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Dartmouth

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Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** The Colonial Roots: Founding Dartmouth
- **Chapter 2** Eleazar Wheelock and the Vision for Education
- **Chapter 3** The Charter and Early Years in Hanover
- **Chapter 4** Educating Native Americans: Aspirations and Realities
- **Chapter 5** Faith, Ministry, and the Shaping of Curriculum
- **Chapter 6** Dartmouth Before the Revolution: Challenges and Growth
- **Chapter 7** Post-Revolutionary Survival and Transformation
- **Chapter 8** The Dartmouth College Case: Defending Autonomy
- **Chapter 9** Embracing Diversity: African-American and Minority Students
- **Chapter 10** Academic Evolution: Liberal Arts at Dartmouth
- **Chapter 11** The Birth and Growth of Professional Schools
- **Chapter 12** The D-Plan and Year-Round Learning
- **Chapter 13** Research and Innovation: Dartmouth's Academic Frontier
- **Chapter 14** The Making of Modern Majors and Interdisciplinary Programs
- **Chapter 15** Campus Life: Tradition, Community, and Connection
- **Chapter 16** Traditions Old and New: Rituals that Bind
- **Chapter 17** Dartmouth and the Arts: Creativity on Campus
- **Chapter 18** Athletics and the Big Green Spirit
- **Chapter 19** Outdoor Adventure and the New Hampshire Setting
- **Chapter 20** Preparing Leaders: From Classroom to World Stage
- **Chapter 21** Alumni Ties and Dartmouth's Lifelong Network
- **Chapter 22** Embracing Change: Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
- **Chapter 23** Dartmouth's Impact Beyond the Classroom
- **Chapter 24** Looking to the Future: Innovation and Identity in the 21st Century
- **Chapter 25** Dartmouth's Enduring Legacy

Introduction

Dartmouth College, nestled in the scenic landscape of Hanover, New Hampshire, holds a unique place in the tapestry of American higher education. Established in 1769, Dartmouth stands as one of the nine colonial colleges founded before the American Revolution. Its establishment, survival, and continual reinvention over the centuries reflect both the enduring values and the evolving ambitions of American society. With a deep commitment to the liberal arts, a tradition of innovation, and a focus on close-knit community life, Dartmouth has cultivated generations of leaders, thinkers, and visionaries.

The genesis of Dartmouth was rooted in the pioneering vision of Eleazar Wheelock, a Congregational minister devoted to education and missionary work among Native Americans. Wheelock's founding of Moor's Indian Charity School, and the subsequent relocation and transformation into Dartmouth College, represented more than just a change in location; it symbolized the early complexities and ambitions of American education. The college's charter, granted in the name of King George III, set the stage for an institution that would weather revolutions—both political and intellectual—while shaping its own distinctive identity.

Throughout its history, Dartmouth has continually expanded and adapted. From its beginnings as a school intended to educate Native Americans and train Congregationalist ministers, the college rapidly evolved into a secular institution known for academic excellence in a broad array of fields. Dartmouth is today a leader not only in undergraduate liberal arts education but also in graduate and professional programs through its renowned schools of medicine, engineering, business, and advanced studies.

This book tells the story of Dartmouth not just as a campus or curriculum, but as a living community. The traditions—like the First-Year Trips, Homecoming bonfire, and Winter Carnival—are more than nostalgic rituals; they are the connective tissue that binds generations of Dartmouth students and alumni. The college's rural setting has fostered a culture of self-reliance, adventure, and strong bonds, while a commitment to diversity and inclusion has increasingly shaped its mission and impact.

Dartmouth's influence reaches far beyond its picturesque campus. Its alumni are woven into the fabric of American and global leadership, innovation, and creativity. From Nobel laureates and Fortune 500 CEOs to influential writers, artists, and government officials, Dartmouth graduates are marked by their intellectual rigor, collaborative spirit, and enduring devotion to the college that shaped them.

As we embark on this exploration of Dartmouth's rich history, it becomes clear that the story of this university is, in many ways, the story of American education itself—an ever-evolving testament to curiosity, resilience, and the enduring quest for knowledge and purpose.

