Education in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, 1900-1910

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An Explanation

For several years I have had the pleasure of delving into the history of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, concentrating on the first quarter of the twentieth century and providing, when appropriate, historical background to make my discussions clearer. Although my research and writing are ongoing, I have decided to make available drafts of a number of topics which I have explored at length, with the hope that the material presented will prove helpful to many readers. I would request that credit be given if my findings are used by other writers or those making oral presentations.

As my study has proceeded, many people have been helpful and, hopefully, I will be able to thank all of them during the course of my writing. At this point, let me mention just a few who have been especially supportive. Many thanks to the Trustees of Bridgewater’s Public Library for allowing me free access to the sources in the town’s library, made easier by the aid given to me by the research librarians under the competent direction of Mary O’Connell. Without the constant aid of Dr. Steven G. Young, I would have been at a loss many times in how to proceed in the use of my computer, a piece of technology indispensable to my writing. Many thanks to Sylvia B. Larson who has been willing to spend numerous hours using her fine editing skills and her probing historical mind to improve greatly these drafts, all the while sharing my great interest in the history of Bridgewater. Any errors in these pieces, of course, are solely mine. What a great joy it is to share many of my findings with S. Mabell Bates, who, as a friend, head of the special collection at Bridgewater State College Library, and member of the Bridgewater Historical Commission, has provided me with valuable historical material and has been a constant source of inspiration. Lastly, my research, particularly concerning the Bridgewater Normal School, would have been far less interesting without my many conversations with David K. Wilson, long associated with public relations and institutional research at Bridgewater State College. His willingness to share his historical knowledge of the college, videotape my tours of Bridgewater’s School Street and Central Square, begin the time-consuming task of placing some of my writings on a web-site, and putting the drafts, such as this one on education, into more permanent forms are much appreciated.

One final note concerning bibliography needs to be made. At some juncture, I will present an essay on the sources used in my study. For now, the numerous footnotes will give the reader a good idea of the research materials used in this historical account of the town.
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Education in Bridgewater, 1900
(Including Some Historical Background)

If some aware Bridgewater inhabitants of the early twenty-first century could be transported by magic to their town as it was in 1900, they would have little difficulty in spotting many of the church edifices since these buildings continue to serve a religious purpose. Recognizing the structures devoted to education would be another matter. Often called the common, district, or outlying schools, none of the eight primary-grammar schools of 1900 were still in the business of education after 1947, having either been torn down or converted to other purposes. Most of these sojourners would take note of the Academy Building at the southern end of Central Square, but many would not be aware that before the early 1950's it served as the town's high school, and fewer still would know that before the middle 1870's it had been the third home of the Bridgewater Academy, a private institution devoted to post-grammar school learning. Owing mainly to the disastrous fire of 1924, our visitors would look in vain for most of the pre-twentieth century edifices, including the Model School, of what was called in 1900 the Bridgewater State Normal School. Still, there were a few things concerning education in Bridgewater in 1900 to which they could relate: the never-ending struggle to have an excellent school system at a reasonable cost; the fact that by far the largest part of the town's budget was devoted to the public schools; and that, other than church-related Sunday schools, the town had no parochial schools.

To understand Bridgewater's educational configuration at the turn of the twentieth century and how it would be shaped both by continuity and change in the following twenty-five years, a cursory look at the town's earlier efforts to educate its youth might be helpful, bearing in mind that our comments sometimes refer to the original Bridgewater before it officially became four towns in the 1820's. Nahum Mitchell in his History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater, 1840, lauded the town for having "been remarkable for its attention to education, both public and private...," an interpretation re-enforced over forty years later by Joshua E. Crane as he chronicled, among other things, the steps taken to promote learning in Bridgewater between the 1660's and the 1880's. There is a bit of filiopietistic sentiment in these
evaluations, but also some historical merit.  

Reflecting trends seen elsewhere in the English colonies, especially the New England ones, and in the new nation subsequently forged by the American Revolution, Bridgewater witnessed some basic changes in its public educational system, although it did not displace the family as “the most important institution of socialization and education.” Incorporated in 1656 as the first inland town of the Plymouth Colony, Bridgewater joined several other towns in 1663 in heeding the call of the colony’s General Court to appoint a “schoolmaster...to train children in reading and writing.” Nathaniel Willis, one of the original proprietors of Bridgewater, was probably the first traveling schoolmaster in this town. After the Plymouth Colony became part of the newly created royal province of Massachusetts Bay in 1691, further steps to promote education were taken. In 1696, Bridgewater agreed to allow schooling in the Meeting House, located in what is now West Bridgewater, and two years later decided to appoint “four school-dames for the several quarters of the town, to instruct small children in reading.”

During the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries, the original Bridgewater remained, at least politically, one town, but the growth and spread of its population had necessitated the formation of additional parishes, including the South Parish which would become the present-day Bridgewater. This development naturally had an impact on education. The school-dames continued to teach the very young children, but beginning in the 1740’s grammar schoolmasters were appointed by the selectmen to serve all parts of the town on a rotating basis. Sometimes these teachers were also ministers, an indication of the close connection between the parish churches and the town during the eighteenth century. On the eve of the American Revolution, the proverbial one or two room schoolhouses began to be

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built in the so-called ricks (districts) in Bridgewater, including several in the South Parish. Each of these
schools in this parish was given a number with the Centre School, which was to have a long and interesting
history, having the distinction of being Number One. Toward the end of the Revolution, the state’s
legislative body of Massachusetts, the General Court, began its long involvement in local education when
town selectmen were instructed to visit and inspect the schools at least two times a year.³

