

The Recovered History of Prospect Hill, 1879-1920: Goodnow Park, the Pepper Box and Lake Nonotuck

Robert Herbert,
with the collaboration of James Gehrt

Goodnow Park, Lake Nonotuck, and the Pepper Box: These were once familiar places at Mount Holyoke College, but they have been utterly lost. Only one of the three, the Pepper Box, has literally disappeared, torn down in 1920. The other two remain but their names have changed. Goodnow Park is now simply Prospect Hill, and Lake Nonotuck has reverted to the prosaic Lower Lake. There is no mystery about the Pepper Box or the origins of Goodnow Park, but just when and how the Lower Lake was renamed Lake Nonotuck is an enigma. It's first mentioned in print in early 1896, but no longer appears after 1918. The process of rediscovering these abandoned place-names involves sorting through the college archives, especially its rich collection of postcards, photographs, stereopticon views and glass negatives which offer a delightful excursion into the years between 1879 and 1914.¹ Because there are rather few printed documents about the evolution of the three sites, it's these photos that let us see the progressive changes in the hill above the campus and the lake, as well as the rise to prominence of the Pepper Box pavilion at the top of the hill.



Prospect Hill Pasture with View to the Seminary, 1875-79

¹ I am deeply indebted to James Gehrt, Digitization Center Coordinator, for his close attention to photographing the archives' sources. His perceptions and his knowledge have made him a veritable partner in this enterprise. I'm thankful also to Leslie Fields, Head of Archives, and Deborah Richards, Archivist, for their warm responses to my constant appeals. When I embarked on this essay I benefitted from Professor Robert Schwartz's seminars on the environmental and cultural history of the college. His interests began in 1900 so did not involve Goodnow Park but he offered valuable lessons in the use of archival materials.

The origins of Goodnow Park²

Before the Seminary acquired Prospect Hill, its slopes that faced the Seminary were pastures for the farm of Byron Smith (1825-1922). Smith's father Erastus (died in 1850) was one of the original supporters of Mary Lyon's seminary and the son grew up as a familiar of Miss Lyon and her school. He followed his father as the marshal of the school's commencement, and he gave students corn roasts and picnics. On Prospect Hill's open fields there were only a few trees, mostly on the ridge. In geological terms, the hill is a drumlin the shape of half an egg sliced sideways. It was formed during the last glacial age when the retreating ice deposited this mound of glacial till as it headed northwest. Unlike much of the terrain of New England, the hill is not characterized by loose boulders and has no rock ledges near the surface. That made its soil an ideal pasture. Several photos in the archives taken from it can be dated before 1879 because they do not show the Boat House that the Seminary built that year on the edge of Stony Brook just as it widened to form the millpond (subsequently baptized Lower Lake).



Lower Lake and Gristmill from Prospect Hill, 1879-80

In *Prospect Hill Pasture with View to the Seminary, 1875-79*, we look from the lower flank of the hill to more farmland across the western shore of the lake. The fenced-off row of trees in the center marks the southern edge of the Seminary's property; its huge main building and furnace tower are above on the left. We see the full extent of the lake and adjacent farmland in *Lower Lake and Gristmill from Prospect Hill, 1879-80*. On the right is the irregular northern

² The dates of the expansion of the Seminary's land have been established by the following sources in the college archives: The "Journal letters" written annually before 1890 by Seminary teachers to inform alumnae of the school year's events; annual reports and minutes of the trustees; annual reports of the Treasurer, A. Lyman Williston, and a revaluation of lands, buildings and equipment dated 1914.

shore of the lake which will eventually give way to Prospect Hall. On the left is the southern half of the lake with the mill built by Erastus Smith in 1847 whose dam today is the bridge leading to the Mandelles. The three light-colored disks a few yards down the hill are three of five wellheads placed over springs that once provided water to the Seminary, according to the later reminiscences of Asa S. Kinney.³ Kinney also remarked upon Smith's very close relations with the school so it's no surprise that he permitted people from the Seminary to stroll or sit in the fields. Prospect Hill was therefore a welcome opening to the landscape from an otherwise limited campus.



Canoeing on Lower Lake, 1880-82

A flurry of activity on the eastern edge of the Seminary grounds began in 1879. For \$200 a Boat House was built on the campus bank of Stony Brook and canoeing on the pond soon became popular ("canoes" were actually small rowboats). *Canoeing on Lower Lake, 1880-82* shows the virtually treeless pasture that will become Goodnow Park in 1882. This is a "cabinet card," taken from a view camera and mounted on thin card. Although unlabeled, it has all the marks of camera views by the Knowlton Brothers of Northampton. It is not a postcard although of nearly the same size. The Seminary was very prominent in South Hadley and surrounding

³ "Reminiscences by Asa Kinney as told to Rogers and Sarah Rusk," typescript of 1954 in the Kinney folder in the college archives.

towns—more so than now—so commercial photographers had enough clients to provide a market. In addition to the Knowlton Brothers, the Boston firm of Hearn & Davis supplied numerous stereopticon views of the Seminary. Moreover, there was still room in the market for traditional picturesque prints, like *Mt. Holyoke Seminary & Grounds from Prospect Hill, 1880* by Thomas Chubbuck of Springfield. Chubbuck also sold black-and-white versions of this print and reissued it after 1882 with the legend “From Goodnow Park.”



