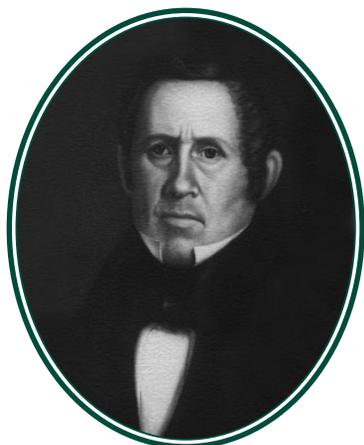


Charles Tufts

Farmer, Manufacturer, College Founder

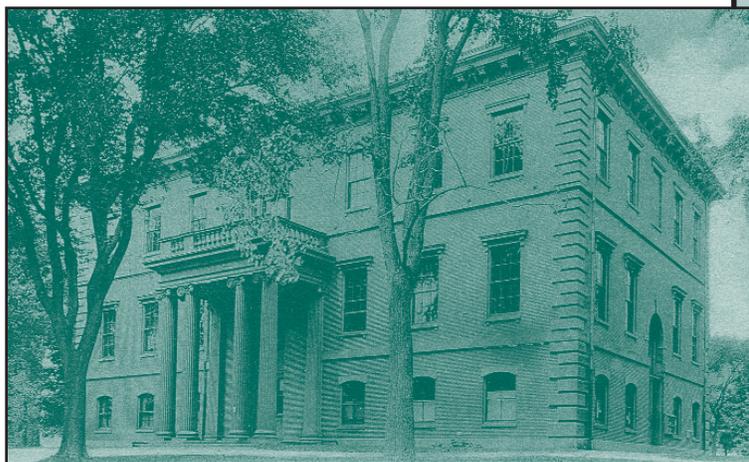
1781-1876



Charles Tufts



Home of Charles Tufts, Washington Street, Charlestown,
Later, Somerville



Ballou Hall, First Building, Tufts College

Born in Medford, Massachusetts, Charles Tufts was descended from Peter Tufts who settled in Charlestown about 1638. In the business of farming and brick manufacturing with his father, Charles had extensive land holdings in Medford and a section of Charlestown that became the town of Somerville in 1842.

In 1821, Tufts married Hannah Robinson of Lexington. That same year, he built the two-story gambrel roof house at 141 Washington Street that was to be their home for the rest of his life. (The site of the now-demolished house was just west of the railroad overpass on Washington Street and on that street's northern side.)

While lacking in formal education due to deafness, Tufts was self-taught from reading and experience. Devoutly religious, he was a member of the Universalist Church in Charlestown's Thompson Square.

When the Universalists decided to establish a college in the area, Tufts donated 20 acres of his land on Walnut Tree Hill on the Medford-Somerville line as a campus. He later increased his gift to 100 acres. When previously asked what he intended to do with that hilltop, Tufts prophetically answered, "I will put a light upon it."

When the college incorporated in 1852, it was named for Tufts in gratitude for his benefactions. Tufts College laid the cornerstone of its first building, Ballou Hall, in 1853 and formally opened its doors to students in 1855. Tufts continued his involvement in the affairs of the college named for him, donating substantial sums of money for construction and serving on the Board of Trustees from 1856 until his death in 1876.

Over the years, Tufts College continued to thrive and grow in enrollment and academic offerings, becoming a University in 1955. It opened 161 years ago with 7 students; today's enrollment is 10,837. Charles Tufts' light upon a hill shines brightly.

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