Since it would help explain Bridgewater’s educational strengths and weaknesses in 1900, an
extensive history of public schooling in the eighty years would be a worthy undertaking. Only a few salient
points of this complicated story can be made here, but at least we can speak of Bridgewater as we know of it
today since the South Parish retained the name of the original town when it was divided into four political
entities in the 1820’s. Given the smaller population and geographic area of the “new” Bridgewater, the
educational expenditures, recommended by an elected school committee, were initially reduced after 1822.
In 1827, continuing a long tradition of ministerial involvement in the town’s educational system, two
members of the town’s clergy were part of a seven-man school committee, although in 1836 the
Town and the Parish were legally separated, which meant that tax revenues were no longer used to support a
particular parish society. Another member of this school board was John Angier Shaw, a close friend of
Horace Mann, a leading figure in promoting public education in Massachusetts. Indeed, Mann, who was
appointed to head the state’s new Board of Education, was one of the national leaders of the so-called
common school movement, which aimed to extend elementary schooling to all white children. Bridgewater
had a direct connection with this popular reform since, as we shall see, it was the site of the first building
erected in America to house a State Normal School to train public school teachers.⁴

³ Crane, pp. 813-814; MacCurdy, HH, p. 101; Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, p. 31;
Lagemann, “Education,” Reader’s Companion, p. 314; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater
(Charleston, S.C: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), p. 44; Pictorial History Bridgewater, Massachusetts
(Rockland, Massachusetts: Fairmount Printings, Inc., 1994), p. 54; the Bridgewater Historical Collectors
who prepared this book are: Ruth Hooper Bishop, James “Mike” Bois, James W. Buckley, Martha Dorr
Cossaboom, Katherine Pratt Jordan, Arthur C. Lord, Dorothy Lord Mann, James K. Moore; they gave
special thanks to George Rizer, Photographer; Bates, “Chronology, Part I,” HH, pp. 36-37; since the
British variation of the word center was used in the title of Bridgewater’s Centre School, this text will
adhere to that practice.

⁴ Crane, p. 815; Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, p. 31; Lagemann, “Education,” Reader’s
Companion, pp. 315-316; The Bridgewater Book Illustrated (Taunton, Massachusetts: William S.
Sullwold Publishing, Inc., 1985), pp. 22-23; published by the Old Bridgewater Society in 1985, this work
During the 1840’s, as the United States was expanding westward to fulfill what some considered to be its Manifest Destiny, Bridgewater’s annual expenditures for public education reached two thousand dollars, surpassing that of the old town before it became four separate political entities. Reflecting an increase in the town’s economic activity and resulting population growth, there were by 1847, the year in which it was decided to print and then distribute the Town Report to each family, thirteen ungraded schools scattered around the town, all of which were staffed by one or two teachers. Among the ranks of those who valiantly instructed about four hundred of Bridgewater’s children in these primary-grammar schools were some recent graduates of the new Normal School in Bridgewater and, reflecting a national trend, more and more young women whose salaries, at least in Massachusetts, were less than half of those of their male counterparts. Despite the efforts to reform the common schools, the ones in Bridgewater were described as being in “absolutely pitiable condition” with some of the schoolhouses even lacking blackboards. Nor was the attendance record averaging sixty-one percent something of which the town could be proud.  

On another level of despair, the school committee in 1847 gave voice to an age-old lament when it wrote ‘that children are not as respectful,...and well-behaved as formerly.” Reminiscing about the same decade, Martha Keith, a member of an old family in Bridgewater, told about her experiences at the age of four when she attended a small one-room schoolhouse next to the New Jerusalem Church on Cedar Street. She was among the few children at that age to attend a common school and with hindsight, tinged with a delicious sense of humor, wondered if it had been “safe” to attend school “during the time when the master was accustomed to throw ferules and jack-knives across the room at disorderly pupils.” In a more nostalgic vein, she asked how many remembered reading “the thrilling story of Peggy Hammond, and the dire mishaps following her fear of spiders and other creeping things.”

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includes the two original books published in 1899 and 1908, and some additional invaluable information and pictures that take us to around 1916; for most of the future citations of this source, it will not be possible to cite pages, and they will simply be noted as Bridgewater Book; Bates, “Chronology, Part II,” HH, p. 142; “Shaw, John Angier, 1791 to 1873--Educator,” HH, p. 277.

5 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1900 (Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Arthur H. Willis, Printer, 1901), pp. 24-27; in this report William H. Sanderson, Bridgewater’s Superintendent of Schools, compared the town’s school system of 1900 with that of 1847; all the town reports in this work refer to those of Bridgewater and all were printed by Willis.

6 Martha Keith, “At School: From Four To Sixteen,” Bridgewater Book, pp. 227-228; Bridgewater Book, pp. 22-23; Crane, p. 815; Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, p. 31; Lagemann, “Education,”
Her whimsical question cannot be answered, but we do know that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Bridgewater’s school system continued to be shaped by continuity and change. After the Civil War, the common schools, numbering fourteen in 1876, continued to be central to the town’s educational endeavors. Despite the establishment of a public high school in the late 1860’s, a topic to be discussed below, the largest portion of school expenditures, approaching $10,000 in 1876, was spent on the 700 hundred or so children attending these wooden schoolhouses. The impact of state legislation, not a new phenomenon, continued to be felt when, for example, a law in 1886 required all schools in the Bay State to provide instruction in physiology and hygiene, with stress on the effects of alcohol and narcotics on the human body. (There were no saloons in Bridgewater, and for many years the town voted against granting liquor licenses.) Two years later, the town decided to create the position of Superintendent of Schools in conjunction with a nearby community. This administrative move was especially aimed at improving the outlying schools and was reflective of a national trend in the late nineteenth century toward centralizing the control of schooling in American communities.7

