"Yard by Yard": Line by Line and Through the Years

by Dustin Griffin '65

"Yard by Yard" is one of the best-loved "Songs of Williams," the college's "fight song," regularly sung at football and basketball games and at alumni meetings. But many alums only know the chorus: "Yard by yard we'll fight our way. . ." Most probably realize that there's also a "verse" (originally, "Come, all ye sons of Williams, sing. . .") but would be surprised to hear that the song has a second "verse." And almost nobody knows its history. Every twenty years or so somebody looks back to rediscover the song's origins, and tries to straighten out the complicated story of its creation. The last time was in the 1970s, when one of the composers, Hamilton Wood '09, during an oral history interview preserved in the college archives, commented on his part in writing the song. Perhaps we're overdue for another look, if only to reflect on the martial language of the song, to discover that "Yard by Yard" has roots that go back earlier than its official beginnings in 1909, and to remark the song's recent history in the days since co-education.

A marching song

The complete lyrics of the song are worth repeating, since even those who can sing the song may be a little unsure of all the words. Here, in its original version, is the first verse:

Come, all ye sons of Williams, sing,
As we march on the field,
Cheer till the hills and valleys ring,
There's never a thought to yield.
We'll back the team through every game,
With them in every play.
Fling out the purple, hail. . .
For once again comes Williams' day.

The song was clearly designed to be sung by the cheering fans as they -- along with the team -- "march onto the field," expressing their determination to provide loyal support. At the climax of the verse it is imagined that a purple flag is "flung out" and "hailed" as a sign of impending victory ("Williams' day").

The atmosphere is quasi-military. The "sons of Williams" march onto the "field" of battle – the music is marked "In march time." With the flag flying above them, they are ready to fight and determined never to "yield." Pronouns suggest a dual focus on fans and players. The singing fans refer to themselves and each other as "we" and "ye sons" and to the athletes as "the team" and "them," but they so identify with the team that they imagine *themselves* marching onto the field. In one sense, the fans will "back the team" by providing moral support through their

¹Did Williams fans in an earlier era, before the start of a game, march in a body onto the field

cheers. But the verb "to back" also carries a strong sense of "providing back-up"-- i.e., physical or logistical support, from behind the lines. The military character of the song is confirmed by the chorus:

Yard by yard we'll fight our way
Through Amherst's line,
Every man in every play,
Striving all the time.
Cheer on cheer will rend the air,
All behind our men,
For we'll fight for dear old Williams
And we'll win and win again.

Like a regiment of infantry in a classic ground war, the players (clad, like soldiers, in uniforms) are imagined as infantry, now not marching, but with great determination fighting their way "through Amherst's line" – i.e., through the defensive line of the opponent, but also through the front line that separates contending armies. (Now the "we" refers simultaneously to the fans and the players -- both together are imagined as "fighting our way through Amherst's line.") Even the word "striving" hints at armed conflict. The main meaning of the word "strive" now is "to endeavor vigorously," but the word also means "to contend in rivalry" and "to contend in arms." Like the infantry, with artillery support behind them, the players slowly but steadily gain ground – it is a cliché of military narrative accounts of painstakingly slow progress made by troops in infantry battles to say that they fight "yard by yard." Meanwhile the air is "rent" with cheers (metaphorically equivalent to the artillery shells that are designed to support the advance).

Almost nobody sings the second verse, or even knows that there is one:

Amherst and Dartmouth may be strong, Mighty and full of steam, Oft have they been of no avail When they meet the purple team. Harvard and Eli both can tell When we have dimmed their fame. Ring out the triumph bell, For once again we've won the game.

Amherst, the arch rival, is mentioned first. It is surprising now to hear the names of Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale, no longer opponents of Williams teams. But when the song was composed in

and into the stands?

²Oxford English Dictionary, "strive," senses 4, 6, and 9.