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CHAPTER ONE: The Seeds of an Institution

The story of Dartmouth College doesn't begin on the verdant plains of Hanover, New Hampshire, but rather in the rolling hills of colonial Connecticut, with a determined Congregational minister named Eleazar Wheelock. Born in Windham, Connecticut, in 1711, Wheelock was a graduate of Yale College and a fervent participant in the Great Awakening, a religious revival that swept through the American colonies in the mid-18th century. His passion for evangelism soon intertwined with a deep-seated belief in the transformative power of education, particularly for Native Americans.

In 1754, Wheelock put his educational ideals into practice by establishing Moor's Indian Charity School in Lebanon, Connecticut. The school was named for Joshua Moor, a wealthy farmer who generously donated a house and two acres of land for the endeavor. Wheelock's initial vision for Moor's was ambitious: to educate Native American youth in Christian theology and the Anglo-American way of life, with the ultimate goal of preparing them to become missionaries to their own tribes. He believed that Native American missionaries, being familiar with the languages and customs of their people, would be far more effective in spreading Christianity than their English counterparts.

Among Wheelock's earliest and most influential students at Moor's was Samson Occom, a Mohegan Indian who began studying with Wheelock in 1743. Occom's remarkable intellect and dedication to his studies deeply impressed Wheelock, so much so that Occom became an ordained Presbyterian minister himself. Occom's success served as a powerful inspiration for Wheelock's broader educational mission and proved instrumental in the very founding of Dartmouth.

Moor's Indian Charity School offered a classical education, including instruction in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, alongside religious studies. While the emphasis was on preparing Native American boys for ministry, the school also admitted English youth. Girls, both Native American and English, were also educated, though their curriculum was primarily focused on household arts and only one day a week of academic classes.

However, the reality of the charity school proved more challenging than Wheelock initially envisioned. Despite its well-organized structure and widespread publicity, recruiting and retaining Native American students proved difficult, largely due to the school's distance from tribal territories. Furthermore, the hoped-for return of a large number of successful Native American missionaries to their homelands did not materialize as extensively as Wheelock had hoped. By 1768, only 15 out of approximately 50 students who had attended Moor's had returned as missionaries,

schoolmasters, or assistants to non-Indian ministers.

This limited success prompted Wheelock to reassess his approach. He began to believe that his divinely inspired mission might be better fulfilled by training white missionaries, rather than relying solely on Native Americans. This shift in focus, along with the desire to expand the school's scope and secure more substantial financial resources, led Wheelock to seek a new location and a new charter for a college.

The search for a new home for Wheelock's educational endeavor led him to Hanover, in the Province of New Hampshire. It was here that Royal Governor John Wentworth played a pivotal role. Wentworth, a supporter of Wheelock's earlier efforts, not only provided the land for the new institution but also facilitated the issuance of a royal charter.

On December 13, 1769, King George III, through Governor Wentworth, officially granted the royal charter establishing Dartmouth College. This made Dartmouth the ninth-oldest college in the United States and the last institution of higher learning chartered under colonial rule. The charter explicitly stated that the college was created "for the education and instruction of Youth of the Indian Tribes in this Land in reading, writing, and all parts of Learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and Christianizing children of pagans as well as in all liberal arts and sciences and also of English youth and any others." The inclusion of Native American education in the charter was crucial, as it allowed Wheelock to utilize the unspent trust funds from Moor's Indian Charity School for the new college.

Interestingly, the college was named for William Legge, the 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, a prominent supporter of Wheelock's earlier work. This naming was a gesture of gratitude and duty on Wheelock's part, though the Earl himself, in fact, opposed the creation of the college and made no direct financial contributions to it.

Following the granting of the charter, Wheelock relocated Moor's Indian Charity School to Hanover in 1770, where it continued to serve as a preparatory school for Dartmouth. The nascent college began its operations in primitive conditions, with the first classes held in a single log hut. Despite these humble beginnings, the college quickly set about its mission. The first degrees were granted in 1771, just two years after the charter was secured.

While the initial intent of Dartmouth College, as reflected in its charter, was to educate Native Americans, its early years saw a primary focus on training Congregationalist ministers, a natural progression given Wheelock's own background and the religious climate of the time. However, the college also opened its doors to African-American students early in its history, with the first recorded enrollments in 1775 and 1808. By the end of the Civil War, Dartmouth had earned a reputation within the African-American community as a place where men of color could receive an education. This

early commitment to providing educational opportunities, even amidst the societal norms of the era, laid a groundwork for the institution's later embrace of broader diversity.

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