

Let's start by putting this all in context; let's just look at a few interesting facts about life in the early 1800s and consider how things have changed in 200 years:

- In the early 1800s, life expectancy was about age 40.
- There were only 20 states.
- The United States was at war with Great Britain and Spain at various times during this period, as well as American Indians, as it fought for increased territory.
- In 1817, the year Wilbraham Academy was founded, James Monroe was inaugurated as just the fifth president of the United States.
- The world was immersed in war, aside from the expansion of the U.S., with the Ottoman Empire fighting over the Middle East and Southeastern Europe, Napoleon attempting to conquer the rest of Europe and pushing into Asia until defeated by Russia, Spain, Great Britain and Germany, and China becoming engaged in the first Opium War.
- In 1819, just two years after the founding of Wilbraham Academy, the American steamship Savannah, under part steam and part sail-power, crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Savannah, Georgia, to Liverpool, England, arriving in a world record-setting ... 29 days ... imagine if it took more than a month to get to WMA from overseas ...
- Trade ports and international relationships were just beginning to blossom in China and Japan, with cities like Shanghai and Tokyo opening up.
- In 1820, the population of the United States was around 9.6 million . . . just over the current population of New York City.
- Also in 1820, in New Jersey, a gentleman named Colonel Robert Gibbon Johnson ate a tomato in public ... just to prove they are not poisonous. Shocking ...
- The two primary political parties in the U.S., now the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, were started during this time period through the national debate over U.S. allegiance with either Great Britain or France.
- In 1821, four years after the founding of Wilbraham Academy, Emma Willard founded the first women's college in the United States - Troy Female Seminary.

- In 1822, five years after the founding of Wilbraham Academy, the first group of freed American slaves settled a black colony known as the Republic of Liberia (which means Liberty) when they arrived on African soil at Providence Island. The capital, Monrovia, is named after President James Monroe.
- In 1824, the year Wesleyan Academy moved here to Wilbraham, sushi was invented in Japan.

A lot has changed since those early days that seem so distant from us now. It is hard to imagine that people exactly like us managed their lives similarly but without so many of the modern conveniences from which we benefit. For example:

- The first clothes washing machine was patented in 1851.
- The radiator, as a form of central building heat, was invented around 1855. That is why, until last year, Rich Hall had 25 chimneys. Those were necessary because every dorm room had a fireplace for heat and students needed to supply their own firewood.
- The telephone was not invented until 1876 (and the cell phone in 1973).
- Light bulbs, which were the first use of consumer electricity, were invented in 1879.
- The first automobile was created around 1885.
- Deodorant and antiperspirant were not invented until 1888.
- The first brief flight by airplane, which lasted 120 feet, occurred in 1903.
- In 1913, refrigerators for residential use were invented.

Just think for a moment what it might have been like to attend the Academy *200 years ago* with no telephones, no airplanes, no cars, no electricity or electric light, no clothes washing machines and ... no deodorant. Think for just a few minutes about what it must have been like to wake up when the rooster called (because the first adjustable alarm clock was not patented until 1847), light a gas lamp or candle in your chilly room and start a fire in your fireplace, dress in stiff woolen clothes that you had washed *by hand* (two weeks ago), head down to a meager breakfast that was made *without* foods requiring refrigeration, most of which were grown in or around the school, and then off to class with the homework that you completed the night before by lamp or

candlelight with a pencil or a feather pen, and finally, after classes, off to do your share of the chores in the school's gardens or tending the livestock that sustained you and the rest of the community throughout the year.

Needless to say, it would have been a VERY different experience from the one on which you are about embark this year.

Regardless of all that has changed in the last 200 years, some things remain very much the same. People in 1817 possessed few of the modern conveniences that today make our lives so much more comfortable, enjoyable and productive. Yet ... we still struggle mightily with some of the same issues with which they wrestled:

- Gender inequality
- Discrimination
- Economic instability
- Military conflict
- Domestic and international political uncertainty
- Civil unrest

As we all know, these topics are still timely for us now; that has not changed. There are a few other things, however, that have remained very much the same ... basic principles that govern our very core as an academic institution and a residential community:

- We believe that education and a love of learning is the key to a fulfilling life, and that healthy habits of mind are developed through interest, hard work, trial and error, freedom of inquiry, challenge and the support of a caring faculty.
- We accept that humans are fallible and imperfect, but we also believe in the need for self-improvement and that a worthy life is also one of thoughtful self-reflection, humility and kindness.
- We believe in the respect of all people, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, skin color, or any of the other qualities that make us all so unique and contribute so meaningfully to our diverse global community, and we reject the presence of hate and intolerance in all of its manifestations.
- We believe in the promise of youth, all of you, and the hope that you represent to the world and to all of us.

We believe that citizenship in this community comes with enormous privileges and therefore equal responsibility to one another. In this community:

- we are thankful for what we have
- we offer our assistance and support to one another
- we respect our school, ourselves and others
- we seek solutions rather than blame
- we are friendly and courteous to one another
- we clean up after ourselves, both literally and figuratively
- we value all of our differences for their unique contribution to the whole
- we hold ourselves accountable for our words and actions
- we win and lose with grace
- we actively engage with one another
- we apologize and we forgive
- we challenge ourselves to do, and be, better
- we live clean
- we speak true
- we work hard
- we play fair

These values and those like them have been the foundation of this school since its founding days in the early 1800s, and will continue to be so, for another 200 years, beginning tomorrow with the year of the Class of 2018.