³Singers today perhaps think of the slow incremental forward movements of troops in the First World War. But in 1909, when the song was introduced, its composers probably had in mind trench warfare in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05).

1909 Williams was playing Harvard, Dartmouth, and even Army! Perhaps the verse is omitted in modern performance because it's obsolete. But there may be another reason. It's noteworthy that the military metaphor has been dropped. In its place are unrelated formulaic phrases ("full of steam," "of no avail," "dimmed their fame") that seem now like dead metaphors. Maybe the second verse is no longer sung because, frankly, it's not of the same quality as the first.

As in the first verse, victory is declared. "Ring out the triumph bell" imagines that a "victory bell" is rung at each Williams victory, a tradition still found at a number of colleges and universities today. Fred Rudolph remembers that when he was an undergraduate (1938-42) the chapel bell was rung after an important football victory at home. In earlier years it was the old bell in Goodrich Hall. The custom began in 1905, when Thompson Chapel was completed, replacing the old chapel in Goodrich and freeing up its bell for other uses. (Thus it would have still been a new tradition, enthusiastically taken up, in 1909, when "Yard by Yard" was composed.) But no later than 1939 the Goodrich bell fell silent, and the Thompson Chapel bell took its place as the victory bell. The custom of ringing the bell after a victory over Amherst apparently lapsed by the early 50s. (Recently, the Class of 1998 tried to re-institute the custom by dedicating its graduation gift to the refurbishment of the Goodrich bell. In any case, ringing bell or not, this is a confident song of victors, not a song to rouse the spirit when the team is down. The phrase "once again," in "once again we've won. . .," is repeated from the first verse (and is echoed by "win and win again" in the chorus). This team seems to win every time: every day is "Williams' day."

The history of "Yard by Yard"

So the words read in 1909, when the song was composed. Lyrics are credited to Clarence F. Brown, Class of '09, and Lars S. Potter, Class of '10, the music to Brown and Hamilton B. Wood, '10. All three were musical. While a student Potter was a member of the Mandolin and Banjo Clubs. (He went on later to become partner in a Buffalo brokerage firm, and served as an alumni trustee from 1937 to 1942.) Clarence ("Buster") Brown composed several songs while he was an undergraduate, and was selected Ivy Poet for his class. (Williams College Class Book, 1909, p. 31). He was also a varsity football player, and captain of the hockey team. Brown went on to win some fame as the composer of "Armadillo Rag" (1911).

Wood was perhaps the most musical of the three. From Worcester, MA, he was also an athlete -- as a senior he started at center on the football team, and ran track for three years. He was a member of Mandolin and Banjo Clubs, of both the Orchestra and Choir, head of the Glee

⁴According to a typescript entitled "The Bells of Williams College" (p. 8), prepared by Harvey Spencer '19 in 1939 for the upcoming 150th anniversary of the founding of the college in 1943.

⁵Irwin Shainman, who began teaching at Williams in 1948, remembers that in his first years the chapel bell was rung occasionally after an important football game.

⁶In May 1998 the Class of 1998 gave funds to restore the Goodrich bell as the "Class of 1998 Bell," to be rung, so it hoped, by team captains after a victory over Amherst. But the custom has apparently not been restored.

Club – and a cheerleader. He wrote several songs while an undergraduate, and was one of the editors of the 1910 edition of <u>Songs of Williams</u>. He was marshal of his class at commencement, and (like Potter) later served as an alumni trustee. He retained his interest in music for years after his graduation, composing "Good Old Worcester Town" in 1917. Williams gave him an honorary degree in 1944, citing his contributions as president of the Worcester County Music Association and as "composer of some of our most cherished Williams songs."

