



CELEBRATING

THE HISTORY OF SAINT JAMES SCHOOL

The Founding of Saint James

Among the first proponents of an Episcopal boarding school in western Maryland were the Rt. Rev. William R. Whittingham, Bishop of Maryland, and the Rev. Theodore B. Lyman, Rector of St. John's Church in Hagerstown. They envisioned a school in the pattern of the English public schools—a model that continues to influence Saint James today. When they began their efforts to raise support for such a school, in 1838, there was only one school of this type in the country—the

College of St. Paul's in College Point, New York.

Bishop Whittingham succeeded in convincing the Rev. Dr. William Muhlenberg, Headmaster of the College of St. Paul's, to allow him to hire Muhlenberg's second-in-command, Dr. John Barrett Kerfoot, to serve as the College of Saint James' first headmaster. As Muhlenberg said, "We would send out a colony of pious, intelligent, respectable young fellows, with Kerfoot at their head... They would be the soul of the thing and gradually they would generate the body around them."



175 YEARS

An American disciple of the Oxford Tractarians, Dr. Muhlenberg envisioned a rigorous academic institution that was absolutely dedicated to the faith and practice of the Episcopal Church: “the beau model of a Catholic School, a genuine Church School.”

At about the same time, Rector Lyman learned that a suitable tract of land was available. This was the central portion of the estate of General Samuel Ringgold, a brigadier general in the Maryland Militia. The Ringgold estate originally comprised more than 17,000 acres. Its showpiece was the beautiful mansion, “Fountain Rock,” a translation of the name of the legendary, ever-flowing spring just behind the mansion, which the Native Americans had known for centuries as “Bai Yuka.”

Such notables as President Madison and his wife, Dolly, the statesmen Henry Clay and James Monroe were frequent visitors at Fountain Rock; the mansion was famed for the lavish parties given by General Ringgold and his wife. By the time of Ringgold’s death in 1829, most of the acreage, including Fountain Rock, had been sold. During the next decade, the mansion and its environs changed hands several times, and the premises deteriorated badly.

In the spring of 1841, Fountain Rock and 20 surrounding acres were purchased “by the joint subscription of churchmen of Washington County and devoted by them to the uses of a church school.” To the sales price of \$5,000, the enterprising churchmen

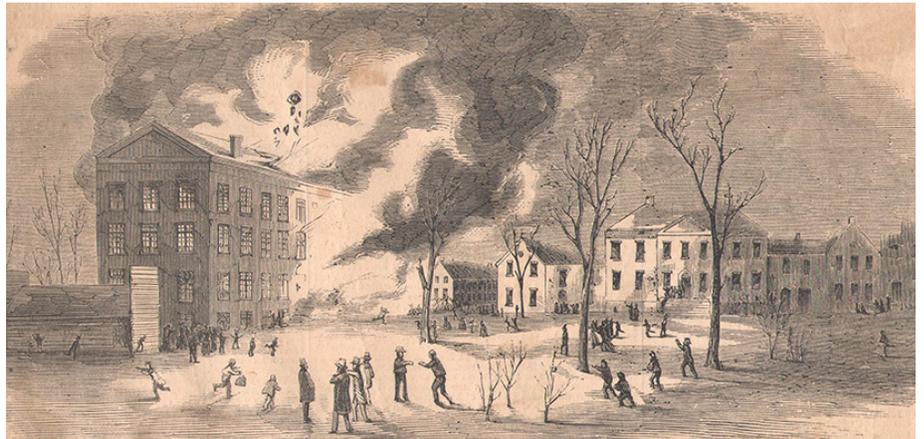
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contributed an additional \$3,000 to refurbish the house and purchase furniture and equipment.

Finally, all the necessary funds were raised, and on October 2, 1842, the College of Saint James was formally dedicated, with Fountain Rock renamed Claggett Hall in honor of the first bishop of Maryland. Students ranged in grade level from the upper levels of high school through college, with four collegiate classes and three preparatory classes.

Dr. Kerfoot soon proved to be an exemplary headmaster. His sermons were highly regarded by students and area residents alike, and his classes, relying strongly on the Socratic method of questions, answer, and explication, were widely described as invaluable to his students. He had a keen sense of humor and a strong vision of the course that would take the school successfully through its founding years.



Kemp Hall was destroyed by fire in 1856.

