



LASTING MARK: A marble marker is all that remains of the Class of 1858 gift for the Prince Street Campus.

Ask the Archivist: Stumped by the Class of '68?

Questions for Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian.

When I graduated in 1968, it was customary that each class would leave a gift to the University. Usually it was a bench, a piece of art, a specimen tree, or the like. I don't know if the tradition continues. I have a question that might stump the archivist. What gift did the Class of '68 give?—Jared Abrams '68, Merrick, New York

As class sizes have grown and interests have diverged, choosing a gift has become more complex: it is now customary for each new graduate to

of this fine campus out on the edge of the city. It was barren enough . . . so we, of the class of 1858, determined to plant the first class tree."

Moss described the ceremony surrounding the "little English Elm" on the Prince Street Campus, and the Class of 1858's reunion in 1883: "We gathered under our tree. How it had grown in a quarter of a century . . . did it not symbolize somewhat the class that assembled under its ample shade that day, modestly bearing as they did the burdens, the responsibilities, the honors of mature life?" He concluded: "Of every son of Rochester may it be said: 'He shall be like a tree planted.'"

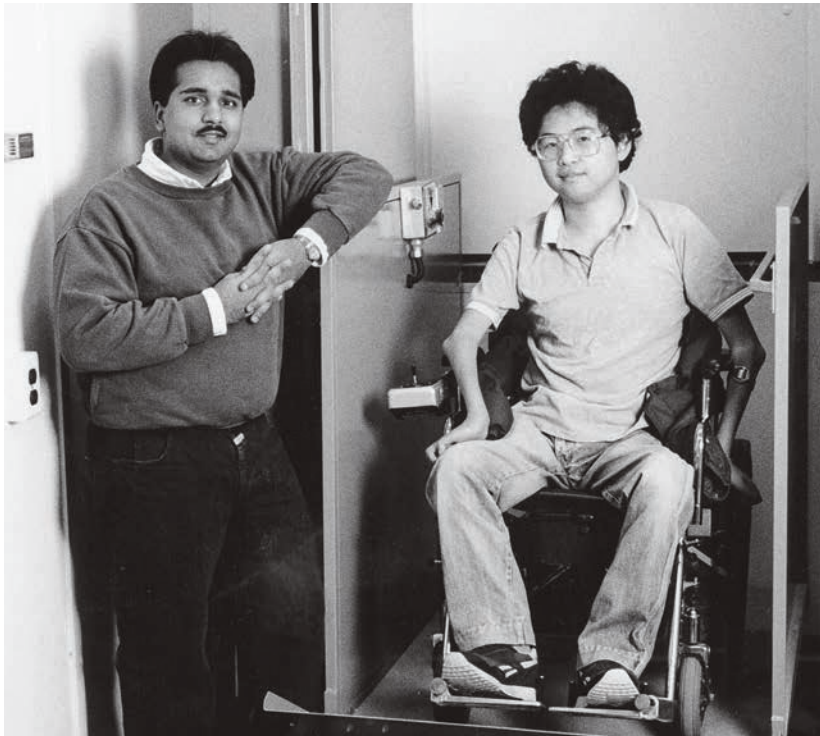
The gift was not always limited to a tree, and the "daughters" of Rochester also contributed generously. According to a newspaper account, Frances Ruliffson Tennent, president of the women's Class of 1912, "explained the choice of a settee as a foresight of the needs of the girls when the anticipated women's building is realized." (The women's building would be dedicated as Catharine Strong Hall when it opened in 1914.)

The men's Class of 1912 fixed upon the gift of a drinking fountain for the library in Sibley Hall. In accepting the gift, President Rhees noted, "You are to be congratulated in thus promising to be a constant fountain of refreshment to those that follow." That source of refreshment was permanently paused when Sibley Hall was razed in 1968; however, the settee is still in use in Rush Rhees Library, and was refurbished in 2000 through a gift from former Dean of Students Mary-Beth Cooper '00S (MBA) in recognition of her Simon School MBA classmates.

Other notable class gifts have included an electric scoreboard in the Palestra (given jointly by the men and women of the Class of 1953); a sculpture by Arch Miller, professor emeritus of art and art history (Class of 1962); a wheelchair lift in Wilson Commons (Class of 1988); and a set of benches to commemorate the alumni lost in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Class of 2002).

What is believed to be the last joint gift is a group of clocks on the wall of Hirst Lounge set to the current times of six major cities around the world. Chosen by the Class of 2007 in response to the demise of the standing clock in Wilson Commons, it aptly complements the display of international flags.

Many of the class trees planted long ago have been "stumped," and now the archivist is as well: will a member of the Class of '68 make a "gift" of the information?



UPLIFTING GIFT: Rajnish Garg '88, '91S (MBA) and David Wang '85, '92 (PhD) show the Class of 1988 wheelchair lift in action.

choose how and where to give, and for the class to compete as a group for a participation level "ever better" than the previous year.

As a tradition, the class gift dates back to the first decade of the University. It was part of a varying set of Class Day rituals that included orations, poetry, singing, planting ivy, the reading (and burning) of class wills, and a celebratory dinner.

The Class of 1858 attended the University downtown in the United States Hotel, but as alumnus Lemuel Moss recalled on the occasion of the 1900 Semi-Centennial: "Now, as were to be baccalaureated and set free, the trustees came into possession

Need History?

Do you have a question about University history? Email it to rochrev@rochester.edu. Please put "Ask the Archivist" in the subject line.