With the words attributed to Brown and Potter, and the music to Brown and Wood, one imagines the three students gathered around a piano, working out the words and music together. But the real story is a little different. The song we know as "Yard by Yard" originated in the spring of 1909 as two different songs, both of them entered in the "interclass singing contest," a new Williams tradition then in its second year. (Both Brown and Wood had entered songs in the 1908 contest, but neither Brown's "Our Mother" nor Wood's "Williams' Sons" was awarded the prize.) Songs composed by undergraduates were performed on what was then known as the "Lab Campus" (now the "Science Quad") by large choruses from the four classes, seniors massed in front of Jesup Hall, juniors beside West College, sophomores in front of the Thompson Physics building, and freshmen (as they were then called) in front of the Chemistry building. It was apparently common for the music to be written first; once the class had approved it, words were fitted to the tune. Songs were judged by several members of the faculty – in 1909 they included two men who went on to become eminent senior professors, the then-young Assistant Professors Karl Weston and William H. Doughty. 40% of the score was based on the performance of the song, another 40% on the "excellence of the composition," and the remaining 20% on the attendance of class members.

As Wood told the story many years later, "Both Brown and I had a song in the contest. When the contest was over we decided that his was a good verse and mine a good chorus, so we put them together". Brown, in other words, had written the verse beginning "Come all ye sons of Williams, sing. . ," and Wood had written the "chorus," "Yard by yard, we'll fight our way. . ." The two songs are quite compatible, both set in 4/4 time, both built on military metaphor in which the cheering fans provide support from the rear ("we'll back the team," "all behind our men"). Few singers through the years have probably noticed that Brown's song is adapted for almost any team sport played on a field or a court – "every man in every play" could refer to football, soccer, basketball, or baseball – while Wood's song can be nothing but a football song. Few notice or care that the "we" of the verse is the fans, but the "we" of the chorus is both fans and team.

What Wood doesn't say is that neither Brown's "March to Glory" (as it was called) nor the Wood/Potter "Yard by Yard" won the contest that year, nor does he mention Lars Potter, who contributed the words to his "chorus." In spring 1909 the contest was in fact won by Everett L. Hazelton and H. R. Johnson's "The Song of the Purple," later re-titled "Senior Song" -- which began "Nineteen nine, our voices free . . ." -- sung by the Class of '10.8" The occasion for

Williams Alumni Review, vol. 28, no. 6 (April 1936), p. 263.

⁸See the February 26, 1953 letter from Charles B. Hall, Alumni Secretary, to Hamilton Wood, Williams College Archives and Special Collections.

combining the songs may well have been the publication of a new collection of Williams songs. Wood happened to be one of the editors. Perhaps with an eye to improving his song and making it more memorable, he may have spoken to Brown, and decided to combine their efforts. What we now know as "Yard by Yard" was first printed in the 1910 3rd edition of Songs of Williams, where it was attributed to all three of the composers/lyricists. (Two other songs from the 1909 contest were also printed in the 1910 volume -- the Hazelton-Johnson "Senior Song" and "Sing We to Williams" by Cady and Lehman.) ⁹

"Yard by Yard" was reprinted in the 1916 and 1933 editions of Songs of Williams. By 1936, when Wood's account of what he called the "inside story" of the song's origin appeared, "Yard by Yard" had long been popular, but had apparently in some minds come to be attributed to Brown alone, so that Wood had to set the record straight. Less than 20 years later the question of attribution came up again, this time when an outraged alumnus, who had come to think the song was Wood's alone, found out that "Yard by Yard" was being described as the result of a collaboration. A flurry of correspondence, preserved in the Williams College Archives, was exchanged in 1953. Wood dismissed the dispute as a tempest in a teapot. When a new edition of the Songs of Williams was produced in 1959, "Yard by Yard" was accompanied by a brief note that got the story mostly right, reporting that it was "a combination of two songs submitted in a class song contest," but got the date of the contest wrong, giving the year as 1907 rather than 1909. Many years later, in an oral history interview in 1976, Lars Potter (whose name had been omitted from Wood's 1936 account) re-told the old story of the song's origin, falsely remembering that *his* song (the chorus) had won the song contest in 1910, and Brown's song (the verses) had won in 1909, and -- turning the tables -- omitting any mention of Wood. 10