By 1848, enrollment had grown from 14 to 89, and the fledgling College of Saint James faced a pressing need for additional space. Dr. Kerfoot was able to raise more than \$8,000 to build a three-story brick building to house the dining hall, a large classroom, and dormitory space for 65 boys. Kemp Hall, named for the second bishop of Maryland, was completed in 1851.

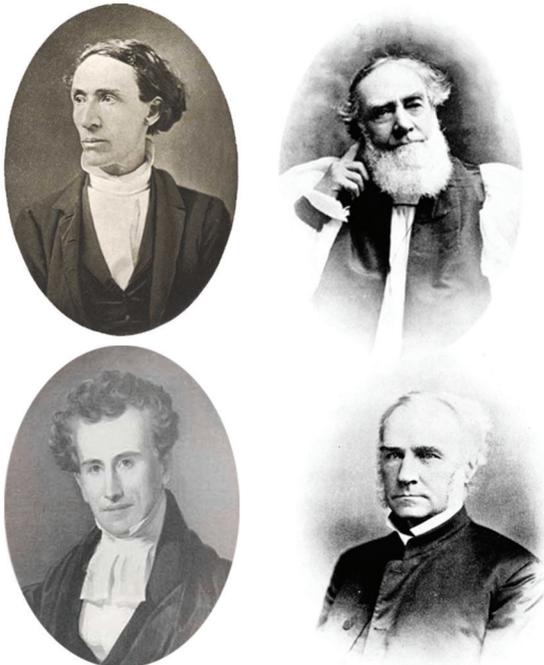
A Tradition of Academic Excellence

Saint James became widely known for the strength of its academic programming. In 1853, General Robert E. Lee was asked to recommend a school for his nephew. He suggested “one in Sing-Sing, St. James’s College in Maryland, Virginia Military Institute, William & Mary, and what would become Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia.” Lee was not alone in his high regard of the school. In 1855, Jared Sparks, the retired president of Harvard University,

commented: “...there is one institution in the South which has sent [to Harvard] some remarkable exceptions to the general rule of negligent and rowdy students. It is, I believe in Maryland, and called the College of Saint James. Four or five young men have come from it to Cambridge, and have been, without exception, among the best-mannered men we have.”

During Dr. Kerfoot’s tenure, traditions and organizations were established which continue today. Washington Irving, for example, granted permission for the literary club at the school to name itself the Irving Society. He also bestowed an emblem—the holly leaf—and a motto—*sub sole, sub umbra virens*.

In 1856, only five years after it was built, Kemp Hall was destroyed by fire. Bishop Whittingham again came to the school’s aid by organizing a campaign among Episcopal parishes in Philadelphia and Baltimore to raise funds for the purchase of a tract of land just a few miles from Baltimore—a location which many felt would allow the school to draw more students from both Baltimore and Washington, DC. The property was purchased, the cornerstone was laid in 1860, and construction



The founding men of Saint James School (clockwise from top left): Rt. Rev. William R. Whittingham, Rev. Theodore B. Lyman, Dr. John Barrett Kerfoot, and Rev. Dr. William Muhlenberg.

began—only to be interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War.

The Civil War

Spreading hostilities made it impossible to continue construction on the new campus. Dr. Kerfoot worked to keep the School open in the face of factional disputes among students, parents, and faculty, many of whom sided with the Confederacy even though Maryland was officially a Union state. Within the next few years, after losing the property on which the new campus had been planned, it became clear that the School's destiny lay with its original location.

The area surrounding the school was the scene of much Civil War fighting—most prominently the 1842 Battle of Antietam, only seven miles away. Prior to this battle, Union and Confederate forces regularly crossed the campus, and often camped on school grounds.

The deep division of loyalties that characterized Maryland's populace during the war was also evident at Saint James. Dr. Kerfoot's strong pro-Union stand was a source of contention. Only 16 students arrived for the fall term in 1862. Although a few more students enrolled during the year, it became clear that the future of the School was under serious threat.

In addition to his work at the School, Dr. Kerfoot visited nearby hospitals to aid the wounded. He provided Bibles, food, and tobacco to needy soldiers; and conducted burial services for the dead. On August 7, 1864, Dr. Kerfoot and his assistant, Joseph Coit, were arrested by Confederate officers. They were paroled a day later on the condition that they secure the release of the

Rev. Hunter Boyd, a Presbyterian clergyman from Virginia, who was being held by the Union.