Not the first to serve Bridgewater in this capacity, William H. Sanderson was appointed the town’s superintendent of schools in 1890 and was to remain in that position for fifteen years. In August of 1891, he moved his family into the “Sanford place,” located across from the First Parish Cemetery on Summer Street, and soon became an active member of the Unitarian Church. Running a school system containing thirteen common schools, some of which were aging and in poor condition, was hardly an easy task, but the closing of six of them between 1889 and 1896, made possible in part by the opening in 1891 of the Model School conducted by Bridgewater Normal, perhaps made the task more manageable. Located in the 1880’s near the corner of Grove and Summer Streets, the Centre School, the town’s largest and the one used by the

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7 “Twenty Years Ago,” Bridgewater Independent, Feb. 1, 1907; this local newspaper will be cited as BI throughout this work; Crane, pp. 814-815; MacCurdy, “Education,” HH, pp. 103-107; Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, pp. 31-32; Bates, “Chronology, Part III,” HH, p. 180; Lagemann, “Education,” Reader’s Companion, pp. 317-318; “A Scrapbook of Bridgewater’s 15 Original Schools”; this source, deposited in the Bridgewater Public Library, was prepared under the direction Dr. Robert D. MacCurdy for the Bicentennial Committee of the Friends of the Bridgewater Public Library and presented to the library’s Board of Trustees on April 29, 1976; aiding in this worthwhile project were: Dr. Robert A. Daniel, photographer, Barbara Hewitson, art work, Eleanor MacCurdy, art work and script, and Alice Wilkinson, script; future references to this unpublished source will cited as the “Scrapbook,” followed by the name of the particular school.
Normal School beginning in 1880 as a School of Observation for the training of prospective teachers, was among the schoolhouses to pass into history. In any case, Bridgewater's school committee and superintendent still faced major challenges as they sought to cope with the many problems besetting the remaining common schools, sometimes mockingly called the “anything” schools.8

In April of 1900, a joint meeting of the elected school committees of Bridgewater and Abington, which at this juncture shared the same Superintendent, re-appointed Sanderson to the position. Varying in size during the nineteenth century, Bridgewater's school committee at this time had six members, five of whom were men noted for their professional lives and sense of civic duty, and all of whom were representative of the town's Yankee-English majority. It was chaired by Hollis M. Blackstone, admired for his selfless devotion to the town's school system for the previous thirteen years and also for his work as the Superintendent of the State Farm at Bridgewater since 1883. Among the other men on the board, William H. McElwain was especially well-known in Bridgewater since his shoe factory on Perkins Street was becoming the town's largest employer. (He will long be remembered in the annals of Bridgewater's history for having the town's first truly multi-classroom primary-grammar school named in his honor in 1913.) There was, however, one major difference, shared with the public library's board of trustees, that set the makeup of school board apart from other elected committees of town government, namely the right of women to be a members of the school board even though they had not yet been granted the right of franchise at the town meeting. In 1900, Sarah T. Bates, an active member of the New Jerusalem Church and an elected trustee of the public library, was beginning her seventh year on the school committee, serving as a competent and dedicated secretary, a job none of the men on the committee were perhaps willing to do. At the time of her sudden death in 1905, Sanderson in a rather Victorian approach wrote: “Being a woman and in close touch and sympathy with the children, their parents, and the teachers, she knew more about the

8 Bl. Nov. 12, 1909; Arthur C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden and the Bridgewater State Normal School—A Memorial Volume (Bridgewater, Mass.: Arthur H. Willis, Printer, 1919), p. 46; hereafter this work will be cited as Memorial Volume; MacCurdy, “Education,” HH, p. 103; Moore, Images of America; Bridgewater, p. 44; Townscape Institute, Form 247, pp. 569-570; this comprehensive survey of Bridgewater's historic architecture was started in 1983, when the Board of Selectmen “received a grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission”; the Townscape Institute was contacted to do the survey which was done under the direction of Edward W. Gordon; this important unpublished work, copies of which can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library, will hereafter be cited as the Townscape Institute; “Scrapbook—District No. 1 School.”
inside workings of the schools than any other member of the board." Bridgewater's Irish Catholics, although they constituted the town's second largest ethnic group, were still not represented directly on the school committee or in the town government in general.  

Much of the work done by the School Committee and Superintendent Sanderson in 1900 was devoted to maintaining a faltering system of schoolhouses located throughout the town. Around three hundred and fifty students now attended these common or outlying schools, all of which were staffed by female teachers rather than schoolmasters of whom we hear so much about in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Each of the buildings accommodated one to six or eight grades in one or two rooms, and none of them had a kindergarten, a level of education left to the Model School in the center of the town. Since the state law now required school attendance to the age of fourteen, there was a considerable span of ages in these schoolhouses. Teacher salaries and maintenance costs of these buildings absorbed a large portion of the sixteen thousand dollars provided by the town in its school budget for 1900.