The pre-history of "Yard by Yard"

Even the composers could not remember the details of the song's origin. What is more, they apparently did not remember -- or never chose to reveal -- that the words of the song have their roots in some earlier student songs. The rules of the song contest provided that "each song must be original and composed without extraneous aid." There was additional incentive for originality: the song was composed at a time when intercollegiate competition in football was

⁹Another early printing, of which a single example survives in the College Archives in a scrapbook for the years 1909-10, suggests that the song quickly caught on. It is a single sheet, containing the words to "Sing We to Williams" as well as "Yard by Yard," perhaps produced for fans at a football game. On the single sheet "Yard by Yard" is untitled. There is one textual variant in the chorus: "Every man in every play / Shouting [instead of "striving"] all the time." The variant keeps the focus on the fans -- "cheering," "shouting," maybe even "fighting" -- rather than the players, but it may have simply been a misprint.

¹⁰ A transcript of the Potter interview is preserved in the Williams College Archives.

¹¹<u>Williams Record</u>, April 7, 1910. Thus, the long-time favorite "Come, Fill Your Glasses Up" (1896) could not have been entered in the competition. Like many of the songs in <u>Songs of Williams</u> it fits new words to an old tune – in this case the trio from "The Corcoran Cadets March" by John Philip Sousa.

being formalized -- the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the U. S., predecessor to the NCAA, was founded in 1906 -- and every college wanted its own distinctive "fight song" to be sung from the sidelines. Many famous college "fight songs" -- including those of Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Navy, Washington and Lee, Wisconsin, Notre Dame, and Minnestota -- date from the years 1905- 1910). "Yard by yard" is distinctive, but not wholly original.

It is not surprising that some of the language of the song is conventional or formulaic. The opening words of the first verse, "Come all ye . . ." . . ." is a common folk song opening phrase, where it serves as a summons to *listen*. Brown makes it into a summons to *sing*. The phrase is found in patriotic songs, hymns, and fight songs. ¹² "Sons of Williams" is found in several Williams songs that Brown would have known. ¹³ "Fling out the flag" is the euphonious title and first line of several 19th-century songs – an anti-slavery song of 1849 ("Fling out the Anti-slavery Flag") an 1848 hymn ("Fling out the banner"), and (oddly enough) at least two Australian songs, the 1887 patriotic song ("Flag of the Southern Cross" – "Fling out the flag of the Southern Cross" is a kind of refrain), and an 1890 song celebrating laborers. ¹⁴ "Hailing" one's flag is another cliché. Northwestern's loyal alumni sing "Hail to purple! hail to white!/ Hail to thee, Northwestern" ("University Hymn"). ¹⁵ "Dear old Williams" is a local instance of the formulaic "dear old X," commonly found in college fight songs and alma maters from Wheaton to Wabash.

Such conventional elements are almost inevitable: how many different ways are there to urge your favorite team on to victory? But in some respects it appears that Potter (who wrote the words of the chorus) had in mind some famous songs of the day. Yale's "Down the Field," composed in 1905, one of the best-known and oft-copied fight songs, was probably one of the sources:

March, march on down the field, fighting for Eli, Break through the crimson line, their strength to defy.

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¹²Alan Lomax assigns the name "Come all ye's" to Irish street ballads (<u>Folk Song USA</u>, p. 485). A 1798 "Ode on the Fourth of July" begins with the words "Come all ye sons of song." An 1861 Civil War song, "Wait for the Wagon," begins: "Come all ye sons of freedom." The Mercer University fight song begins "Come all ye loyal sons of Mercer." The opening words of Georgetown's 1894 alma mater are "Sons of Georgetown." The "come all ye sons" formula is also found in 19th-century hymns.

