With an extraordinary weekend of joyous alumni reunions, gridiron grit, cutting-edge academic symposia, soaring confetti and what was possibly the world’s largest red-velvet cake, the Columbia University community celebrated the kickoff of an anniversary 250 years in the making.

Beginning a remarkable, yearlong celebration of Columbia’s 250th anniversary, the opening weekend was a rousing success, with a sizable turnout and enthusiastic participation. Alumni from around the world, current students and University neighbors alike flocked to campus for events ranging from symposia and walking tours to Friday’s Birthday Bash, featuring student performances, 10,000 cupcakes and a giant birthday cake in the form of Low Library. The party raged on with Saturday’s Homecoming festivities at Baker Field before hurtling back to South Field on Saturday night for an electrifying performance by hip-hop superstar Wyclef Jean. The estimated attendance for the evening’s concert—13,500—was the largest University gathering other than the annual Commencement ceremony.

Over the past six years, and under an executive committee co-chaired by Henry L. King, CC ’48, chair emeritus, University Trustees, and Kenneth Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences, more than 140 faculty members, administrators, alumni and students have served on committees for Columbia 250, planning these events to capture the energy of Columbia as a home to people and ideas that have changed the world. On opening weekend, more than 200 additional volunteers—staff, students, alumni, and neighbors—donned blue-striped Columbia rugby shirts and helped to usher, distribute pennants, Alma “hats” and glow-sticks, as well as to direct foot traffic and serve as ambassadors to the campus.

Whether or not you took part in the celebration on campus, the following pages will give you a glimpse of both the academic and celebratory activities that opened this landmark anniversary.

Now in full swing, Columbia’s 250th anniversary celebration offers a wealth of events and activities continuing throughout the year—from academic lectures and conferences to alumni events around the country and all over the world. The C250 Web site will highlight these events and the stories of two-and-a-half centuries of remarkable Columbians who have shaped the world and how we see it. For the next twelve months and beyond, on campus, online, and in alumni clubs in cities around the globe, the University, friends and alumni will celebrate Columbia at 250.
This work, Columbia University begins a year-long celebration of its 250th anniversary. Founded by Royal Charter in 1754, eight students and one professor (who also served as president) met in the vestry of Trinity Church, near Ground Zero, to begin an institution that today is the fifth-oldest university in the United States and, by any measure, one of the leading institutions of higher learning in the world. For these academic pioneers, the world was a very different place—and ours would have been unimaginable: There was no United States, and the global population had not quite reached 500 million, with New York City boasting a mere 11,000 inhabitants.

The celebration of Columbia, so intimately connected to everything around it, will essentially be a story of how our world has become what it is today—and how so many of our faculty and alumni have been ahead of their time. Columbia University in the City of New York, as its official title proclaims, has been intertwined with the fortunes of the city. Everything from the sewers (Charles Frederick Chandler), to the subway (William Barclay Parsons), to the parks and highways (Robert Moses), to the public school system (De Witt Clinton), to Broadway (Rodgers and Hammerstein), to Wall Street (Warren Buffet), to the Yankees (Lou Gehrig), to the mayor’s office (one-seventh have been Colombians)—every facet of the city has been created and shaped by Columbia faculty or graduates. And the same is true of the country: the drafting of the Declaration of Independence (Robert R. Livingston) and the Constitution (Gouverneur Morris), the authoring of the Federalist Papers (Alexander Hamilton and John Jay), the office of the president (both Roosevelts and Eisenhower) and the Supreme Court (Louis Brandeis, the most recent being Ruth Bader Ginsburg)—and on and on.