These three of the outlying schools in 1900 needed special attention: the Blackstone, Flagg, and Main. Originally called the Great Woods or District Number Twelve School, the first of these was subsequently named after Hollis M. Blackstone, Superintendent of the Bridgewater State Farm, who had much to do with the history and condition of this building. Located on Titicut Street, it was erected in 1876, the year of America's centennial birthday, to serve the families of the attendants of the Bridgewater State Workhouse, formerly called the Bridgewater State Almshouse. With no cost to the town, Blackstone had the building moved in 1895 to the corner of Conant and Titicut Streets, and at the same time the town had made repairs and renovations to this wooden shingled schoolhouse. Five years later the enlargement of the building was made necessary by the increased enrollment which by this time numbered forty-one, about the same as the Scotland School. The Flagg School, or District Number Six School, situated on the corner of Auburn and Summer Street, was erected about 1850, although an earlier school building had been on this

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10 BI, March 9, 1900; "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 19-20; "Report of the School Committee," Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 6-9; "Town Meeting, March 5, 1900," Annual Town Report, 1900, p. 16; it would appear that the women running for the two positions in town government opened to them could vote in these instances.
general site as early as 1772. After the school had been moved to the center of the lot in 1899, the interior of this mid-nineteenth century wooden clapboard structure with its rubble stone foundation and simple windows was remodeled. Only twenty-nine students were enrolled in 1900, but in a move with pragmatic consequences the outbuildings were reconstructed. (Modern inside plumbing and lighting would have to wait until the depression years of the 1930’s). A change of a more academic nature was made in the District Number Nine or the Main Street School as it was renamed in 1888. Built in 1849, the year of the California Gold Rush, this wooden shingled building was one of Bridgewater’s largest school buildings and had an enrollment of sixty-eight in 1900. Considered to be rather poorly constructed and not easy to get to from the center of the village before the coming of the trolleys in 1897, new slate blackboards were installed in 1900 in the grammar school room. This school was permanently closed in 1913, thirty years or so before the Blackstone and Flagg Schools experienced the same fate. 11

As the nineteenth century came to a close, both the school committee and Superintendent Sanderson saw some valid reasons for having at least a modicum of optimism about the status of the outlying schools. Certainly they had improved considerably since the dire days of fifty or so years earlier. By the 1899-1900 school year, school attendance on average had reached over ninety per cent with a good number of young adults remaining in school after the age of fourteen despite no legal requirement to do so. The teaching staff had become more permanent, although not without some turnover. In a guarded fashion, the School Committee used the word “creditable” to describe the work of the outlying schools and was especially pleased to see that the Stamp Savings System, which had started at the Model school at the urging of the Ousamequin Club in 1900 as a way of encouraging students to save money, had now been inaugurated at all of the outlying schools. Superintendent Sanderson was more expansive in his praise of the schools, declaring they “have never been in better condition.” He took note of the special teachers of drawing and singing who helped supervise the teaching of these subjects in the common schools. And,

11 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 19-20, 30; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1900, p. 7; Townscape Institute, Form 262, pp. 599-600, Form 267, pp. 609-610, Form 127, pp. 327-328; as of the early twenty-first century, the Flagg and Main Street school buildings are still extant, but not the one once used for the Blackstone School; MacCurdy, “Education,” HH, pp. 103-107, includes excellent photographs of the buildings once housing the outlying schools; Pictorial History, 1994, pp. 52, 54; Moore, Images of America Bridgewater, p. 45, includes a description by Benjamin A. Spence; “Scrapbook--Blackstone, Flagg, and Main Street Schools.”
unlike some of his predecessors such as Frank Sweet in 1889, did not think "that the character and behavior of the young is getting worse year by year..." He willingly admitted, however, that "the vices that afflict the youth of this town" have not "completely departed."  

Not surprisingly, town and school officials were inclined to stress the favorable aspects of the outlying schools in 1900, and many townspeople would later speak with fond memories of their days in the "little red schoolhouses." But there were problems with this segment of Bridgewater's school system that would persist and, indeed, even grow, as we shall see, during the first decade of the twentieth century. Trying to repair and renovate these aging school buildings was to be an ongoing struggle since the town was constantly walking a fine line between doing what was considered to be fiscally responsible and maintaining a viable, and hopefully excellent, system of education. Increased enrollments sometimes dictated that certain schools, the Blackstone in 1900, for instance, be given priority. Recruiting teachers for these schoolhouses occupied a considerable portion of Superintendent Sanderson's professional time. Low salaries, the strain of teaching a whole range of subjects to students of many ages, the lack of comradeship among fellow teachers found in the multi-classroom schools, and, in some cases, living a considerable distance from the center of the town hardly added to the attractiveness of these teaching positions. In September 1900, not the worst year for retention, the Main, Prospect, and Pratt schools were staffed by new teachers, all graduates of the Bridgewater Normal School. Albeit not a major problem at this juncture, the teaching of children whose native tongue was not English was another challenge for Bridgewater's school system in 1900, best illustrated by the fact that many of the young children of the Blackstone School were of foreign-born parents and not conversant in English as they started school. In the days before the ubiquitous yellow school buses, transportation was another problem for the School Committee. Many students could walk to school, but some, including those from the outlying areas who attended the Model and High Schools in the center of the town, had to take the electric trolleys. The cost of this was born by the town, but fortunately for the school budget these students were granted half-fares by the street railway company.