¹³The lyrics of at least three songs (by Charles Everett, E. B. Parsons, and E. W. B. Channing) in the 1859 edition of <u>Songs of Williams</u> contain the phrase. In the 1904 edition appeared Dwight Marvin's "My Heart is in the Mountains. Williams Marching Song," whose chorus begins: "My heart is in the mountains,/ Where the sons of Williams dwell. . .".

¹⁴The presence of the line "Fling out that dear old flag of purple and white" in the Plano (Ill.) High School fight song, composed in 1907, suggests not that Brown borrowed a detail, but that "fling out the flag" was a common idiom of the day.

¹⁵Furman fans sing "Hail the white and purple."

We'll give a long cheer to Eli's men, We're here to win again. Harvard's team may fight to the end, But Yale will win.

The chorus of "Yard by Yard" patterns its phrase "through Amherst's line" on the Yale song's "through the crimson line." "Cheer on cheer . . . / All behind our men" closely resembles "give a long cheer to Eli's men," just as "and we'll win and win again" derives from the following line in the Yale song – "We're here to win again." The title and the opening line of the chorus -- "Yard by yard we'll fight our way" -- apparently borrows from the well-known "Princeton Cannon Song" (1905), in which the Tigers are urged to "fight fight for ev'ry yard."

Potter's chorus is generic enough that it could suit almost any college. Indeed, it is not surprising to discover that it has been adapted for other colleges. Irwin Shainman, who graduated from Pomona College in 1943, remembers that "Yard by Yard" was frequently sung there, and not only when Pomona played its arch-rival, Occidental College: "Yard by yard, we'll fight our way,/ Through Oxy's line . . . And we'll fight for dear Pomona, and we'll win and win again." (Shainman said he thought it was odd when he arrived in Williamstown in 1948 to join the Music Department that the Williams students were singing the Pomona song!)

Brown's verses, as opposed to Potter's chorus, are more adapted to Williams and to the Berkshires. The language of the first verse reflects the setting in Williamstown, surrounded by "the hills and valleys" – and probably alludes to the final words of "The Mountains" (1859), ". . . till hill and valley gaily, gaily ring." The flag is a purple one – the color purple is prominent in many of the Williams songs in the previous fifteen years. Like the "fight song" itself, the color was a way of distinguishing the college, and its athletic teams, from those of its rivals.

Brown was presumably also familiar with another Williams fight song, published two years earlier as "Marching Song", composed by A. M. Botsford '06:

We march and sing as all along the line
We raise our battle cry;
The valley echoes, sending back a cheer
For men who do or die.
Then onward, steadfast, forward to the front,
With hearts and voices strong
The Purple floats above us, cheering
For the team we march along.

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¹⁶"The Royal Purple" (1894), reprinted in the 1904 edition of <u>Songs of Williams</u>. The last line of its chorus -- "It's our grand old Royal Purple,/ And we triumph in its might" – has the same rhythm as the final line of Potter's chorus. Purple had been adopted as the college's official color in 1865 (Leverett Wilson Spring, <u>A History of Williams College</u>, 1917, pp. 297-98), but it was given renewed attention when intercollegiate football grew. (See Rudolph, <u>American College and University: A History</u>, 1962, pp. 386-87.)

Here is the same underlying metaphor of marching infantry, the valley echoing back the cheers, the purple flag flying overhead. The end of Botsford's second verse – "We'll back our team for ever./ Once again we sing our marching song" – might have prompted Brown's "We'll back the team in every way." The end of Botsford's chorus – "For this is Williams' day" – is plainly the model for Brown's "For once again comes Williams' day." Even flinging the purple flag has its source in a previous Williams song, "The Purple Team" (1909):

We will sing this song as we march along To old Williams and her fame.

Fling the Purple wide, it has stemm'd the tide, For its sons are brave and strong.

The composer turns out to have been Brown, who was here borrowing from himself.