But an anniversary such as this implicitly asks fundamental questions. What accounts for the extraordinary longevity and successful evolution over time of American colleges and universities? (Very few organizations last as long.) And where are we headed in the future? There are many reasons why universities have endured the test of time, but a few are fundamental. Foremost is the purpose they serve. Universities remain meaningful because they respond to the deepest of human needs, to the desire to understand and to explain that understanding to others. A spirited curiosity coupled with a caring about others (the essence of what we call humanism) is a simple and unanswerable human drive, certainly as profound an element of human nature as the more often cited interests in property and power, around which we organize the economic and political systems. Moreover, universities at their best have nurtured a distinctive intellectual atmosphere in which one is free to live in a world of seemingly infinite complexity, while holding onto the natural but quixotic hope that someday it all will be resolved. If the pursuit of understanding is your mission, you simply cannot avoid confronting the immense variety of perspectives out there and, ultimately, how much we don’t know, our sheer ignorance. You cannot rely on the comforts of common sense and of having a point of view. Learning to live comfortably in this very uncomfortable mental environment, with all its confusions and absurdities and possibilities, defines the intellectual character of the modern university.

And this has great significance for shaping the intellectual and emotional character of the open, democratic societies. Just as instilling an entrepreneurial spirit is difficult and takes time, so does the creation of a democratic personality. The instinctive impulse in the marketplace is to stick with what we think we know, to find others who think similarly so as to accommodate our certainties of our beliefs, to avoid situations where we might have to justify our ideas and to resort more and more to certitude as the best defense when under attack. These, natural as they may be, are of course devasting to society. With all the pressures toward the closing of our minds that come with conflict in the public arena, it’s not a bad idea to have special communities like universities distinctly dedicated to the open intellectual life.

Other features of universities also contribute to their success over time. The respect government has accorded universities—founded in the principle of academic freedom, has been crucial. The decentralized structure of universities has established that a substantial autonomy, coupled with a high and natural purpose, can also be an extraordinary motivator for organizations. The fact that universities have become pieces of our identities that we carry with us through life is important. And perhaps the greatest cause of success is that all this takes place in the company of the next generation.

Columbia, like every other university, celebrates its contributions to knowledge: 64 Colombians have won the Nobel Prize (with Columbia College having graduated more laureates in science than any other American college); and while fields (anthropology) and theories (plate tectonics) were conceived at Columbia. But none of this satisfies quite as much as the noble role of conveying to youth what we have come to know, and to do that in the intellectual atmosphere of the modern university.

Where are universities going? New areas of knowledge and needs are opening before us—the continuation of genetics, the continuing building of democratic societies, the phenomena of globalization. Throughout the year Columbia will have symposia on these issues. But, if I had to select one change in the years ahead, I would point to the growing internationalization of our universities. More students from abroad (especially at the undergraduate level), and more research and teaching on global issues (trade, international institutions, poverty, environment, etc.) will be the defining characteristics in coming decades. And just as the influence and involvements of Columbia have steadily widened over the last 250 years from the local (New York City) to the national, so will they now do so at the international level as well. The fundamental purposes and structure will not change, for they are enduring. But the problems to be solved and the pool of talent to solve them will broaden. This is why our way will remain rigorous, and relevant, in a mercantile world.


The Idea of a University
by Lee C. Bollinger, Oct. 15, 2003

Alan Brinkley, Alfred Aho Receive Great Teachers Awards

On Tuesday, Oct. 14, Provost Alan Brinkley and computer science chair Alfred Aho were presented with the Society of Columbia Graduates’ 55th Annual Great Teachers Awards.

Brinkley, an esteemed scholar of 20th-century U.S. history, became provost in July, after serving as chair of the history department since 2000. He has taught at Columbia since 1971. Brinkley offered the keynote address, “The University as a Time of Crisis.”

Aho, chair of computer science at the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, is internationally known for his fundamental research in algorithms, programming languages and theoretical computer science. His current research interests include programming languages, compilers and algorithms for next-generation machines including quantum computers.