Mt. Holyoke Seminary & Grounds from Prospect Hill, 1880

Julia E. Ward, the Principal, had made it known that Prospect Hill would make a valuable addition to the campus. She touted the views from its summit, and the possibilities of landscape gardening. A *Journal Letter* in June, 1879, wrote that “a lot of land on Prospect Hill, directly opposite the present grounds, recently advertised for sale, has been secured through the kindness of Mr. Goodnow, and several other friends, including some former pupils.”⁴ This purchase consisted of about six acres on the uphill side of the pond. In June, 1881, the trustees thanked E. A. Goodnow for giving \$2200 to buy an additional twenty acres of Prospect Hill, the pastureland we’ve been looking at. The property secured by his donations would be called “Goodnow Park” following his wishes.⁵

⁴ Florence Purington, typescript memoir of Henrietta Hooker (MH *Alumnae Quarterly*, 13, 2, July 1929, 75-79. Hooker was “influential in securing the interest of Mr. E. A. Goodnow, . . . the donor of Goodnow Park, more commonly known as Prospect Hill.”

⁵ Anon. *E. A. Goodnow. A Souvenir Sketch*. 2d edition, Worcester, The Blanchard Press 1904. Reproduces the hand-distributed edition of 1892, no changes.

A *Journal Letter* dated a week later reported that this gift put the Seminary “in possession of a large part of Prospect Hill; all that borders upon our grounds this side of the brook and upon the pond, extending over the road [now Park St.] on the east side of the hill. Two New York gentlemen [unnamed] have given several hundred dollars toward the improvement of the land . . .” On November 23, 1881, Goodnow wrote the trustees that \$5000 he was now sending was for a perpetual fund for the park. The annual interest, “after being first applied to repair any loss of the principal shall be used for the enclosing, grading, planting, & otherwise improving & beautifying the grounds.” The following year, the trustees acknowledged three donations “for improvements” on Goodnow Park: \$500 from John Dwight of New York City, and \$100 each from Miss Emma E. Dickinson ’67 of Fairport, NY, and John Maurice of New York City. Not to be outdone, a few months later, according to the *Journal Letter* of May 19, 1882, Goodnow gave \$2000 for “laying out walks, planting trees, erecting a pavilion, and other expenses.”



Plan for Planting Prospect Hill, 1882

With these funds, the transformation of Prospect Hill began. In the college archives is a large *Plan for Planting Prospect Hill* dated January 1882 by Ernest W. Bowditch, a landscape gardener of Boston. Bowditch (1850-1918) was a young landscape architect who subsequently was the designer of the gardens of the Breakers in Newport, and of several parkways and gardens in Cleveland, Ohio. His hand-drawn plan for the Seminary, 39^{1/2} x 43^{1/2} in., unpublished and unknown until recently, shows the “Carriage Way” that departs from a bridge over Stony Book

(the “Iron Bridge,” built in 1886) and winds up to the site of the Pepper Box. This broad roadway exists today.



Detail, Plan for Planting Prospect Hill, 1882

On the Bowditch plan, a few circles in black ink locate trees existing in 1882, mostly scattered along Park St. above. Contemporary photographs by the Knowlton Brothers and Hearn & Davis picture cows sheltering in their shade. Downhill, near the center of the plan, circles in black ink are labeled “wells.” These are the springs that Asa Kinney described as we saw when looking at *Lower Lake and Gristmill from Prospect Hill, 1879-80*. Otherwise cloud-shaped forms drawn in red ink on the plan indicate foliage of about 120 new trees that would be planted. Their choices and placements roughly conform to British picturesque parks and gardens dating from the late eighteenth century. For an educational institution, a great variety of trees would not only suit an esthetic arrangement but also be available for the arboreal sciences. Among the trees were Austrian and Scotch pines, Norway, Oriental and Englemann’s spruces, many kinds of oaks, individual specimens of Western catalpa, Kentucky coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), and Cucumber tree (*Magnolia acuminata*). The most numerous were—in descending order—pines, oaks, larches, beeches, birches, spruces, and hornbeams.



Canoeists on Lake Nonotuck below Goodnow Park, 1896-97

Bowditch envisioned that when looking up to Goodnow Park from the campus as in *Canoeists on Lake Nonotuck below Goodnow Park, 1896-97*, one would see a picturesque park with copses and individual trees. From some angles one would also see the curving pathways necessitated for ease in climbing but which also afforded graceful “natural” rhythms rather than straight-line geometry. Up in the park, open glades would present constantly shifting perspectives of nearby foliage and some distant views. However, Bowditch made no provision for maintaining a prospect from the top of the hill. As they grew, the trees planted just below the Pepper Box would obscure the view even before they matured. When all the proposed trees were fully grown, the open spots would be hemmed in by overhanging foliage. This is indeed what happened, and because Goodnow Park was neglected after about 1910, the hill became increasingly forested. Today only the carriageway and the cleared site of the lost Pepper Box are more-or-less open at ground level, but they’re shrouded overhead by foliage and don’t provide distant views.

