

Bampton House was inaugurated in October of 1986, although it had to be renovated before being inducted into the Colleges' Residential Education system. The house was purchased from Finger Lakes Cerebral Palsy's Happiness House, who occupied the house from 1972 to 1986.

According to the then Director of Giving, Shari Best '62, "the idea to create Bampton House started when Bampton was the chairman of the Colleges' Capital Campaign (this campaign built the Scandling Center, the Bristol Field House, renovated Gulick Hall, and eventually, the construction of Rosenberg and Napier Halls). Bampton saw in the minutes of the trustee meeting that the property of 720 South Main Street was up for sale and that the Colleges wanted to purchase it. He bought it with his own money and then gave it to the Colleges. The stipulation that Bampton made with this gift was that the house was to be single sex – not coed (most likely because of his religious roots; he was always an active Presbyterian). It was both Carroll W. Brewster (then the President of the Colleges) and then Hobart Dean Joseph Healy agreed that the idea of having an honors house for Hobart College. Hobart didn't really have any small residences; they had fraternities, but no single-sex men's small houses, and there was no real place in which the students who were doing the best work could be recognized. Bampton House was a response to this issue."

Joseph Healy, Dean of Hobart College during this period, mentions that "Bampton was approached about giving a gift for the capital campaign and I proposed that President Brewster purchase what would be called 'a model residence for Hobart students.' Hale, Bartlett, and Durfee Halls were old wrecks of buildings and weren't very nice residences for Hobart students at that time. My theory was that if you gave students a good residence, you could have a quality residence. Both myself and President Brewster wanted to make this house a model house. If it bared Jim's name, we would make into a model community for Hobart students, which, from what I hear, still works to this day."

Healy noted that Bampton was to create a self-governing environment independent of the Residential Advisor (RA) system, but rather, on the honors system. It would be nicely furnished (Mary Brewster bought furniture from the Stickley Company, which still stands remains in the living room to this day).

“For Jim Bampton ’32, it was a crowning achievement for him. He gave a lot of money to the Colleges and he got to see the end result of his money being put to good use. He got to meet the first group of Bampton residents and see the future of his alma mater,” Healy mentions.

The other major reason for Bampton House’s founding, aside of Jim Bampton making the funds available, was that academic and residential life at the Colleges were uncoupled in ways that were unproductive. Bampton House helped to link the faculty and students more closely. Healy worked at Pomona College in California before coming to Hobart and states that “the quality of a college can be judged by the quality of its conversation.” Bampton House was created upon this belief.

Roderic “Rod” Ross ’52 LLD ’79, former Chairman of the Colleges’ Board of Trustees and a good friend of Jim Bampton, recalls when the house was donated and dedicated to the Colleges. “I thought the concept was good – to put high-achieving students in an environment to work together and benefit the community. It is good to know the original concepts are still being adhered to.”

Ross notes that “Bampton House has worked in the way it was intended to function, based on what I have heard and seen. It has enriched the lives of motivated students and the house has truly worked out for the best.”

The only major change that was made to the house, aside of it being institutionalized to become a college residence was that it was made handicapped accessible. Shari Best ’62 notes that “back in the early days of Bampton House, a Hobart student biked down The Hill and went off the edge of the driveway. Both he and his girlfriend fell off and he became a paraplegic. The Colleges then made Bampton House handicapped accessible so that he could live there.”

Healy makes special note that “the first group in Bampton House was wonderful and it met every expectation we had – Bampton became a place to nurture friendships, foster intellectual activity and leadership skills. It was an alternative to the fraternities, which was the only small group housing option for Hobart men.”

Lastly, Healy mentions that “Bampton House was an experiment that worked and still works to this day, to my knowledge. It was a community created around the values of the College and it was built on faith. It was a wonderful tribute to the College and the man who made it possible. The students who have lived in this house through the years should be proud. Many faculty and administrators felt that the students would destroy the house, but it has come to stay true and stable. Bampton was made to create diversity of opinion and combine those with students who had different passions and interests. Once they came together, the idea was that being a part of this unique community would transform their experience.”

Then Colleges’ President Carroll W. Brewster said in the October 1986 *Pulteney Street Survey* that “this house will always be a symbol of a man who has dedicated his life to making the Colleges what they are today.” Indeed, it is a symbol of Mr. Bampton. Bampton House is still a residence for some of the best and brightest students Hobart College has to offer.