During the same month, Dr. Kerfoot received an offer from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, to become its president. His concern about Saint James School's financial condition and the drastic decline in enrollment led him to accept the offer. He left in 1864 with a heavy heart, expressing his remorse in a letter to Bishop Whittingham, "Here I have loved, as I think I never can again love, any work. It seems impossible that I should leave it..."

Bishop Whittingham agreed that the fight to keep the School open must be abandoned, at least for the duration of the war. In his address to the 1865 Diocesan Convention, he spoke of his reaction to the closing of the School: "What your bishop lost in all this process, brethren, I shall not attempt to tell. For him it makes a large part of the work of a quarter of a century a blank."

Soon after the hostilities ended, Bishop Whittingham began making arrangements for the extensive repairs and refurbishment required

to make the School operational in the wake of the war. Confederate troops looted Claggett Hall following the Battle of Gettysburg, and years of abandonment took a toll on the campus.

A New Beginning

By the fall of 1869, renovations were complete. The College of Saint James reopened as a secondary school with Mr. Henry Onderdonk appointed headmaster. During his 27-year tenure, which ended with his death in 1896, enrollment grew, the campus improved greatly, the caliber of student increased, and the future of Saint James appeared secure.

Julian Hartridge became the College's third headmaster. At this time, the name of the institution was changed to Saint James School. He was succeeded by James Henry Harrison, an alumnus of Saint James School and an 1899 graduate of Princeton University.

Adrian Holmes Onderdonk, the son of Henry Onderdonk, was chosen as headmaster in 1906. He was to enjoy an even longer tenure than his father, one filled with progress and growth for the school.



Mr. Henry Onderdonk and family on the steps of Claggett Hall in 1893.

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“Mr. O,” as he was almost universally known, grew up in the atmosphere of Saint James. He graduated from the School and played on its first football team in 1894.

Many Saint James School traditions originated, or were enhanced, under his guidance. Today, many visitors remark upon the courtesy and politeness of Saint James students. Mr. Onderdonk emphasized these qualities. As one of his contemporaries described, “he was a stickler for manners; not so much as an acquired social art but more as an expression of attentive consideration for others.”

Another hallmark of Adrian Onderdonk’s headmastership was the marked expansion and improvement of the School’s infrastructure. Dilapidated buildings were torn down, and more substantial structures were modernized and expanded. Sadly, in 1926 a fire destroyed Claggett Hall, leaving only the stone steps, known today as the “Senior Steps.” Temporary structures were hurriedly put in place, and the academic year continued with only a brief interruption.



The Saint James baseball team in 1891.

Within a matter of months, Mr. Onderdonk was able to raise the money for a new building—a tribute to his influence, and the regard in which he was held. Within a year, the new Claggett Hall had risen from the ashes of the old.

Soon after, Whittingham Hall, named for Bishop Whittingham, was added as a wing of Claggett Hall. In 1928, the Laidlaw Memorial Infirmary was constructed. The building was a gift from Mr. Onderdonk’s cousins, the Laidlaw

family. Seven years later, two French clay tennis courts were given to the School by Mr. Kenneth Bonner. (He donated four additional courts in 1958.)

Mr. Onderdonk retired in 1939 as one of the greatest and most memorable headmasters in the School’s history. Generations of boys matured under his tutelage and mentorship. Even today, his legacy remains. Mr. Onderdonk wrote in his memoirs, “...I would not change places with anyone on God’s green earth.”

Headmasters from 1942 to Present

James B. Drake, a faculty member, agreed to serve as headmaster pro tempore until 1942, when Dr. Vernon B. Kellett became the school’s seventh headmaster. An accomplished scholar, Dr. Kellett provided sound leadership for Saint James School through the difficult years of World War II.

Like Adrian Onderdonk, Dr. Kellett oversaw many improvements at the School. With the help of



In 1926, a fire destroyed Claggett Hall, leaving only the “Senior Steps.”

the Byron family, he oversaw the construction of a separate Lower School with space for 10 boarding boys, a prefect, a master, and three classrooms. The building was later remodeled and named Onderdonk Hall.

Under Dr. Kellett's leadership, the School also acquired a new athletic field, a baseball diamond, and a running track. He developed a long-range plan to provide an endowment for faculty compensation, and encouraged students to pursue his greatest passion—music. Through his efforts and enthusiasm, Saint James developed a noteworthy glee club.