Because the Seminary couldn’t afford to buy trees, a nursery of trees was implanted in the spring of 1882 near the botanical garden, and put under the charge of Charles “Posey” Bates, the gardener. It’s not known if the saplings planted from the late 1880s onward systematically

followed the 1882 plan. In a *Journal Letter* of May 19, 1882, the college librarian Mary O. Nutting wrote “Some thousands of baby trees, of various kinds, are already planted in a nursery just north of the botanical garden; from which, year by year, the more advanced will graduate, and be transferred to permanent positions in Goodnow Park. . . . We trust that five years will develop some attractions there, though it will require many more to accomplish all that is planned. On the summit of the hill we hope to have a pavilion in which tired pilgrims may rest, and where no doubt many a class-meeting will yet be held.” Right away English larches and quick-growing balsams were planted on the hill as “nurse trees” to shelter the infant saplings when they became available.



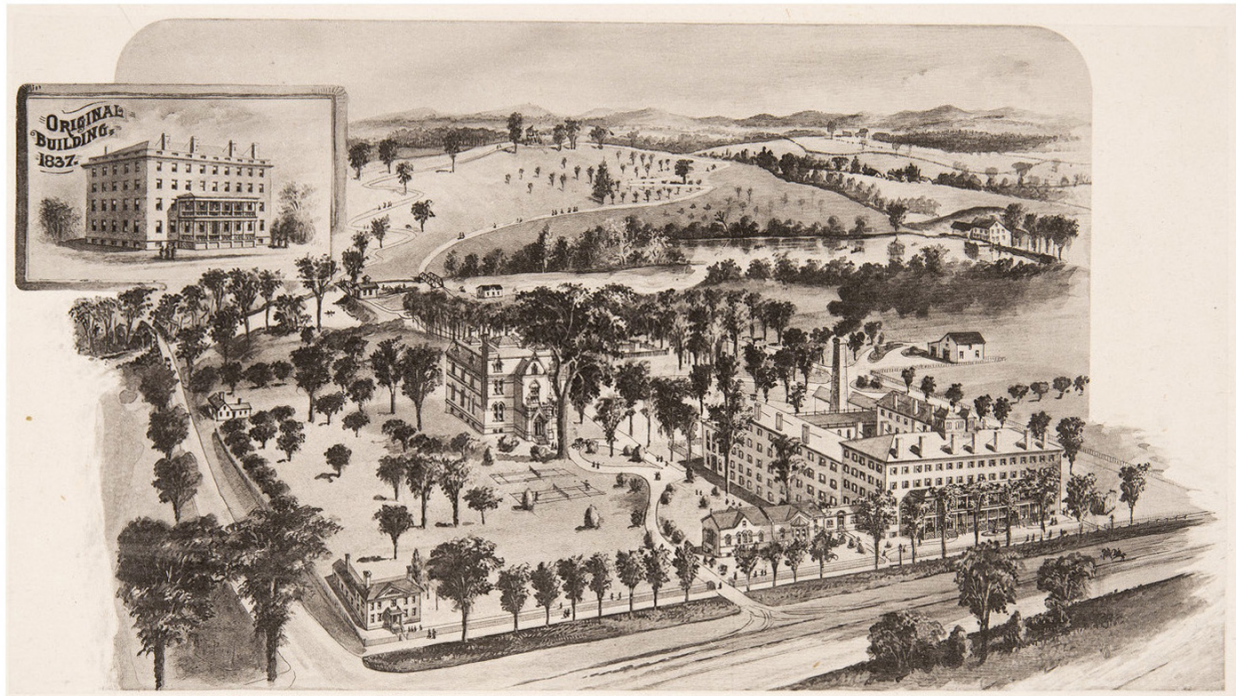
Prospect Hill and Pump House from Northwest, 1884-86

Already in 1882, before Bowditch’s planned carriageway was begun, a footpath to the summit was made across mostly open fields. It did not follow Bowditch’s plan but instead began at the bridge over Stony Brook by the Pump House. (In the fall of 2015 it was cleared of brush and is again walkable.) One sees the beginning of its rise up the hill beyond the Pump House in *Prospect Hill and Pump House from Northwest, 1884-86* where a group of women pose for the camera. It angled by the future site of Willits-Hallowell and rose steeply in switchbacks to the top of the ridge where a tiny image of the Pepper Box pavilion can be made out. Then in 1884 the more ambitious carriage road was begun, a substantial earth-moving project that would have involved animals and machinery. In 1886 it was connected to the campus by an iron bridge, which we will come to shortly.



Five Women on Goodnow Park above the Carriageway, 1886-88

The railing of the new bridge, its point of departure, can be made out in the distance of *Five Women on Goodnow Park above the Carriageway, 1886-88* taken from high up on the hill. The light sandy path of the carriageway curves into the flank of the slope; a wisp of the footpath comes over the rise to the right. Lounging on the hill, where a few saplings are evident, are five women. The same five women are in the foreground of another photo in the archives, obviously taken the same day from a few feet further north. These two photos give rise to speculation. Was the photographer simply taking pictures from the hill and talked the women into posing in order to give interest to his view? This is most likely, but perhaps one or more of the women commissioned a professional photographer like Milan P. Warner of Holyoke (1848-1903), who took views from Prospect Hill in the 1880s.