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One other matter that was sometimes problematic for the town's school officials as they administered the system of outlying schools was the existence of a Model School in the center of the village. The establishment of the training school as part of Bridgewater Normal in 1891 to replace the former School of Observation in effect meant that the town had two systems of pre-high school education. Not without many benefits to the town, this state-supported school of an experimental nature was a source of pride among some citizens, but seen by others as being elitist and receiving more attention than the town's schools, thanks to financial support from the state. Finding various expressions in the first half of the twentieth century, the tension resulting from having some of the town's children attending small wooden schoolhouses and others an up-to-date brick multi-classroom building was seen in a subtle manner in 1900. Realizing that some students from both the Model and outlying schools would continue their education in the town's high school, the school committee in its annual report felt that the rivalry between the outlying schools and the Model School might prove "productive of good," suggesting somewhat condescendingly, if not intentionally-so, that it "should naturally expect to find these outside children of what may be termed sturdier conditions, well grounded in the less ornate but solid subjects of study. Upon such a foundation it ought not to be difficult to build, later, a reasonably ornamental superstructure." Bridgewater's public high school, however, was not able to perform this task in many cases since a high per cent of the students in the town outlying schools quit their scholarly pursuits at the age of fourteen to begin their lives of labor.14

A small number of American youth began attending public high schools in the early nineteenth century, but this level of education was not established in Bridgewater until the late 1860's, despite some earlier heated public discussion concerning the matter. This did not exclude, however, private endeavors from preparing some young men for what we would called today higher education. A friend of Increase Mather, a leading Puritan divine and President of Harvard, Reverend James Keith, was chosen in 1664 as Bridgewater's first minister and joined William Brett, one of the town's original proprietors and elders of the church, in procuring "a subscription of about L12 to be paid in Indian corn, for the use of the college at

14 "Report of the School Committee," Annual Town Report, 1900, p. 6; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 64.
Cambridge.” In the eighteenth century, the South Parish was fortunate in having two ministers who established “schools” in their homes to give instruction in Greek and Latin and other subjects associated with a classical and liberal education, particularly important for young boys and men planning to enter the ministry and other professions. Reverend John Shaw, who succeeded Reverend Benjamin Allen, the first minister of the South Parish, not only served as pastor for sixty years, 1731-1791, but beginning in 1740 used his newly-built house as a school to get boys and young men ready to attend colleges in New England, especially Harvard, 1636, and Brown, 1764. (Shaw’s house was torn down in 1904, and the site on Plymouth Street is now occupied by the Walter S. and Flora T. Little House.) Reverend Zedikiah Sanger, who became the pastor of the First Parish following the death of Shaw in 1791, continued this work in education by making his house on the corner of Plymouth Street and what is now Spring Street “a seat of learning”, indeed “a seminary”, where among other books could be found the eighty-seven volumes of Rees’ Cyclopedia, considered to be one of the great works of that day. Raising ten children, preparing his students for higher education, and ministering to a thriving parish must have made for busy days for him, but the South Parish benefited greatly from his work. Many of the young men who received college degrees in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries owed a debt of gratitude to him and his predecessor. Times were changing, however. By the late 1790’s, some saw the need for a more institutional approach to post-grammar school education, albeit conducted by private institutions with the encouragement of state government. 15

At this time, the state government was encouraging the counties to establish academies of learning. A group of leading citizens, including Reverend Sanger and Major Isaac Lazell and his brother Nathan, both of whom were active in iron manufacturing and owned a store on the northwest corner of what was to become Central Square, petitioned the General Court for the right to establish such a school in the center of the South Parish of the old Bridgewater. Responding favorably, the legislature passed an act of incorporation on February 26, 1799, creating the Bridgewater Academy, and provided it with an endowment

First Building of the Old Bridgewater Academy
(Pictorial History, 1987)
of five thousand dollars to be derived from the sale of land in Maine, still part of Massachusetts. Money was also raised locally, and the first Academy building was erected on the northeastern part of the emerging public square. Dr. Sanger and his two sons, Richard and Zedikiah, were among the early preceptors of the Academy, and from 1823 to 1842, except for two years, the institution flourished under the leadership of John Angier Shaw, the grandson of Reverend Shaw. Before Shaw’s preceptorship began, however, a new edifice had been erected on the southern part of Central Square to replace the original academy building destroyed by fire late one night in February 1822, around the same time the old Bridgewater was being divided into separate towns. The Lazell heirs and “men” and Dr. Noah Fearing, the academy’s treasurer, had pushed for this location, and, indeed, the Lazell heirs gave the land for the second academy. While the school was co-educational, the first program for young women, which included such subjects as needlework and embroidery, was under the direction of Preceptress Dillingham. After the early 1830’s, young women and men attended some of the same classes in subjects of a curriculum stressing the Classics, English, and Science. A major goal of this academy was to prepare young men for college and, in some cases, a life in business. Ethical considerations were not neglected, with all students being required to attend daily religious readings, not surprising considering the longstanding connection between the religion and education in the town.16

The next phase of the Academy began in 1868 when the nation was still in the process of reconstructing itself after a bloody and destructive civil conflict. With a sense of optimism, a new Italianate-style edifice replaced the 1822 building at a cost of about twelve thousand dollars, raised by private subscriptions. More shade trees were planted along side the majestic elms planted in the 1820’s. But the days of the Bridgewater Academy were numbered. Competition from other schools such as the Howard Collegiate Institute in West Bridgewater began to be felt despite the addition of commercial courses to the

Academy's curriculum. Even more telling was an act passed by the General Court in the late 1860's requiring towns of a certain population to establish a public high school. Bridgewater with over four thousand inhabitants met this qualification, and steps were started to carry out the state's mandate, notwithstanding hope among some leading citizens, including Joshua C. Crane, Jr., the last preceptor of the Academy, that a compromise between the town and the Academy concerning a public high school might fulfill the new state requirement. After seventy-five years of preparing some of Bridgewater's youth for further education and richer lives in general, the Academy closed its doors in 1875. Perhaps its most important legacy was that its existence contributed to the choice of Bridgewater in 1840 as the site of America's first Normal School. Some of the graduates of the Bridgewater Academy continued to have fond memories and appreciation for their alma mater as shown by a reception in 1890 for Horace M. Willard, head of the Academy between 1864 and 1870. 17