The Rev. John E. Owens, Jr. became headmaster in 1955, marking a return to one of the original precepts of Saint James' founders—an Episcopal priest as head of the school. Like Dr. Kerfoot, Father Owens believed strongly that spiritual values should inform the life and philosophy of the school. He wrote that, "Since the whole of life is God's concern, the School endeavors to help each student build a solid foundation of body, mind, and spirit and so prepare the student to complete higher education successfully and then to go on to a life of constructive service to mankind."

During his years as headmaster, Father Owens' vision supported the School's continued improvement and success. Under his guidance, the faculty grew in number and improved in quality; enrollment increased from 110 to more than 150; coeducation was introduced; and, the endowment grew. He made many improvements to the campus.

Campbell House was built in 1955 for use by the Selective Service. Just



Father Owens at Commencement in 1962.

over a decade later, Hershey Hall was constructed, providing the Selective Service with additional space. In 1957, the Onderdonk residence was purchased and used as a dormitory for eight boys. It was nicknamed "Buckingham Palace" because two English exchange students roomed there—and "Buckingham" it remains to this day—though it now serves as faculty housing. Nelson House, next door to Buckingham, and named for long-time master, Russell Nelson, was built in 1959.

The Henry Evan Cotton Memorial Gymnasium, which greatly enhanced the School's athletic program, was completed in 1961. Two years later, the Powell Hall classroom building was completed. It was named for the Rt. Rev. Noble Powell, ninth Bishop of Maryland and a long-time friend of the School. The wing of Powell Hall facing "The Circle" housed the McIntyre Library, presented to the school by Mr. and Mrs. John Sharpless McIntyre, in honor of their two sons John Sharpless McIntyre, Jr. '58 and James Byrd McIntyre '61.

The Georgian brick Saint James chapel was consecrated in memory of

Eleanor Blodgett Webster in 1965. Her husband, William Webster '61 provided the impetus for the chapel, and the establishment of an endowment fund.

Pipkin House, named in honor of Ruth and Benton Pipkin, and given by their sons John '53 and Ashmead '56, was built as a faculty residence in 1966. That same year, Bonner House was completed. This faculty residence was named for Mr. Kenneth Bonner, a trustee, former assistant headmaster, and generous benefactor.

Father Owens' 329-year tenure had an impact that will always remain an integral part of the character of Saint James School. He earned the deepest respect and admiration of the School's constituencies and showed by example how much can be accomplished through personal commitment. In the words of Admiral James L. Holloway III '39, former chairman of the board of trustees: "His intensity of commitment, coupled with his absolute integrity, formed the foundations of a brand of personal leadership which endowed Saint James with its unique institutional

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ethos.”

When Father Owens retired in 1984, he was succeeded by the Rev. Richard H. Baker, Jr. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, England, and received his divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. Father Baker’s tenure was marked by his deep concern for the well-being of the faculty and the student body. He worked closely with students and served as a counselor and friend to many.

A major accomplishment under Father Baker’s leadership was the creation of Alumni Hall in 1985, providing the School with an athletic field house. The Laidlaw family donated squash courts. Meade D. Detweiler III and Adm. James L. Holloway III, both ’39, donated the wrestling room which bears their names. The School also acquired the Stonebraker House as a faculty residence.

Charles G. Meehan, Jr. ’65, served as interim headmaster in 1991. He joined the school as a mathematics teacher in 1969 after his graduation from Franklin and Marshall College. Mr. Meehan also served as Dean of Students and coached football and baseball.

In the spring of 1992, Saint James celebrated its 150th anniversary with the Sesquicentennial Campaign for Stewardship. The centerpiece of this campaign was the conversion of the Cotton Gymnasium to the Bowman-Byron Fine Arts Center and Auditorium. In the mid-1980’s, A. Smith Bowman, a long-time trustee and friend of Saint James School, made a gift for a Fine Arts Center and Auditorium that would be named for David Byron ’23, a friend, fellow trustee, and a lifelong



The Saint James Chapel Choir in 1988.

supporter of the School.

Following an intense search for a successor to Father Baker, the Board of Trustees unanimously elected the Rev. Dr. D. Stuart Dunnan headmaster in 1992.