U.S. President Eisenhower was present in 1949 when the first Great Teacher Awards were given to Mark van Doren and Edwin H. Armstrong. Each year, recipients’ names are added to a permanent plaque that hangs in Butler Library and stands as a monument to the great educators who have enlightened Columbia students.
In the late 1940s and 1950s, a small group calling themselves the New York School of Poets began to raise eyebrows in the city's arts and literary circles. Known for their humorous, experimental verse and collaborations with musicians and painters, these avant-garde poets included John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler and Columbia Professor of English Kenneth Koch, who died in July 2002. On Oct. 10 of this year, literary fans, performers and composers gathered to celebrate Koch's life, his works and his forty-plus years of teaching poetry at the University.

The remarkable evening of whimsical short plays, songs, films and opera featured a vast array of Koch's verse set to music, staged and/or filmed by his many collaborators. Held before a packed house at Miller Theatre, it was one of Koch's last public appearances—his last reading, to be accurate, since he was too ill to perform it. Held before his unexpected death in July 2002, the evening marked the first time Koch's body of work was celebrated in a literary, musical extravaganza by Caroline Ladhani

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FANS SALUTE FORMER PROFESSOR AND POET KENNETH KOCH

Celebration 250: Backstage at Columbia University's Fred Friendly Seminar by Katherine Moore

The scenario: you live in the City of Metropolis. When your bathroom ceiling starts to leak, you accompany the superintend- dent to the apartment above. The occupants are not there, but when you and the super enter, you discover that the apartment is covered with photos of major buildings in Metropolis, marked with arrows pointing to what appear to be staged and real spots.

Do you tell anyone what you have seen? Do you call local authorities immediately? Do you report the leak to the building management company?

The scene is repeated in every Metropolis, around the table at Columbia University’s Fred Friendly Seminar. In a room filled with photographs of major buildings in Metropolis, marked with arrows pointing to what appear to be staged and real spots.

Do you tell anyone what you have seen? Do you call local authorities immediately? Do you report the leak to the building management company?

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The steady rain that crept across campus on Friday, Oct. 17, didn’t dampen the spirits of the 3,500 students, alumni, faculty and staff members who gathered on South Lawn and Low Plaza and donned “alma crowns” in honor of the kick-off of the 250th anniversary of Columbia and the 100th anniversary of the landmark Alma Mater statue.

The Birthday Bash festivities began with an official proclamation, delivered by alumna Esther Fuchs, director of the Center for Urban Research and Policy, chair of the Urban Studies Program and Public Affairs as well as Mayor Bloomberg’s Special Advisor for Governance and Strategic Planning. On behalf of the mayor, she pronounced Oct. 17, 2003, “Columbia 250th Anniversary Day” in New York City. The proclamation also stated that Columbia is one of the most renowned institutions in the city and will forever be intertwined with the city’s history and its future.

“Columbia University students are the minds that will capture the dreams which will shape the future of our planet.”

In a letter to the University, former president Bill Clinton wrote that “excellence in education is the key to our future,” and that “Columbia is poised to build on its grand past to create an even brighter future.” Clinton added that he has enjoyed being Columbia’s neighbor for the past two years, and is pleased to be working with the Mailman School of Public Health on his Presidential Foundation’s HIV-AIDS initiative.

Reflecting on Columbia’s past, President Lee C. Bollinger said that the size of our campus community today—23,000 students, 3,000 faculty and 9,000 staff members is a far cry from the university’s size back in 1754. The incoming class of Columbia’s inaugural year consisted of eight students—with one faculty member who also served as president. After noting that it is an honor to serve as Columbia’s president during this historic time, Bollinger stepped up onto the 13-foot birthday cake replicating Low Library and cut a ceremonial slice of the red velvet cake from the Rotunda’s dome.

As the rain picked up, the crowd devoured 10,000 cupcakes, enjoying performances by the Columbia dance team, jazz ensemble, marching band, gospel choir, cheerleaders, and other groups such as Notes and Keys, Raw Elements, Two Shots of Rye, Bacchantae, DOLE, The Kingsmen and the glee club.