A Bird's-eye view of Mount Holyoke Seminary and Grounds, 1887

In a print commissioned in 1887 by the seminary, *A Bird's-eye view of Mount Holyoke Seminary and Grounds, 1887* as the frontispiece of its fifty year history,⁶ the two paths up the hill show distinctly in the distance as they cross the Pump House bridge and the Iron Bridge. In the crisp lines of the print we see the Boat House to the right of the Iron Bridge. At the other end of the elongated stretch of water is the gristmill which necessitated the dam that formed the millpond. Above in the new Goodnow Park a few people stroll along the two paths; young trees have made their appearances. The carriageway climbed less steeply than the footpath through broad switchbacks to the pavilion on the crest where both met.

⁶ Sarah H. (Locke) Stow. *History of Mount Holyoke Seminary . . . during its first half century 1837-1887*. Springfield 1887.



The Pepper Box, 1895-1900

The Pepper Box

The Queen Anne styled pavilion on the crest of Prospect Hill almost immediately was given a nickname that stuck: *The Pepper Box, 1895-1900*. Because it was roughly cylindrical (it had twelve sides) and was surmounted by a gable, it recalled the household pepper container patented in 1858 by Edmund Brown of Lynn MA. Below its conical roof, painted dark red, were wide window openings; the pavilion quickly became popular among the students. “Walk with us up the winding foot-path to our pretty pavilion in Goodnow Park on Prospect Hill” wrote Ellen Bowers in a *Journal Letter* on June 10, 1885. “The meadow is full of buttercups and daisies as of old, and the little foot-bridge by the wheel-house [Pump House] is the same, but the boat house below is a new resident . . . A bridge is soon to be built across our little brook near the boat house for the carriage-road which winds up the hill in Goodnow Park.” For a few years until the nearby trees gained height, the Pepper Box was prized for its view of Mount Nonotuck and the Mt. Tom range. That it was a romantic view is clear from an essay in the college newspaper in April 1894. “The horizon as seen from most of its windows is bounded by long, low ranges of hills. They shut out the strife and tumult of the great world. Love and peace are the guardians of this realm of knowledge; but it is the abode of humanity, and joys and sorrows alike enter in. Our college girl will come here often during her four years’ residence. In the mornings, she will come to view the sunrise. Her eyes will follow the course of the sunlight, as it presses back the jealous shadow of the hill, and kisses the little lake beneath. . . . She will come with a gay party of picnickers, to watch the fading of the daylight.”



A Gathering at the Pepper Box, 1888-90

In *A Gathering at the Pepper Box, 1888-90* are thirty women being photographed at one of the meetings held periodically there by campus social groups, maybe a picnic (two women hold picnic baskets) or a tea. A bench shows to the right, and we get a glimpse of the broad clearing on the ridge punctuated by the pavilion. Organized gatherings including Maydays would have been among the highlights of campus life, but everyday excursions up the hill by students and faculty, and the occasional visitors, would have been more common. The Pepper Box was also called the “Spoon Holder.” This evoked “spooning,” a rare hint of erotic socializing among the students. A manuscript by Louise Dodge, a junior in 1902, offers jokey rules for the Pepper Box. No two persons could remain inside for more than five minutes. “Each couple must wait till the last couple gets out before entering.” “Sittings by moonlight restricted to 3 minutes.”

The Millpond and Stony Brook’s bridges

In 1884, in order to get adequate water as well as water power, the Seminary spent \$3,500 to buy the upper millpond which had a substantial falls and a paper mill. Of the ten acres of the new property (the Upper Lake, hence the naming of Lower Lake), eight were accounted for by the pond. There were also (according to the *Journal Letter*, December 23, 1884) “the paper-mill, the upper pond, and three tenement houses, the tenants of which rejoice at the change of ownership, since the houses have been made more comfortable for winter.” Just how long the Seminary had tenants is not known. The erstwhile paper mill was removed before the dam was raised eighteen inches in 1912. Contemporary documents also mention a cider mill, perhaps another use of the paper mill or else an independent structure.



Three Women by Lower Lake, 1888-90

At the south end of Lower Lake was Smith's gristmill. About 1890, three women who entered the college in 1888 (Emma Evangeline Bloomfield '92, Grace Martin Burt '92 and Caroline Frost '94) were photographed on the shore of the lake across from the gristmill: *Three Women by Lower Lake, 1888-90*. To the left of the imposing red mill is seen the gravel quarry that Smith exploited, cut into the hill on which the Mandelles were built in 1923.

For someone who years before had been familiar with the ponds and the mills, a visit in 1890 would have been startling. The activity of the mills and several buildings had been replaced by the leisurely pursuits of college women who now enjoyed their vastly increased grounds. From the Boat House on Stony Brook, canoeists paddled on waters that no longer supported industry or farming. In 1886, the Seminary purchased Smith's mill and adjacent property on the south end of Lower Lake. A decade later the rest of Smith's extensive farmland was acquired, including the site of Mandelle and Mead Halls. Also in 1896, properties owned by the Cook, Snow and Taylor families were added to the campus which now extended uninterruptedly to Morgan St.