Father Dunnan graduated from St. Albans School and Harvard University. He earned a master’s degree from Harvard, and master’s and doctorate degrees from Oxford University. Before coming to Saint James, he was the Chaplain and a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

In addition to the completion of the Sesquicentennial Campaign, Father Dunnan’s first years included the development of the Middle School, expansion of the girls’ program, and further strengthening of the School’s academic facilities and programs. During this time Saint James lost one of its most loyal alumni, John B. Ferguson, Jr. ’32. Due to his bequest of \$2.2 million, a permanent endowment was established to increase faculty salaries substantially, and Ferguson House was purchased and added to faculty housing.

Saint James launched the Quad Campaign in 2000. This was a larger and more comprehensive

campaign than the Sesquicentennial Campaign which had been “the most ambitious capital campaign in the School’s history.”

Renovations to the Laidlaw Infirmary, again funded by a generous gift from the Laidlaw family, the addition of the Frick Porch, by Robert P.L. Frick ’34, and the renovation of Kemp Hall, with the addition of the new Detweiler Student Center, given by Mr. and Mrs. Meade D. Detweiler III ’39 were dedicated during Alumni Weekend 1997. The John E. Owens, Jr. Library, which included two new science laboratories, an archive, and a classroom on the lower level, was dedicated during Alumni Weekend the following year. In Powell Hall, two classrooms, enlarged faculty offices, and a computer lab were created to meet the academic needs of a larger enrollment.

The Quad Campaign also supported construction of a new girls’ dormitory, Gertrude Steele Coors Hall, providing rooms for 28 girls and three faculty apartments. Coors Hall joined with Powell Hall, the Detweiler Student Center, and the Owens Library to create a residential and academic quadrangle.



The Coors Hall girls' dormitory opened in 1998 to accommodate female boarders.

A second girls' dormitory, Holloway House, named in honor of Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN (ret.) '38 and in memory of his son, James L. Holloway IV '63, was built with a grant from the Olmstead Foundation in 2001. The Kerfoot Refectory was also built in 2001, providing seating for the entire School community to enjoy meals together.

To support the athletic program, a fitness center was added to the field house, along with 12 tennis courts and new playing fields. During Father Dunnan's tenure, Saint James purchased three adjacent farms, increasing the School's land holdings by nearly 100 percent, providing a buffer from residential growth adjacent to the campus.

A new headmaster's residence was built in 2003. Biggs Rectory, named for former board chair Jeremy Biggs '54, overlooks the "Bai Yuka" and provides an elegant entertaining space for the headmaster and guests on campus. The "Barr" House, located adjacent to the Ferguson and Stonebraker houses, acquired in 2004, was named in honor of David and Betty Barr and also provides faculty housing. Additional faculty housing was provided by past-parent, Virginia Stimson, when

she renovated an adjacent pre-Civil War farmhouse in memory of her husband, Douglas.

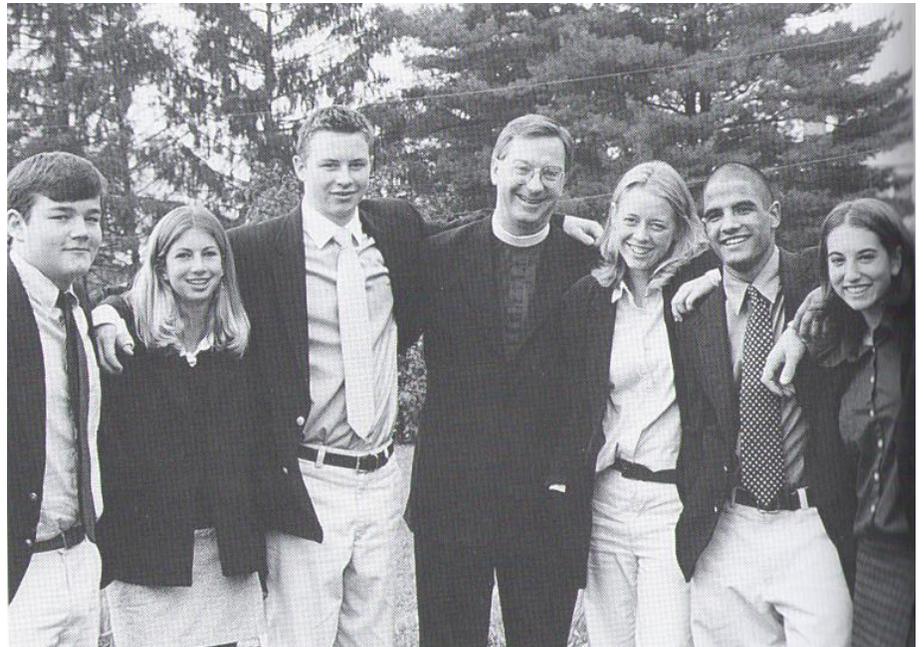
From 2005 to 2010, the School continued to grow. The Fulton family gifted a new faculty home, and built the Barbara J. Fulton Academic Building. This academic building doubled the space available for teaching. Hershey Hall, later renamed Mattingly Hall in honor of Mr. John M. Mattingly '58, was expanded and renovated. A driving range, baseball field, softball field,