School of the Arts student Ben Odell’s short film “Columbia University Studios: The Dream Factory,” a “mocumentary” of Columbia’s history was shown on jumbo screens. Taking a more comical approach to Columbia’s history than Ric Burns did in his documentary, Odell’s film told of a much different, albeit fictitious, Columbia—one that started in the early 1900s, not as a university, but rather as a movie studio. According to Odell, the campus was created as a backdrop for “Big Nick” Butler’s movie “Pride of the Yankees.” Subsequent films brought the addition of new buildings to the set until the 1990s, when the industry shifted from New York to other locations. In the fall of 1999, the leftover sets began to be used as classrooms and labs, thereby serving as a source of employment for the ex-studio workers. The film concluded with well-wishes from campus regulars and superstars, such as Mayor Bloomberg and Art Garfunkel.
Homecoming Festival Draws Record Crowd
by Michael Larkin

With Columbia matched up against long-standing rival, the undefeated University of Pennsylvania, alumni, classmates, professors, friends and family gathered for one of the oldest traditions in the University’s history, its homecoming football game. The kickoff of Columbia’s 250th anniversary celebration the previous afternoon only added to the excitement.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, and to be part of Columbia’s family at such an important time for the University as we mark our 250th year is really a privilege,” said Alumni Association President Charles O’Byrne, CC’81, IA’83, LAW’84. “To see so many generations of Columbians coming together with their families and reacquainting themselves with each other, their classmates and the faculty is what a celebration should be all about."

Thousands of alumni and fans gathered outside Wien Stadium at Baker Field to enjoy pre-game homecoming festivities that featured a gourmet barbecue and a family fair. The occasion gave many alumni the opportunity to reconnect with the University and reunite with old classmates and friends.

“The thing that is interesting is each time we come back … the celebration gets larger and more exciting,” said Harold Shorr, CC’56, who was a student during the 200th anniversary celebration. “It is great to see the camaraderie that’s going on. I know Columbia has always been very close, and this proves it even more.”

“It is wonderful to experience; you can feel the positive vibrations of people renewing ties both with the University and with each other,” said former Columbia President Michael I. Sovern, who was able to catch up with many old friends over the homecoming weekend.

“We come every year to see old friends and watch the football team, and as you get older you come to appreciate that where you are in life is a result of where you came from,” said Ta Li, Engineering ‘69.

Many who came to celebrate the homecoming weekend also came to cheer on a much-improved Columbia football team. Under the direction of new head coach Bob Shoop, the Lions were primed to battle the nationally ranked Penn Quakers. Unfortunately, the Quakers proved too great a force for the up-and-coming Lions, who fell 31-7. But the fervor surrounding the team was considerable, and a record crowd of 13,785 came to show their support.

“You see a lot of excitement, you see a lot of enthusiasm for football and the revitalization of big sports at Columbia,” said trustee Philip Milstein, CC’71. “People want to come back, the alumni are yearning to come back to the school.”

From 1934 Columbia College graduate Cliff Montgomery’s participation in the ceremonial coin toss to the halftime presentation of student-athlete honors from the winter and fall seasons, the University honored its past, as well as its future.

“The place was packed with people who remember their great moments at Columbia and we are all anticipating some great moments in the future,” said Columbia College Dean Austin Quigley.

To keep up to date with the Columbia Lions football team, log on to www.gocolumbialions.com
A Conversation with Austin Quigley

by Elizabeth Golden

As Columbia University begins the year-long celebration of its 250th anniversary, College Dean Austin Quigley reflects on how the College’s unique history and academic tradition will help pave the way to its future. And as Columbia starts a new chapter in its history, the Core Curriculum must continue to evolve as it has since its inception.

"From the day he began as Dean, Quigley has been able to think about the history of the College and the University in a way that substantively informs and directs its future," said Kathryn Yatras, dean of Academic Affairs.