Women on the Iron Bridge, 1886-90

With the expansion of the campus, bridges were needed over Stony Brook. Between the stone arch of Park St. and the Pump House there are stone and cement supports of an overhead bridge that led to Cowles Lodge (1910-65). Much earlier a bridge had stretched over the brook from the Pump House to facilitate walking along its west shore, where picket fences can be seen in some photographs. In 1882, as we saw, it led to the new footpath up the hill. Then in 1886 a new bridge was built a few dozen yards south. It's shown in the very charming *Women on the Iron Bridge, 1886-90*. This bridge—its iron structure is still intact—was constructed by R. F. Hawkins Iron Works of Springfield at a cost of \$1373, toward which the generous E. A. Goodnow gave a further \$300. It initiated the carriageway that still winds up Goodnow Park. The *Journal Letter* of February 10 of that year wrote that already the carriageway and the footpath were much frequented “especially in autumn days when the view from the top is so enchanting. Both Seniors and Juniors have already picnicked in the Pavilion there.”



Women Seated on Stony Brook bank near Iron Bridge, 1888-90

Postcards and other photos picture small footbridges that gave students access to the slender island that then divided the brook's flow at this point. A narrow channel on the campus side, once the millrace for the pump, flanked the main channel. At an unknown later date a steam engine replaced the water wheel; the millrace and the narrow island it had formed were absorbed into the broader flow about 1910. Before then, however, a small bridge led from the campus to the little island. It appears in several photographs. Its crude planks and the tip of the island poke into the left corner of *Women Seated on Stony Brook bank near Iron Bridge, 1888-90*. A group of students relax in the mottled sunlight which also discloses across the Iron Bridge a portion of the carriageway as it climbs the hill. To the right, as we look over the roadway to Lower Lake, the foreshortened Boat House appears, nearly hidden by a clutch of trees. After the Iron Bridge was built, the planks leading to the island were replaced by a rustic bridge that remained there for about twenty years. There would have been more than one reason to replace the crude planks by a sturdier bridge, but its rusticity certainly suited the picturesqueness of Goodnow Park, probably deliberately so.



Stony Brook from the Iron Bridge to the Little Falls, 1885-90

Its full span and the end of the little island are visible in *Stony Brook from the Iron Bridge to the Little Falls, 1885-90*, one of a number of “cyanotypes” popular toward the end of the 19th century. (A photographic negative was turned into a cyanotype by using a solution of iron compounds instead of the silver used for black-and-white prints.)



Women on the Pump House Bridge, 1885-90

The bank of the brook from the Pump House to the Boat House was much frequented by campus women. It lay at the edge of the campus and invited students to find relaxation away from its well-ordered precincts. (The Upper Lake, newly acquired, was less often visited then.) Especially popular was the Pump House bridge, the site of many photographs, including *Prospect Hill and Pump House from Northwest, 1884-86* which has already been mentioned. In a closer view of the bridge from the other side, *Women on the Pump House Bridge, 1885-90*, five women face the photographer from the bridge, and a similar group has crossed over to the east bank to look at the camera. (The solemnity of the dark clad women is amusingly relieved when we learn that the bridge was nicknamed “the kissing bridge.”) The waterfall was distinguished as “The Falls” in captions of several photos, and was also called the “Little Falls.”

Goodnow Park after 1886

Goodnow Park prospered through the 1880s and 1890s. The income of the donor’s permanent fund, averaging about \$250, provided the wherewithal for its maintenance. Goodnow also supported the Seminary with other donations. In 1883 he gave \$2250 toward the \$7000 purchase of the George Chamberlain property whose former Dwight homestead on the corner of College & Park Streets was remodeled for music and art; he also gave \$200 “for education.” In 1886 he contributed \$300 toward the cost of the iron bridge over Stony Brook, and the following year, \$5000 for an educational fund. Finally, in 1890 he sent the college a further \$100, his last contribution to the park, “to make the shores of the lake more sightly by ridding them of weeds and other aquatic plants” Goodnow was a notable defender of women’s education. Following his gifts to Mt. Holyoke he gave generously to Wellesley College and other women’s institutions, and founded a women’s seminary in South Africa. Presumably it was he or his family who created another Goodnow Park, established in his home town Princeton MA (today the town’s golf course).

A banner year for the Seminary was reached in 1888, when Governor Oliver Ames signed the charter of Mount Holyoke Seminary and College on March 8. Courses had been added as the curriculum broadened to qualify as a college. The Seminary had grown from twenty-seven teachers and 226 students in 1880, to thirty-three teachers and 313 students in 1887 (tuition remained unchanged at \$175). A second charter in 1893 confirmed the dropping away of the Seminary track and the institution’s permanent name: Mount Holyoke College. Three years later came the great trauma, the fire of September 27, 1896, which destroyed the large Seminary building which had been expanded periodically from its erection in 1837. It had housed all the students, most of the faculty, the classrooms, dining room, gymnasium and boiler plant. Beginning right after the fire, in an astonishing rally, large sums were given to the college. In 1897 five dormitories (“cottages”) were built: Brigham, Safford, Porter, Pearsons and the first Rockefeller Hall. The famed Olmstead firm was engaged to plan the campus whose new buildings appear in the grand plan provided to the college in 1900 (see below). Lake Nonotuck is named instead of “Lower Lake,” and sweeping changes are proposed for Goodnow Park. However, these changes were not made (perhaps cost was a problem), and the park’s original carriageway remains.