and a multi-purpose field enhanced the School's athletic amenities. Kemp Hall was expanded in 2009, offering students a space in which to relax between classes, after school, and on weekends.

In 2013, a generous gift from the Turner family allowed the School to replace the football and main soccer field with artificial turf, and five grass fields have been built on the south side of campus.

Under Father Dunnan's leadership, the enrollment has grown to 240 students, with 75 percent of students boarding and 25 percent of students in the day program. International student enrollment has grown to 22% with 16 countries represented in addition to the U.S. These students add diversity to every aspect of life and learning at Saint James, and prepares students to lead in a global world.

The role of young women on campus has grown, with girls becoming boarders and competitive athletes, putting them on equal



Father Dunnan pictured with students in 2001.

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| celebrating 175 years |

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footing with male students. The first female Senior Prefect was elected in 1999 and again in 2002. Today, there are approximately 90 young women enrolled, for a 60:40 male-to-female ratio.

The endowment has grown from \$3 million to \$23 million, providing stability for the future and allowing the School to pursue initiatives that enhance our programs and attract and retain talented faculty.

The campus will continue to expand to enhance our programs, with two capital projects currently underway. To accommodate the continued growth of our arts program, the School will soon begin construction on the Pohanka Fine Arts Center (*see page 18 for more information*), and an expansion of Alumni Hall is also planned.

The School has gained a national and international reputation as a highly selective boarding school that is smaller in size, leading to a stronger sense of community and family. The Saint James School culture of trust and mutual respect is made possible by an honor code to which every student and teacher agrees to adhere—in the classroom, on the playing field, and in every

other facet of life on our campus. The honor code reads, “On my honor, I will not lie, steal, or cheat, and I will report anyone I witness doing any of the three.”

Six times a week, we gather for seated meals, a tradition that has shaped the Saint James community since our founding. Teachers are joined by students of various forms, interests, opinions, and experiences to eat, relax, laugh, and get to know each other.

Rooted in our Episcopal identity, our worship and values are at the heart of this community. The School gathers every weekday morning in the Chapel to begin the day humbly, gratefully, and faithfully. In Chapel, students are encouraged to participate as they feel comfortable in our common liturgy and to challenge themselves spiritually to live moral and purposeful lives.

Despite this impressive growth and expansion over 175 years, the School’s mission remains the same: to prepare young men and women for academic success in college, and to challenge and inspire them to be leaders for good in the world. We seek to do this within a small and familial residential community

which values the moral and spiritual development of our students.

Growth over time has provided sustenance for this mission and reaffirmed the Saint James philosophy as written by Father Owens, which states:

Saint James is devoted to developing the character of our students and to fostering a strong sense of Christian values: self-discipline, personal and social responsibility, and a high standard of honor. Further, as a church school we believe that because of God’s love for mankind, the School is a caring and nurturing community. Each person is given opportunities to develop a strong sense of self-worth and an awareness of himself or herself as a child of God.

All of this finds expression within the structure of the faith and practices of the Episcopal Church. Saint James was founded on this principle and continues in this belief: the leavening influence permeating every activity and relationship of school life is to be found at the altar of God.

Dr. Kerfoot’s description of Saint James, quoted from an early commencement address, is as fitting today, as it was more than 175 years ago: “...the work thus far done has been worthwhile. It will stand.” †



Watch the Saint James School 175th Anniversary Video!

Watch our commemorative video featuring current students, faculty, and administrators to learn more about the remarkable history of Saint James School.

www.stjames.edu/175video