The secret to Columbia’s success, said Quigley, its ability to balance continuity with change, and tradition with innovation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the University’s steadfast dedication to a core undergraduate curriculum. The curriculum provides all undergraduate students with a common grounding in disciplines and discoveries that have fueled great debate and social change through the ages.

Respect for the intellectual roots of contemporary thought does not, however, translate into mere acceptance of the past. From the outset in 1919, the faculty who constructed the first course in Contemporary Civilization planned that the seminar course would bring into fruitful conjunction the insistent problems of the present and the persisting voices of the past. The Core Curriculum is continually being reformed. As a former professor, Dean Quigley still takes a hands-on approach. “One of the great pleasures in talking to Austin about the inexhaustible works on the core reading lists is that he has actually read them and remembered them,” said Michael Seidel, Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities.

For the last two years, the Columbia faculty has been evaluating ways to better prepare undergraduate students to understand and respond to the enormous scientific advances that have reshaped our world in recent decades.

Drawing upon the talents of some of Columbia’s leading research faculty, a newly created course, “Frontiers of Science,” has been offered as an optional course to one-third of the 2003-2004 incoming freshman class. A vast majority of the group elected to participate in this pilot project for a new general-education course. If it is successful, Quigley hopes that the College will offer the course next fall to the whole incoming class.

The addition of a course covering several scientific disciplines to the Core Curriculum would help non-science majors become more conversant with major scientific paradigms and with sophisticated modes of quantitative reasoning. And students who go on to major in scientific disciplines would enter their speciality with a broader understanding of how that specialization relates to other scientific disciplines and to the field of science at large.

“While it is important to have specialized knowledge to succeed in the modern world, students need to be able to move around among areas of specialization, to think across frames of reference, to adapt acquired forms of expertise to new and changing circumstances,” said Quigley. “There is an old joke about a specialized scholar spending a lifetime knowing more and more about less and less, while someone committed only to general education can end up knowing less and less about more and more.”

Being conversant with these related tenets of intellectual inquiry also enables students and professors to participate in the rigorous sharing of divergent points of view – the hallmark of a Columbia undergraduate education. “The formative intellectual experience of Columbia College students today continues to be one of intellectual exchange and competing voices in small seminars,” said Quigley. “People change each other’s minds. Speaking up is a way of exploring different viewpoints on different topics. Students develop their own voices as instruments of inquiry. They learn how to be independent minded, to develop informed opinions, and just as important, they learn how to listen.”

So how does Quigley keep his finger on the pulse of the College? “I used to think I needed to have large forums to talk to lots of people at once,” said Quigley. “Now I have found the best way is to get to know people individually and in smaller groups.” True to his word, Quigley readily accepts invitations to student events and hosts regular breakfasts and lunches with student groups to talk about their experience at the College.

Dean Quigley recently had lunch with students from the Columbia Outdoor Orientation Program, COOP, a student-led program for incoming first-year students to get to know each other through outdoor activities before the New Student Orientation Program begins.

“Dean Quigley has been not only aware of, but very active in his support of the Columbia Outdoor Orientation Program,” said David Keck, CC’04. “As we work to improve what we see as an indispensable aspect of student development and orientation, it is extremely gratifying to feel the administration’s presence so strongly. It is not often that one has the opportunity to freely bounce ideas back and forth with someone so receptive, inquisitive, and sincerely interested in what we are trying to accomplish. Quigley’s relationship with COOP is based upon a common interest: the well-being of a very dynamic student body. That is very comforting.”

“As the University celebrates its 250th anniversary it is important to take stock of where the institution has been and where it is going,” said Quigley. “The 250th anniversary celebration brings to mind the rich history of the institution, the recognition that this history has been one of continuity and change, and that the challenge going forward is to use history as an informative guide, but without necessarily letting it govern the future direction of the University.”