The early decades were not easy ones for Bridgewater's high school, but some progress was made, especially after 1890. To use the word "free" in describing this new level of public education is misleading since the town's property owners had to pay for this state-mandated form of schooling. It was, nonetheless, part of broad movement toward more democracy in the nation, making possible, but not compulsory, more years of education for those who could not pay the costs of private institutions. Rather optimistically, fifty students enrolled in the high school's first class, but, according to reminiscences of Martha Keith, the school's first teacher, only four completed the four year program in 1871. Classes first met in the Centre School on Grove Street, but in the spring of 1869 moved to quarters in the Old Town House (Hall) on the corner of School and Bedford Street, a site that was soon chosen by the New Jerusalem Church on which to erect their new sanctuary. After a year or so of putting up with unfavorable conditions, including "the odors of cabbage, onions, and the like coming from the tenement below the school...," and the impending dismantling of the Old Town House, the high school class returned in September 1870 to expanded quarters...
in the Centre School. 18

An even more fortuitous event for the future of the town’s public high school occurred in 1875. In that year, the trustees of the Bridgewater Academy, despite lingering hopes of reopening this school one day, closed its doors and agreed to rent the building to the town for use as a public high school. For the next seventy-five years or so, for better or worse, Bridgewater High School was lodged in the Academy’s building, relieving the town of the financial burden of constructing a new school. During the fifteen years after moving to its new home, the high school, although not adequately funded, perhaps did its best to carry on in the tradition of Reverends Shaw and Sanger and the Bridgewater Academy by offering Greek, Latin, physics, history, and other subjects helpful to those students going on to higher education. The expansion of the curriculum to include commercial offerings aided others in gaining skills, useful in a new age of business and industry that was emerging in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, as the School Committee in 1900 pointed out, the high school in 1890 was “very inferior.” 19

Fortunately, a number of important things were done in the last decade of the century to lay the foundation for improving the situation. The decision in the late 1880’s to appoint a Superintendent of Schools was crucial to a well-managed educational system, and Sanderson proved to be a staunch advocate and spokesman for the high school. In 1893, as the country began to face the worse economic depression up to that time, a step was taken to better prepare students for high school by locating in the Model School of Bridgewater Normal a ninth grade that all students had to attend before going on to the four years (grades ten to thirteen) of high school. This new grade was considered to be a preparatory department for the high school with all the students taking the same subjects, namely, algebra, English, Latin, botany, drawing, and physiology. It would prove to be very helpful to students from the outlying schools who perhaps needed additional subject matter and skills before entering the tenth grade. To solve a space problem caused by an

18 BL, May 1, 1908; Keith’s remarks were made in 1908 at the first reunion of Bridgewater High School’s graduates; there is some controversy concerning the fate of Bridgewater’s first (pre-1843) Town Hall, but by September of 1871 its former site on the corner of Bedford and School Streets was occupied by the new New Jerusalem Church.
increase in the high school’s enrollment, a Georgian Revival wing abutting the 1868 building was added, creating the handsome edifice still standings at the southern end of Central Square across from the village Common. The enlarged high school accommodated eighty-five students in 1898. 20

Buoyed by the sense of optimism and hope, partly engendered by the dawn of a new century, the Bridgewater school committee in its annual report for 1900 spoke of the “great promise” now shown by the high school as it prepared students for “any higher education” or “methods of self-support.” For the first time, the enrollment had reached over one-hundred, forty-six from the outlying schools and sixty-one from the village. The freshman class (the tenth grade) had forty-three students, a sign that more youngsters were staying in school after the age of fourteen, even if many did not stay to graduate. To build or lease a high school facility was becoming an issue, but the town still had three more years on its rental lease at the cost of $900 per year. Only a handful of teachers staffed the four grades, and naturally the curriculum was limited compared to what larger towns and cities such as Brockton and Fall River could offer. In addition to the academic programs, there were some of what we would call today extracurricular activities. Sports, a school publication (The Oracle), a student concert at town hall in March, and a Saturday train excursion to Boston in the cold month of January to see the sights and attend a performance of Macbeth at the Boston Theater were a few of the things which enriched the lives of some students. 21

The graduating classes at this time were very small, but the town took great pride in the exercises which took place in the Town Hall in June of each year, and 1900 was no exception. Looking forward and backward, so much a part of these occasions, was exemplified by the two recitations: “The Twentieth Century” and “The Pilgrim Fathers”, the latter reminding the graduates and audience of Bridgewater’s founding in 1656 by people from Plymouth, America’s second permanent settlement. Questions of the day figured prominently in the program. An oration “The Reorganization of Cuba” was a timely topic since the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War of 1898 had freed Cuba from Spanish control. (Within two years, however, Cuba’s independence was curtailed by the American-imposed Platt Amendment.) The ceremony also included a debate on an issue still being discussed in the twenty-first century: “Resolved, That the

President of the United States should be elected by direct popular vote.” Adding to the solemnity of the day were a piano selection by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and a choral piece “Praise Ye the Father” by Charles-Francois Gounod. All in all, it was an impressive program for a very small high school in a town of about five thousand inhabitants (if the population of the State Farm is not included.)

To some in the town, including the students, teachers, and administrators of the high school, the record of the graduating class was equally gratifying. Seven of its male students were off to Harvard after passing the entrance exams, some of them receiving honors in history, physics, Greek, or Latin. A total of five hundred dollars in scholarships was granted to three of the young men. All of the graduates who took advantage of having a State Normal School in the town passed the entrance examinations and soon would begin their training to become professional teachers. The school and town could be proud of this record, but there were some questions that would need to be addressed as the decade proceeded. How would the non-college-bound graduates fare as they sought meaningful work and lives? How could the numbers of graduating students be increased? And, would the high school enrollment increasingly include students who were not part of the native Yankee-English population which had dominated the town since its founding as the South Parish in the early eighteenth century?

