

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

On the same day in February 1809, two individuals were born, who, by virtue of their intellect and the course of events, would greatly influence contemporary thinking and establish principles that would be debated long after they were gone. Abraham Lincoln, through skillful political leadership and with sound moral compass, saved the union of the United States and set in motion what would be a longer than expected struggle for equality in America. Charles Darwin expanded on ideas about evolution that emerged in the early part of the 19th century to articulate a revolutionary approach to thinking about how species arise and evolve. In 2009, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory will take special pride in celebrating the achievements of Charles Darwin, recognizing that our work is connected to his in a direct line of descent, for the very beginnings of the Laboratory can be traced to the scientific urge "to investigate experimentally the origin of species."

Those words were used in a proposal for the construction of a permanent Station for Experimental Evolution at our current location in the early years of the 20th century. The goal was to apply Darwin's theory and test Mendel's laws in animal and plant breeding experiments. When such a Station opened its doors in 1904, thanks to a grant from the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the idea that gave rise to Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory was already 14 years old. At an old fish hatchery on the edge of an intertidal zone, a field station of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences had been established in 1890 to study how life, per Darwin's theory, had adapted to fill a diversity of ecological niches.

The Laboratory has itself evolved since its days of affiliation with the Brooklyn Institute and the Carnegie Institution. Although evolution in the natural world is selected from a wide variety of nondirected mutations, in the case of our institution, change has been deeply purposeful. From its beginnings in the observation-based study of evolution, to its focus on genetics under Charles Davenport beginning in 1904, to its historic role in the 1940s and 1950s in incubating molecular genetics and molecular biology under the leadership of the geneticist Milislav Demerec, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory has taken the lead in setting the agenda for the advancement of biological science.

Progressive institutions such as ours to adapt or risk falling away from the leading edge in generating knowledge.

The current phase in our evolution is being given palpable, physical expression in the six new interconnected laboratory buildings that comprise our Hillside Research Complex, now nearly finished. These beautifully conceived and executed structures underlie the future evolution of research at the Laboratory. They announce, first,

