

# Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary

By GLADYS F. GOVE

IN celebrating the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of Mount Holyoke College—1837-1962—the Mount Holyoke Club of Western Maine has reproduced in full color the delicate 11" x 15" print of the original seminary building,<sup>1</sup> made in New York about 1845 by Nathaniel Currier (before his partnership with Ives was established in 1857).

One of the few college views made by Currier, and the only one of a women's college, the print revives a significant period in the college's history, for the original sketch from which the lithograph was made was drawn by an alumna, Persis Goodale Thurston, who graduated in 1845 and for the following two years taught drawing at the college. "P. G. Thurston, Del" (delineator) appears plainly at the left-hand corner of the print. But Persis' first drawing of the building was also printed, as a copy in the college library testifies. In the first draft the elms look more like palm trees, perhaps quite naturally, for Persis was born and brought up in Hawaii. Very likely Mr. N. Currier or one of his skilled lithographers was well acquainted with New England elms.<sup>2</sup>

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author is a Mt. Holyoke alumna, class of 1917, and long-time member of the Society.

<sup>1</sup> November 8, 1837. Seminary opened, building unfinished. May 3, 1838. Building dedicated. On ten acres of ground . . . a brick building 94 by 50 feet. December, 1841. South wing, East wing, each 75 feet long. No funds for North." *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly*, Winter, 1962, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> In 1828, Nathaniel Currier, then fifteen years of age, started his five-year apprentice-

Quite appropriately, too, the story of the print brings to mind a colorful period in the history of New England colleges, many of whose early students went abroad to mission fields. Persis' parents, the Reverend and Mrs. Asa Thurston, sent out to Hawaii in 1819, were among the pioneer missionaries. The Reverend Mr. Thurston of Fitchburg, educated at Yale (1816) and Andover (1819), and his wife Lucy Goodale Thurston of Marlboro sailed from Boston on October 23, 1819, and arrived at Kailua 164 days later—April 4, 1820—to begin his work which lasted forty years and included preparation of Hawaiian versions of many books of the Scriptures as well as a translation of Worcester's "Sacred Geography."

Their lives were typical of the times. The five Thurston children were kept in Hawaii with their mother until she brought Persis and her brother and a sister to the States in 1841 to pursue their educations.

Mrs. Lucy Goodale Thurston's biography, *Life and Times of Lucy Thurston* gives a vivid account of mission life in Hawaii for the fifty-six years she lived there. Called by Mrs. Thurston *Guide and Life of my Riper Years and the Nourishment of my Old Age*, the book is illustrated not only by pictures of island people and places but also by several delightful reproductions of

ship to William and John Pendleton of Boston, one of the first concerns in this country to use lithography as a method of printing. In 1835 Nathaniel went into business for himself at 1 Wall Street, New York. *Currier & Ives*, F. A. Conningham, pp. 9-10.

Hawaiian scenes depicted by Persis' skillful pen. More of her delicate work is to be seen at the library of the United Church Board for World Ministries at 14 Beacon Street, Boston.

After her graduation from Mount Holyoke in 1845, followed by two years of teaching, Persis was married in August, 1847, to Townsend Elijah Taylor, and the familiar pattern was repeated. A graduate of Middlebury College (1844) and Union Seminary (1847) the Reverend Mr. Taylor was sent out by the American Seamen's Friend Society as chaplain at Lahaina in

Hawaii, where he and Persis arrived in June, 1848, in the ship "Matilda." Four years later the Taylors went to Honolulu, where he served as Pastor of the Second Foreign Church of Honolulu until his health required a move to California.

In publishing the lithograph of the first seminary building at Mount Holyoke Mr. Currier has given us a print that recalls the lives of the early New England students, so many of whom carried their teachings across the continent and over the globe.