"Yard by Yard" was re- published in the 1926 <u>Collegiate Song Book</u>. It was perhaps its publication there that led to the song's being adopted, and adapted, as the fight song of other colleges, like Pomona, who thought they lacked a good one. Probably the most famous rendition of the song outside of Williamstown was heard in the 1953 movie, "Titanic," starring Clifton Webb and Barbara Stanwyck. Just as the ship collides with the iceberg, a group of college-age men and women are seen gathered around the piano singing "Yard by Yard." The last line we hear clearly is "Cheer on cheer will rend the air," as the iceberg rips open – rends? – the hull. The movie's producer (and one of its writers), it turns out, was Charles Brackett, Williams Class of 1915.¹⁷

"Yard by Yard" in changing times

It's good to rediscover where "Yard by Yard" came from, and to see how it grew out of an era -- before the First World War -- when a football game might innocently be compared to classic ground war. Nowadays we cannot go back to that more innocent time. When our team marches down the field yard by yard, we prefer to conceal from ourselves any memory of infantry pinned down on the western front, grinding out a few yards at a time, the artillery shells rending the air behind them or over their heads. We still sing the old songs -- all of the Williams songs date from the late 19th and early 20th century. "Yard by Yard" appears in all new editions of Songs of Williams -- in 1916, 1933, and 1959. But the song has been adapted to our changing needs. We no longer sing the second verse because Williams doesn't -- and can't -- compete in football against Dartmouth, Harvard, or Yale. Some of the words in the chorus have changed over the years, probably inadvertently, and not for the better. Some singers now assume they should sing "Every man in every way [rather than *play*],/ Fighting [rather than *striving*] all the time." And most singers now insert "For Williams" between beats at this point in the song. Just as the substitution of "fighting" for "striving" produces redundancy (cf. "we'll fight our way"

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¹⁷Brackett was a freshman at Williams when the Titanic went down. The film is full of music – including Amherst's fight song ("Lord Jeffrey Amherst was a soldier of the king . . ."), Cornell's alma mater ("High above Cayuga's waters. . ."), along with memorable renditions, as the ship goes down, of the "Londonderry Air" ("Danny Boy") and "Nearer My God to Thee."

and "We'll fight for dear old Williams"), the inserted "For Williams" means that, together with "For we'll fight for dear old Williams," there are altogether too many "fors" in the chorus. ¹⁸ It's not uncommon for singers to substitute "as we march down the field" for ". . . on the field" (as if remembering the Yale song).

Other changes in the words have more official sanction, although the process whereby the words were changed has never been fully documented. When Williams began accepting women, it occurred to some that the words to some of the old songs perhaps ought to be changed, to recognize the presence of women among the undergraduates and (soon enough) among the alumni. The driving force seems to have been not young feminist faculty or students, but a Williams alumnus from the Class of 1932, John English, who served as Director of Alumni Relations from 1965 to 1975. In the spring of 1971, when there were only a few women transfer students on campus, and before Williams had accepted its first four-year co-ed class (the Class of 1975, which began at Williams in the Fall of 1971), English wrote to two other alumni, Henry Greer '22 and Warren Hunke '42, editors of the 1959 edition of the Songs of Williams, suggesting that beginning in June 1971 (when the first women would graduate), the words to Williams songs should refer to "the men and women of Williams," and asking them to suggest "appropriate changes" to the lyrics of Williams song, in the light of co-education. In March 1972 Greer and Hunke proposed, among changes to other songs, that the first line of "Yard by Yard" be altered to read "Daughters and sons of Williams, sing" They noted that they tried to keep the changes to a minimum, "both to preserve continuity and to facilitate learning the new versions." English then consulted with several interested parties, including Irwin Shainman, Nancy McIntire (then Assistant Dean, with responsibility for women students), and at least one woman undergraduate with musical expertise. ¹⁹ The change was adopted, though it is not clear whether it was formally endorsed, or how the new language was made known. 20

Over time other minor changes were quietly made, apparently to remove the remaining gender allusions. "Every man in every play" was altered to read "Every one in every play" and "All behind our men" became "All behind our friends," although documents do not survive to show just when these revisions were made, or by whom. ²¹ Since 1989 the revised version of

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¹⁸Anecdotal evidence suggests that many singers think the penultimate line of the chorus reads "And [rather than *for*] we'll fight for dear old Williams."

