Dickinson House was erected in 1885 by the architecture firm of Peabody and Stearns of Boston, Massachusetts. The smallest of the Circle Houses, Dickinson was once the campus rival of the Kennedy House, but a large maple tree planted between the two was seen as a symbolic barrier intended to end the feud. Dickinson House’s Latin motto, Princeps Exemplo, translates to “Leadership by example.” The house was named after Martha Dickinson Smith, the great-grandmother of Lawrenceville benefactor John Cleve Green.

MARThA DICkINsoN SMITH

Not much is known of Martha Dickinson, for whom Dickinson House was named. At Lawrenceville, she is known as the great-grandmother of John Cleve Green, Lawrenceville’s chief benefactor. Martha was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1725, the daughter of Jonathan and Joanna Dickinson. Her father, Jonathan Dickinson, was a Presbyterian minister, and would become the first president of the College of New Jersey, now known as Princeton University. Martha, described in the Genealogy of Early Settlers in Trenton and Ewing (1883) as a “lady of genius, refinement, and superior education,” eventually married one of her father’s pupils: Reverend Caleb Smith.

The Smiths had three daughters: Anna, Elizabeth, and Jane. It was Anna, the oldest (born 1749) who would marry George Green, grandfather of John Cleve Green. Martha Dickinson died in 1756, at the age of 31. John Cleve Green would go on to memorialize his great-great grandfather with the establishment of Dickinson Hall at Princeton University, just as his namesake foundation chose to memorialize his great-grandmother in the naming of Dickinson House at Lawrenceville.

The current Dickinson House flag was designed in 1964 by Housemaster Ted Graham H’66 ‘72 P’85 and the boys in the house after the previous flag, a red D on a white background, had been stolen. Looking to update the design, they incorporated the house logo, Princeps Exemplo, as well as the pen crossed with the sword. The pen symbolizes scholarship, and the sword symbolizes strength. The date of 1885 refers to the year the house was established. The Dickinson House colors are red and white; the red represents passion, the white represents brilliance and understanding.
Dickinson was a regular winner of the Foresman Trophy (for excellence in House athletics) throughout its long history, as well as the Head Master’s Cup (for sportsmanship).

Dickinson House traditions include the Dickinson Winter Formal, as well as the institution of tea dances, the first of which took place in the winter of 1943, with young ladies invited from Miss Fine’s School in Princeton.

Dickinson House was one of the first to have a House song. Penned by Henry H. Strater L.1915 and Julian W. Eastman L.1915, the song’s melody is shared with a long forgotten turn of the century song called "Prairie Girl."

"Pride of the Circle, dear Dickinson
Oh! How we love thee just as our own
We will stand by thee till all is won
All for old Dickinson."

Notable Dickinson Housemasters include William E. Plumley, one of the earliest Latin Masters at Lawrenceville, and Theodore H. Keller, the former Head of Music.

Notable Alumni include the impressionist painter George Duhring Oberteuffer L.1896, John Hays Hammond Jr. L.1905 known as the "Father of Radio Control," and Paul Moravec Jr. '75, a Pulitzer Prize winning composer.