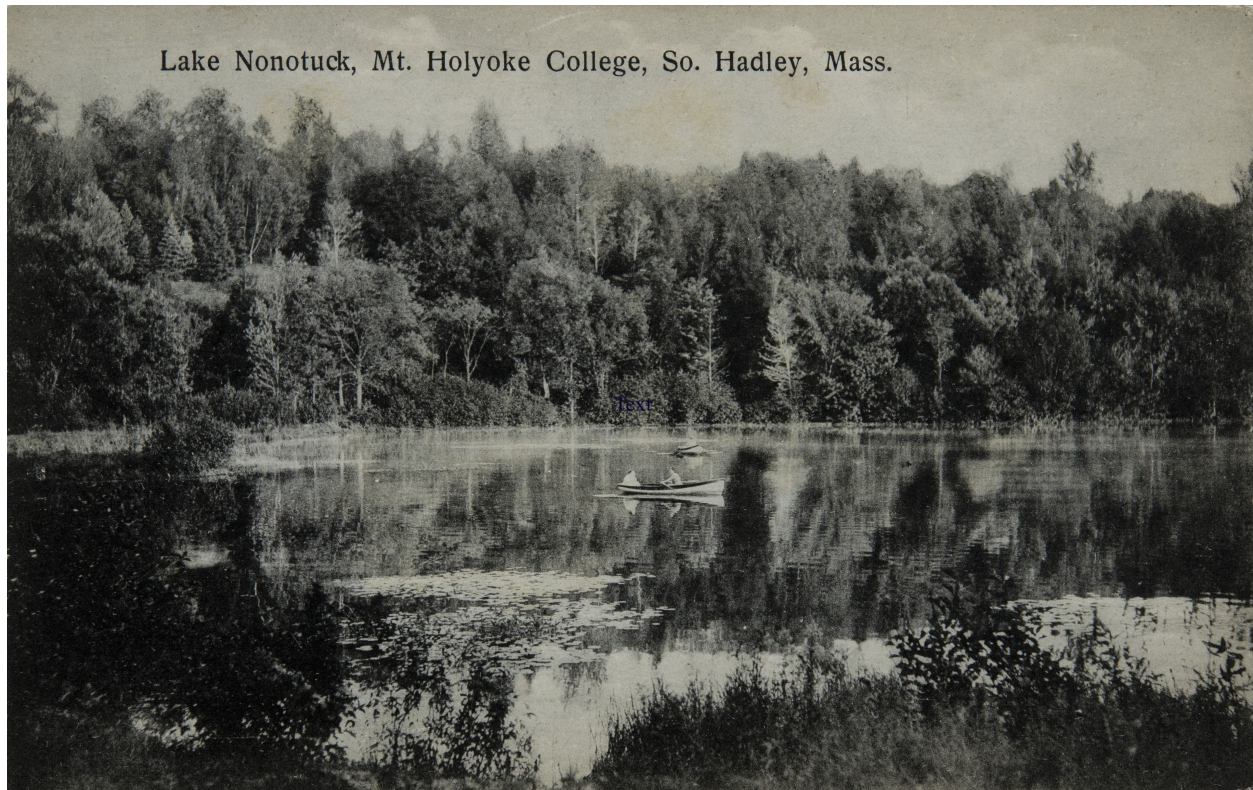
Goodnow Park from Lake Nonotuck, 1893-94

In Goodnow Park trees from the nursery were being planted on Prospect Hill as they grew, presumably following Goodrich's 1882 plan. By 1893-94 when *Goodnow Park from Lake Nonotuck, 1893-94* was taken, only a sprinkling of bushes and young trees had been planted; the hillside was still largely open. To the left here, young bushes and trees mark the curving ascent of the footpath to the Pepper Box above. The carriageway slants up to the right, and one of its uphill curves can be spotted. Comparison of this photo with *Canoeing on Lower Lake, 1880-82* shows how much of the pasture has been filled in. Thereafter, photos show a steady growth of trees and bushes as they're transplanted from the campus nursery. By about 1905 the hillside became quite shaggy because the open spaces were rapidly being filled in.



Olmsted plan of the campus, 1900

On the plan of the college provided by the Olmsted firm, *Olmsted plan of the campus, 1900*, Lake Nonotuck and Goodnow Park figure prominently although one has to peer closely to extract the names of Goodnow Park and Prospect Hill from the abundance of little markers for foliage. Although this plan determined the location of most of the college buildings and open spaces, its recommended changes for Prospect Hill and Goodnow Park were not undertaken. Indeed, by late in the first decade the slope of Goodnow Park had become a woodland. The trees had prospered so much that there were few signs remaining of a park.