South Lawn Comes Alive

A crowd of 13,500 students and neighbors enjoyed a lively concert by eclectic singer Wyclef Jean.
Two-Day Symposium on Constitutions, Democracy and Law Opens Columbia 250 Festivities by Gina Bria

Celebrating its long history in the shaping of constitutions, Columbia University convened "Constitutions, Democracy and the Rule of Law," a two-day symposium that brought together renowned legal scholars, business and government leaders, and other experts to address questions crucial to the development of constitutions in nations around the world.

The panelists explored the companion questions of whether and how constitutions constrain governments, and what impact constitutions have in a time of heightened concerns for international, national and individual security. At what point, for instance, does a nation's constitution make it too difficult for government agencies to secure the safety of its citizens? How can governments strike the right balance between individual rights and the collective rights of the state?

The symposium was organized by Jon Elster, Robert K. Merton Professor of Social Sciences, and Akeel Bilgrami, Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy. Provost Alan Brinkley told symposia attendees that "it is particularly appropriate that Columbia would celebrate its 250th anniversary by convening a symposium on constitutions. There is a long history of constitution-making and interpretation at Columbia University."\n
The first day's discussion centered on the issue of constitutional constraints: when is such legal constraint excessive; when inefficient? Is it the words of a constitution that constrain, or is it the interpretation of the constitution by courts that limit politicians' freedom of action?

The second day was devoted to a discussion of the connection between terrorism and civil liberties. Does the threat of terrorism justify abrogating civil liberties of some citizens and residents? Which civil liberties must be suspended or restricted to prevent terrorism? Will these policies make a country more fearful or more secure? To what extent does the interpretation of the constitution by courts that limit politicians' freedom of action?

Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger opened the symposium by noting that constitutions reflect "not only what the law should be, but what the fundamental values of a culture should be." Constitutions, while embodying ideals of law and values, he said, must also address the balance between individual protection and the common good.

The difficulty of achieving this balance became evident as panelists reflected on the constraints they encountered in trying to govern by the rule of law. Michel Rocard, former prime minister of France from 1991 to 1998, and currently a member of the European Parliament, for instance, recounted his experience trying to govern under the constraints of a constitution rendered unwieldy by too many amendments. He noted with humor that he was not alone in his observation that too many amendments can cost a constitution longevity—even Napoleon, he said, liked his constitutions short and obscure.

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Antanas Mockus Sivickas, mayor of Bogotá and participant in the creation of Colombia's constitution in 1991, raised a different set of concerns—the impact of social upheaval on adherence to constitutions.

He told participants that before he took office, twenty-seven mayors of Bogotá had been assassinated and that the vast majority of party delegates in his country declined to run for office. "The rule of law is seriously jeopardized," he told the hushed audience, "when those who govern do so under threat of extreme harm." Even so, he added, progress under these conditions is possible. When Mayor Mockus stepped into the leadership vacuum in his city, he said, he instituted a series of innovative civic programs, including public pledges by officials and citizens to uphold their constitutions. These pledges and other reforms helped renew respect for the constitution, which is now seen as a powerful tool among a populace that wants to be ruled by laws, not violence. "It is tempting to generalize from these and other experiences about the characteristics that render constitutions more or less effective," said Adam Prawdzik, professor of politics at New York University, another panel member. "But it would be unwise to do so. It is difficult, he cautioned, to assess the positive or negative role of a given constitution until we witness it in action. The most that can be observed from a distance, he ventured, is that countries with a high per capita income have strong constitutions.

Prawdzik's remarks ignited vigorous debate among the afternoon's discussants John Ferejohn, professor of political science at Stanford University, Jeremy Waldron, a law professor at Columbia, and Bernard Manin, a professor of politics at New York University. The first day's session ended with a rare glimpse into the difficulties of drafting modern-day constitutions when Rocard relayed his experience producing a constitution with other members of European Union. Here, he said, the major constraint was the sheer number of delegates whose views had to be brought into consensus. Hanging over their heads was the very real threat that the national politics and personality involved could make or break the whole enterprise, unravelling untold months of work in a matter of minutes.