¹⁹English also consulted Stephen Sondheim '50, but was unable to enlist him as a reviser. (Sondheim reportedly suggested that the college should get itself a new song.)

²⁰English noted that student members of The Ephlats initially suggested the change. The correspondence to and from English on the matter is found in the college archives (Henry Greer file), and in the files of the Director of Alumni Relations. Reference to the proposed changes in the words do not appear in the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Society of Alumni for 1972-76. Programs for the annual alumni meeting were not printed until 1988.

²¹Robert Behr, who served as Director of Alumni Relations from 1986 to 1991, reports that the new words to the song were in place when he took over.

"Yard by Yard" -- with all three changes -- has been printed in the program distributed at the annual meeting of the Society of Alumni. 22

Such revisions of the words of the old fight song may seem foolish to some older alums at a football game, when it's plain that we're singing about male players. But we should remember that those in the stands summoned to "sing" have probably always included both men and women, metaphorical "daughters" (wives, girlfriends, and mothers) as well as "sons." And nowadays those on the field on the Williams campus are as likely to be women athletes as men. The original lyrics -- "All behind our men" -- are equally foolish when sung at a women's soccer game. Maybe we should simply adapt the song to the game at hand. (Curiously, the version of the song appearing in the annual freshman "facebook," What's What, continues to be the original.)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that today's undergraduates -- except for members of some varsity teams -- do not know the words to "Yard by Yard" - or "The Mountains." (When the new graduates are asked to sing the latter at commencement now, they are politely and knowingly reminded that the words are to be found "in your program.") We are sometimes told that today's students are very interested in singing, and that there are more singing groups on campus than ever before. But it seems plausible to conclude that among the general student population the habit of singing college songs – once thoroughly ingrained in students through the fraternity system, where pledges were expected to sing at dinner – has gradually disappeared. Nancy Roseman, Dean of the College, suspects that while undergraduates are familiar with "The Mountains" – it is sung to first-year students by their JA's in Chapin Hall during First Days -- few students know anything at all about "Yard by Yard."

Looking ahead, we can perhaps be confident that the song will survive in one form or other, but (despite the updating of the language) it may increasingly come to feel like a relic of the college's past. Knowledge of the college songs seems to survive among older alumni – those who learned them when they were students – but classes since the 1970s seem to need to rely on

²²The words to "Yard by Yard" do not appear in the programs produced by the Athletic Department for home football games.

²³The women's swimming team currently sings "Yard by yard, we'll fight our way,/ Through Amherst's line,/ Every swim and every dive,/ Fighting all the time FOR WILLIAMS./Cheer by cheer we'll rend the air,/ All behind our team,/ And we'll fight for dear old Williams,/ And we'll win and win again."

²⁴The words to "Yard by Yard" -- the original words -- and several other Williams songs began appearing in the "facebook" in 1979. They have simply been reprinted since then. A note perpetuates the erroneous belief that the song won the 1909 contest. The "facebook" was published for many years by an undergraduate service group, the Purple Key Society, and was later taken over by the Office of the Dean of the College.

²⁵According to Dick Quinn, the college's Director of Sports Information, members of the football team now sing the chorus of "Yard by Yard" after a victory.

the words "in the program." It seems unlikely that undergraduates will learn the songs unless they are expected or persuaded to sing them on stated occasions. Only time will tell whether young alumni will themselves learn the songs -- probably by stumbling along after their elders -- as they themselves grow older and their attachment deepens to the college and its old traditions.

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