Lake Nonotuck, 1906-10

A postcard by botany professor Asa S. Kinney, *Lake Nonotuck, 1906-10*, is a witness to these changes. As for Lake Nonotuck, prominently labeled on the postcard and the plan, it virtually ceased to be named in campus publications and correspondence in the new century, occluded by the more familiar “Lower Lake.” It was kept charmingly alive, but obscure, by the Lake Nonotuck School of Scribblers, a group from the class of 1902.⁷ It also figures on a few postcards over the next decade, and in a small book of photographs by Kinney in 1909, *Views of Mount Holyoke College*, which includes four photographs labeled “Goodnow Park.”

⁷ *A Little Book of College Verse, Selected from the Undergraduate Verse of Mount Holyoke College, chiefly from the pages of The Mount Holyoke.* Compiled, edited and published by the LNSS of the Class of 1902 (Springfield 1901).



Mayday Carriage at the Pepper Box, Rainy Day

The Pepper Box continued to be an attractive center of campus rituals. Mayday celebrations were held there frequently and other college ceremonies from time to time. *The Mount Holyoke* in 1901 reported on a costumed procession up the hillside to the clearing around the pavilion.⁸ This emulated a sixteenth century English May Day, including a Maypole dance followed by several plays. Its horse-drawn float draws near the Pepper Box in *Mayday Carriage at the Pepper Box, Rainy Day*. An equally festive Mayday was observed in 1905, when the costumed procession up the hill accompanied a wagon of dancers. Supper was served “on the hill,” followed by the sophomore play.⁹

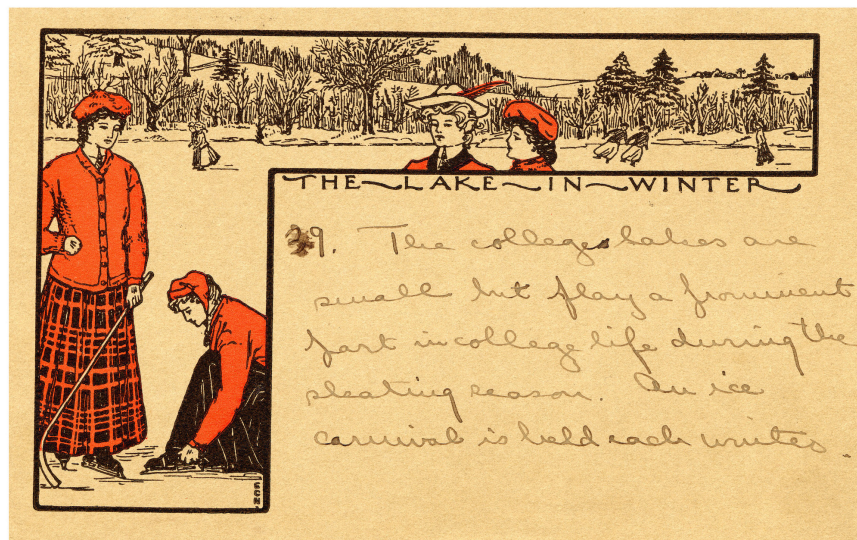
⁸ *The Mount Holyoke*, Vol. XI, June 1901, pp. 18-20.

⁹ *The Mount Holyoke*, Vol. XV, June 1905, pp. 28-29.



Bird's-eye view of Mt. Holyoke, 1908

In 1903 the college purchased for \$1203 the open land extending from Park St. up the hill, the "Maloney Lot," facing the site of the future Ham and McGregor Halls. The treasurer's report that year called it an addition to Goodnow Park, but it remained an undeveloped meadow, a symmetrical echo of the open slope on the other side of the park. Goodnow Park now extended from Park St. to Morgan St. Its nearly full extent is the backdrop of the large *Bird's-eye view of Mt. Holyoke* engraved in 1908 by H. D. Nichols. The left (north) quarter of the hill encompasses Goodnow Park, with its slanting carriageway. In the center is the meadow above the future Mandelles, and the open slopes and trees where 1837 Hall and the Mandelles will be erected.



The Lake in Winter, 1902-04

We can assume that in wintertime some students sledded in Goodnow Park although there was no mention of organized activities in the snow. Skating on the lake, however, was common and is celebrated in the handsome Art Nouveau postcard, *The Lake in Winter, 1902-04*. We learn from the verso that it was “For the benefit of the endowment fund of Dwight Art Building” which had opened in 1902. The artist “ECH” had a professional talent beyond the capacity of an art student, an indication that the college had hopes for a wide sale. Skating at the college was encouraged by a large rink donated by John D. Rockefeller in February, 1896, the winter before the disastrous fire. The student paper announced that it was “a low rectangular structure (120 ft. x 50 ft.) and stands on the brow of the hill overlooking Lake Nonotuck.”¹⁰ It was shortly afterwards moved over to the edge of the water.



Rockefeller Skating Rink, 1898-1906

The wide indoor rink was the setting for a photo of three dozen students, *Rockefeller Skating Rink, 1898-1906*, some equipped with hockey sticks. Their sport was well organized as we see from their uniform black clothing, an amusing contrast with the free-spirited skaters of the Art Nouveau postcard. Writing in 1897, Henrietta Hooker remarked that Lake Nonotuck was used “for skating and rowing, though the use of the Rockefeller skating rink in the last winters has made the lake look lonely.” The rink, however, was dismantled only a few years into the new century to make room for a new power plant.