The second day was devoted to a discussion of the companion questions of whether and how constitutions constrain governments, and what impact constitutions have in a time of heightened concerns for international, national and individual security. At what point, for instance, does a nation's constitution make it too difficult for government agencies to secure the safety of its citizens? How can governments strike the right balance between individual rights and the collective rights of the state?

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Book Party Marks Release of Stand, Columbia

The book party honoring Barnard College Professor of History Robert McCaughhey, the author of Stand, Columbia (Columbia University Press, 2003) was a featured event of the opening festivities for Columbia’s 250th anniversary celebration. The recently published book chronicles the history of the University from its humble beginnings in the mid-18th century to its current status as a world-renowned institution of higher education. “Six years ago I started writing Stand, Columbia, but my work on it began 14 years ago when I joined the history department as an assistant professor,” said McCaughhey. “Since then, making sense of Columbia University has been a career-long fascination.” The book party was co-sponsored by Columbia 250, Columbia University Press and University Seminars.

It’s all one world, there are no islands anymore.

Margaret Mead

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

"The artist must elect to fight for Freedom or for Slavery. I have made my choice."

Paul Robeson
Columbia Celebrates with 13 Foot Cake by “Cake Man Raven” by Kristin Sterling

At age 13 Harlem native Patrick DeSean "Cake Man Raven" Dennis III, sold his first creations—two coconut pies to his elementary school teacher for $5. Raven has come a long way in 20 years. Better known today as "Cake Man Raven" or "Harlem Cake Man," he is the designer and master baker of a 13-ton cake celebrating Columbia’s 250th anniversary.

The cake, modeled after Low Library.

The "red velvet cake"—a type of cake named for its signature red color—was a replica of Low Library. An icing made of cream cheese provided just the right color. The massive construction stood 13-feet tall and will be considered for the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s largest red velvet cake.

“I am honored that Columbia University commissioned me to build this cake for Columbia’s 250th Birthday Bash,” said Cake Man Raven. “The library is an architectural wonder with many unique intricacies. It was truly a monumental job. I welcomed the challenge of combining my passion for baking with replicating the library out of cake.”

So, how many eggs does it take to make a 3.5-ton cake? 190, according to the baker. Before beginning the undertaking, Cake Man Raven took photos of Low Library, reviewed blueprints, and even went on the roof, all to come up with detailed drawings and a rough model of the cake.

In actual creation of the delicious endeavor started at Cake Man Raven Confectionery in Fort Greene, Brooklyn (708 Fulton St.). For construction of the cake’s framework, Cake Man Raven moved to the ADP Project at 130 S. Portland Ave in Fort Greene, where the organization’s owner, architect Tom MacGregor, donated use of his studio-showroom.

Proving that bakers do rise early, at 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, Oct. 16, the cake began the longest leg of its journey—from Fort Greene to Cake Man Raven's old neighborhood in Harlem. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and a crowd of well-wishers came out to assist in the cake’s sendoff. The cake was then transported on a flatbed truck under police escort from the ADP Project to Triple Cakery, and was devoured nearly 10,000 chocolate cupcakes.

This wasn’t Cake Man Raven’s first grand-scale project. Last spring, he made a 12-foot cake replica of the Brooklyn Bridge in honor of the bridge’s 120th birthday.

Cake Man Raven Confectionery is a speciality bakery and is the “official home of the Southern Red Velvet Cake.” A neighborhood legend after only three years, the Confectionery opens its doors on Friday evenings to the Children For Christ Choir rehearsals.

Prior to opening the Confectionery in Brooklyn, Cake Man Raven operated from two apartments on the same building in Harlem, borrowing a neighbor’s kitchen to keep up with demand for his sweet treats. Over the years his creations have delighted not only Harlem and Brooklyn residents, but stars ranging from Ellen Fitzgeral and Dizzy Gillespie to Oprah Winfrey, Snoop Dogg and now the Columbia community.