The Bridgewater State Normal School

The high school graduation was not the only one held in Bridgewater each June. The Bridgewater State Normal School, a short walk down School Street from the Town Hall, also went through the annual ritual of sending its graduates into the world, in this case to begin their professional lives as trained teachers. By 1900, this state-supported institution had been part of the town’s history for sixty years, generally maintaining cordial relations with the government and inhabitants of Bridgewater. The origins of this symbiotic association began in the 1820’s, when some voices in Massachusetts, influenced by the French and Prussian Normal School movement, began calling for the “scientific” training of teachers to staff the public schools of the Commonwealth. With Horace Mann as its first secretary, the newly-created State Board of Education took a concrete step in 1838 by setting up three experimental teacher training...
institutions. Despite competition from the larger community of Plymouth, Bridgewater, owing to the reputation of its Academy, the promise of local support, and the leadership and work of Artemas Hale, was chosen as a site for one of these schools. He represented Bridgewater in the state legislature from 1824 to 1832 and later served in the United States House of Representatives, where he witnessed the great debate leading to the Compromise of 1850, which temporarily “solved” the issue of slavery in the territories gained during the Mexican War. Hale, who for many years occupied a house on Summer street in Central Square, was one of Bridgewater’s most prominent citizens, described in one recollection as “simple, straightforward, with no pretence, full of activity and zeal for the best interests of his town and country.” 24

After the town provided make-shift accommodations in the first Town Hall (pre-1843) on the corner of Bedford and School Streets, the State Normal School at Bridgewater began its first session on September 9, 1840, with a class of twenty-one women and seven men. For thirteen years, Nicholas Tillinghast, a native of Taunton, Massachusetts, and graduate of West Point, was the principal of the school, and, indeed, served for a while as a one-man staff. An important step toward permanency was the General Court’s decision in 1845 to erect buildings for the Normal schools at Westfield and Bridgewater, provided that state funds be supplemented by local contributions. This was accomplished, and on land a short distance from the corner of Summer and School Streets, donated by Colonel Abram Washburn, one of Bridgewater’s leading civic leaders, the first state Normal School building in the United States was erected in 1846, the same year, by the way, the railroad came to the town. This building no longer exists, but a small stone marker reminds passersby of the historic significance of this site. The following prophetic words of Horace Mann on the day of dedication, August 19, 1846, continue to be frequently cited: “Coiled in this institution, as in a spring, there is a vigor whose uncoiling may wheel the spheres.” This plain two-storied wooden building was not a magnificent structure, but it was a promising start to a string of buildings that would grace an expanding campus in the years to come. No more structures were erected during Tillinghast’s tenure, and in 1853 failing health caused him to resign. But this “tall, quiet, and reserved”  

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First Bridgewater Town Hall (Classes of Bridgewater Normal met here between 1840 and 1846.)
(Jordan D. Fiore, David K. Wilson, As we were...As we are, 1976)

First Building of Bridgewater Normal School
(Jordan D. Fiore, David K. Wilson, As we were...As we are, 1976)
educator certainly "was the animating spirit of the school, impressing upon it his own, strong individuality." Considering "a penurious and uninformed legislature" and some students who saw no need for a prescribed course of study, the Normal School at Bridgewater most likely would not have survived had it not been for dedication of Nicholas Tillinghast. 25

Before his death in 1856, Tillinghast must have taken solace in seeing his friend Marshall Conant, a native Vermonter whom he recommended for the position, become the second head of this school in the small but thriving town of Bridgewater. Conant brought to the principalship a variety of experiences as a civil engineer and a teacher, and during his seven-year tenure science became more prominent in the school's curriculum. In the summer of 1860, however, as ominous signs of division between the North and South were becoming more pronounced, ill-health led to the resignation of this respected second principal of Bridgewater Normal. But thanks to its first two leaders, both of whom helped gain public support for the concept of formally training public school teachers, the survival of the school was no longer in doubt. Indeed, a new era of expansion for the institution was about to begin. 26

In August of 1860, Albert Gardner Boyden at the age of thirty-three was appointed the third principal of the State Normal School at Bridgewater. A native of South Walpole, Massachusetts, and an 1849 graduate of Bridgewater Normal, the first ten years of his career included teaching and administrative positions, some at his alma mater under Principals Tillinghast and Conant. Boyden took over the school at a crucial juncture in the American history, a time when the nation was on the verge of a bloody civil war.

25 BI, Jan. 20, 1899; Crane, pp. 815-816; Lucia Alden Bradford Knapp, "Recollections of Bridgewater," Bridgewater Book, p. 26; Bridgewater Book, p. 21; Bates, "Bridgewater Normal..." HH, pp. 116-117; A. G. Boyden, "The State Normal School," Bridgewater Book, p. 31; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 51, includes a drawing of the first Normal School building in Bridgewater; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 11-17; "Washburn, Abram (Col.) 1795-1881," HH, pp. 279-280; Jordan D. Fiore, writer, David K. Wilson, photographer and book designer, Ralph Wilsack and Cheryl Colson Cox, assistants, Bridgewater State College- As we were...as we are, 1840-1976 (Bridgewater, Massachusetts; Published by the Alumni Association Bridgewater State College, 1976), pp. 7, 11-12, 22; the combination of text and pictures makes this work a "must" for understanding the evolution of Bridgewater State College from its earliest days to 1976, placing us much in debt to Dr. Jordan D. Fiore and David K. Wilson; in the present text, this source will be cited hereafter as As We Were; Hart, Commonwealth History of Massachusetts, Vol. IV, 1820-1899, p. 180; Jordan D. Fiore, Leadership in Perspective (Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater State College Alumni Association, 1976), pp. 8-9.

