Academy News

Academy Begins Yearlong Celebration of 225th Anniversary

“Cherishing Knowledge, Shaping the Future” sets the theme for the Academy’s 225th anniversary lectures and publications. Meetings will be held throughout the country to mark this special occasion, with a focus on the principles underlying the founding of the nation and the Academy – how they have been transformed throughout history and how they are interpreted today.

To inaugurate these events, Vice President and Chair of the Academy Trust Louis W. Cabot welcomed several hundred guests to a special program on April 21, 2005, celebrating the Academy’s historic mission and its accomplishments over three centuries. The evening began with Fellows James Carroll and Linda Greenhouse reading an August 1776 exchange of letters between John and Abigail Adams that foreshadowed the creation of the Academy. Members of the Council and Trust read from the Massachusetts Constitution and from the Academy’s Charter, acknowledged sister organizations established in the founding period, and spoke of the Academy’s work in science, social policy, and the arts and humanities.

Several speakers recalled the evolution of the Academy’s work over the past three centuries. Neal Lane (Rice University) called attention to the Academy’s ongoing concern with both pure research and the practical applications of science – from an expedition to observe an eclipse of the sun in the midst of the War for Independence to one of the first Darwinian debates in America in the mid-eighteenth century and the establishment of the field of arms control in the twentieth century.

Robert C. Post (Yale Law School) traced the changing meaning of social welfare in the Academy from improving crop production in 1780 to a conference on the social impact of science and technology held two months before Pearl Harbor, a series of path-breaking studies on race and poverty in the 1960s, and current studies on corporate and nonprofit accountability. Executive Officer Leslie Berlowitz considered humanistic study within the Academy, beginning with a focus on the language of the new nation and extending to the creation of important institutions in the humanities, particularly the National Humanities Center, and a study of the challenges facing the humanities in contemporary America.

Highlights of the evening included congratulatory remarks by Mary Maples Dunn, Co-Executive Officer of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia; video tributes from Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer, U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman, and Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court; and musical performances by members of the Lydian String Quartet, Sergeant Dan Clark of the Massachusetts State Police, and the Lincoln Minutemen Fife and Drum Corps.

As Peter Nicholas, Chairman of Boston Scientific Corporation and Co-Chair of the Academy Trust, observed in his remarks at the celebration, “what is particularly exciting about the Academy is its ability to adapt its historic mission to ensure that we remain a vital resource for contemporary society. The Academy’s success is due to its capacity to use its traditions imaginatively, while always promoting constructive change.”
Order of Speakers

Readings from the Letters of John and Abigail Adams
James Carroll
Linda Greenhouse

Welcome and A Remembrance by John Adams
Louis W. Cabot

A Tribute to the Academy
The Honorable Margaret H. Marshall

Chapter 5, Section 2 from the Massachusetts Constitution
Cheryl Finley

The Charter of the American Academy
John S. Reed

A Tribute to Sister Organizations
Louis W. Cabot

Acknowledgment from the American Philosophical Society
Mary Maples Dunn

A Tribute to the Academy
The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman

The Academy’s Work: Science and Global Security
Neal Lane

A Tribute to the Academy
The Honorable Stephen G. Breyer

The Academy’s Work: Social Policy and
American Institutions
Robert C. Post

The Academy’s Work: The Humanities and Culture
Leslie C. Berlowitz

A Tribute to the Academy
The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Allegro movement from the
Divertimento in E Flat, K. 563
Members of the Lydian String Quartet
Introduced by Jerrold Meinwald

An Appreciation
Leslie C. Berlowitz

Proclamation from the White House
Jesse H. Choper

The Academy’s Future
Peter Nicholas

“America the Beautiful”
Sergeant Dan Clark

Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer
At a dinner honoring members of the Council and the Trust, President Patricia Meyer Spacks (University of Virginia) toasted the legacy and the promise of the Academy:

As President of the Academy, I want to celebrate the accomplishments of my forty-one predecessors. Beginning with merchant and astronomer James Bowdoin, they laid the foundation for an institution that has advanced change while remaining faithful to a 225-year-old mission celebrating the life of the mind in service to society. They never lost sight of the distinctive characteristics that define the Academy. We remain interdisciplinary, independent, reflective, pragmatic, and always aimed at promoting the common good.

Lest you think that presidents alone set the Academy’s course, let me assure you otherwise. My fellow officers, members of the Council and the Trust, the leaders of our research programs, and all those who work with us to advance our goals are critical to our success. Thinkers and doers, working under no academic or political pressure and with no collective preconceptions, join forces to develop fresh approaches to difficult problems. Just as we cherish knowledge, we cherish all of you who value the Academy’s past and inspire its future.
225th Celebration

Leslie Berlowitz (American Academy) and William T. Golden (New York, New York)

Robert C. Post (Yale University) and Michael E. Gellert (Windcrest Partners)

Members of the Lincoln Minutemen Fife and Drum Corps

Charles M. Haar (Harvard Law School) and Allan Robinson (Harvard University)
John Holdren (Harvard University) and Hugh Huxley (Brandeis University). Holdren spoke on "The Energy/Well-Being Nexus: Economy, Security, Environment" at a dinner following the program.

Sergeant Dan Clark of the Massachusetts State Police

Carl H. Pforzheimer III (Carl H. Pforzheimer and Co.) and Father J. Bryan Hehir (Harvard University)