¹⁰ *The Mount Holyoke*, Vol. V, Feb. 1896, p. 207.



The Drive, Goodnow Park, 1906-10

After 1900, cabinet views of Goodnow Park and the Stony Brook bridges are no longer readily found, except for those taken by Kinney some of which he converted to postcards. Presumably some students and their families had Kodak box cameras from about 1890, and “Brownies” by 1900, greatly diminishing the market for professional photographs. Colored postcards nonetheless became common toward the end of the century and frequently appeared until the first World War so there was no lack of images of the campus and Goodnow Park. Among several colored views of the carriageway of Goodnow Park is *The Drive, Goodnow Park, 1906-10*, which shows an upward curve of the thickly wooded drive.

Goodnow Park in 1910 and later

In 1910 the landscape architect John Charles Olmsted¹¹ revisited Mount Holyoke College to look over the implementation of the plan of the campus that his firm had made in 1900. The changes to Prospect Hill proposed by that plan had not been made; perhaps Olmsted hoped for a further commission although none was offered. His report of March 30, 1910, is a capital document for Goodnow Park, a time capsule that has no equivalent.¹² With the treasurer A. L. Williston, Olmsted drove in an automobile up the carriageway to the summit of Prospect Hill. One can imagine the challenge that flivver had! “The drive is too steep, especially on the turns of the zigzags.” Olmsted told Williston that he favored “improving” the fields between the college and Morgan St., adding “walks and trees and shrubs so as to make it a part of Goodnow Park.” This was not done, however. Today the line of trees on the north side of the meadow above the Mandelles marks the extent of the original Goodnow Park. Olmstead also noted that the college

¹¹ Stepson of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. of Central Park fame. In 1898 following the retirement of the senior Olmsted, he and his half-brother Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., founded the Olmsted Brothers firm.

¹² For his seminar on the environmental and cultural history of the college, Professor Robert Schwartz obtained from the Olmsted firm’s papers in the Library of Congress a copy of the report dated March 30, 1910, by J. C. Olmsted, of his recent visit to the college.

now owned the land extending northward from Prospect Hill downhill to Park St. "It is open land with some orchards. One or two small houses have been torn down. An old larger house above the ice house has been fitted up for a dormitory." This dormitory, Cowles Lodge, was used until 1965 when Ham and McGregor Halls were built. Their parking lots usurped the lodge and the lower half of this once open land, but the remaining slope is an expansive field that aerates the nearby dormitories.

Of course we regret that there's no other contemporaneous description of the hill and Goodnow Park but this means that we all the more prize Olmsted's 1910 report. "Part way up Prospect Hill, the students have fitted up a small space with little terraces for seats and use it for an outdoor theatre. The trees are numerous but not very large yet. Still it is a pretty spot The views from the top of the hill are nearly shut off by the growth of young trees. I said they ought to open vistas. I urged a general thinning of trees all over the hill as they are crowding and spoiling each other. On the whole they have done surprisingly well and while the selection and grouping deceive no one as to naturalness, the effects are varied and attractive. The kinds that retain lower foliage best should be given room, especially beeches, maples and oaks. The pines and spruces are needed for winter effect, but should be radically thinned. Mr. Williston said they had been thinning but I thought it must have been merely dead and dying trees. At any rate it was quite insufficient."

As it happened, no substantial thinning took place despite Olmsted's plea. The hill steadily acquired its abundance of trees which blocked the views that Bowditch envisioned when he designed Goodnow Park in 1882. As for the Pepper Box, the last known event at the pavilion was on May 8, 1918, when the class of 1921 performed a circus for the seniors. Only two years later, the timeworn structure, said to be deteriorated and vandalized, was demolished. A far more calamitous event occurred in September, 1938, when a hurricane leveled several hundreds of its trees, adding to the devastation suffered by the former arboreal splendor of the campus itself. Over the following seventy-five years other storms took their tolls, so only a handful of trees can be found that undoubtedly date from the 1880s and 1890s. Although today the picturesqueness of Goodnow Park is no more, Prospect Hill still offers the attractions of woodland walks. The old carriageway continues to make its way up to the top of the ridge culminating in an open clearing where the Pepper Box once stood. Lower Lake has swallowed up Nonotuck Lake, but the crest of Nonotuck Mountain off to the west is visible from its eastern shore.

After years of neglect, Prospect Hill is once again drawing attention. The course of the old footpath has recently been retraced and opened up from the parking lot between Willets-Hallowell and Prospect to the crest. The college's Miller-Worley Center for the Environment will make sure that the hill will more often be visited by classes in botany, biology and ecology, as it takes its part in the campus's expanding Curricular Trail. Campus-wide attention will be drawn to the hill in autumn 2016 with the opening of the exhibition in the art museum: *Goodnow Park and the Pepper Box: The Recovered History of Prospect Hill, 1879-1920*. A number of cabinet views, stereos, postcards and other original documents will be displayed, as well as nearly thirty printed digital enlargements of vintage photographs. Visitors to the exhibition will have the pleasure of being surrounded by images of the college's picturesque park of a century ago.