. All of us, as a community, thrive on that energy—that unstoppable force—which is the spirit of our founders still alive within us today."

As NYU prepares to mark its 175th anniversary, one can only wonder: What would the founders think of the modern rendering of their great notion? In their wildest dreams, could they have envisioned an institution of such complexity, spirit, reach and resources? More than likely, they would be amazed—and proud—to see how much of their dream has been realized.

And then, as Sexton says, "They would probably proclaim, 'Well done. Now go out and do more!' And so we will." ■