26 Fiore and Wilson, As We Were, pp. 11, 13, 41; "Conant, Marshall, 1801 to 1873--Educator," HH, p. 260; Bates, "Bridgewater Normal..." HH, p. 117, interestingly this source does not include Tillinghast in its biographical section; Fiore, Leadership in Perspective, pp. 10-11.
Principals of Bridgewater Normal School
(Arthur Clarke Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, 1919)
Bridgewater Normal’s enrollment in that fall was sixty-seven, and between 1861 and 1864 almost a third of the young men who started their education at this institution entered the Union Army, twelve of them giving their lives for the preservation of national unity and the abolition of slavery. Following this wrenching conflict, Boyden presided over the physical and educational expansion of the school for another forty years. When he stepped down as principal in 1906, the United States had been transformed into an industrial and urban country with a much larger and more diversified population than in 1865. It had also begun, albeit reluctantly, to play an important role in world affairs. These developments, as we shall see, also had a significant impact on the Town of Bridgewater.  

The physical and academic changes which characterized the transformation of Bridgewater Normal after the Civil War were succinctly described by Arthur C. Boyden, who became the school’s principal in 1906, in a 1919 memorial volume dedicated to his father. The increase in enrollment from sixty-seven in 1860 to two-hundred and five in 1890 necessitated an enlarged physical plant. In the 1860’s and 1870’s, the original building of 1846, facing School Street, was made much bigger by the addition of wings and a third floor. Decisions to build a boarding hall in 1869, and then to increase its capacity in 1873, certainly changed the nature of the institution. One wonders if the students, who previously boarded in private homes or commuted to Bridgewater, in some cases by train, enjoyed living under the watchful eye of the Principal who with his family also lived in this new accommodation, known as Normal Hall, on the corner of School and Summer Streets. Later described as a “loving, efficient, counsellor and companion of her husband,” the first Mrs. A. G. Boyden, nee Isabella Whitten Clarke and a Normal classmate of Boyden, supervised the household duties of the Normal boarding hall for twenty-three years before occupying their beautiful home, Groveside, near the corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue. After the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876 helped celebrate the nation’s one-hundredth birthday, there was greater interest in the teaching of science, which found expression at Bridgewater Normal in the erection in 1881 of an annex to the school’s main classroom building to house a chemical, industrial, and physical laboratory. It was during the 1880’s also that the acquisition of land became a priority of the school, best illustrated by the addition of six

acres of land opposite the boarding hall on Summer Street to what had been a small campus of one and three-eighths acres. Soon known as Boyden Park, it was an area that over the years became a great source of delight to the Normal students and faculty, with its excavated pond, icehouse, tennis courts, croquet grounds, and fields for other sports. Its acquisition and improvements were also welcomed by the inhabitants of Bridgewater, particularly by the homeowners in the vicinity since the values of their properties were increased.  

While most townspeople were aware of these physical alterations in the Normal School, not as many, most likely, followed closely the transformation of its academic program during these years. The original course of study was for one year, but in the last four decades of the century this was extended to two years for those students who wanted to get a diploma permitting them to teach in the public elementary and grammar schools of the state. Three and four year programs were introduced to accommodate the needs of college and normal school graduates as well as experienced teachers. Entrance requirements became more stringent with a high school education joining the entrance exam as another criterion for admittance to the school. Semi-annual exams, a practice started in 1856, continued with Principal Boyden asking some of the questions. Bridgewater Normal's international reputation increased to the point that by the 1880's students from many lands were attracted to the institution from as near as Canada and as far way as Japan. Under the leadership of Arthur C. Boyden and William D. Jackson, who joined the faculty in 1879 and 1883, respectively, science became more and more important. Reflecting a national trend, the school began to stress Nature Studies, a movement promoted by the natural sciences and a nostalgic reaction to the shrinking American frontier and growing urbanization, which meant that more and more Americans no longer knew firsthand of the beauties and wonders of the natural world. In 1887, the institution sustained a great loss when Eliza B. Woodward passed away after serving the school for thirty years without being absent. Her last twelve were spent as an instructor of drawing, a subject which remained important for years to come in the public schools. During her long tenure at Bridgewater Normal, it was estimated that 2,000

Boyden Park
(Pictorial History, 1994)
students benefited from her skill as a teacher and her sterling qualities as a human being. All these changes, physical and academic, were important, but the building boom of the 1890's created the campus recognized by the inhabitants of Bridgewater in 1900. 29

By the late 1880's, Principal Boyden, always looking more ahead than backward, called for an enlargement of the school to serve up to two-hundred and fifty students. Supported by friends of education in the General Court, this goal was accomplished in the 1890's, when a massive brick edifice, stretching from School Street to Grove Street, replaced the old wooden classroom building. Speaking about the project at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of Bridgewater Normal on August 28, 1890, Boyden's words captured the delicate balance between nostalgia and present and future hopes, eloquently telling his audience that "the school has outgrown this temple, around which cluster the fondest recollections of its past-life, and a new home for our Alma Mater is going up, deeper, broader, higher than the old, substantial and beautiful." Built by the Darling Bros. of Worcester, Massachusetts, this new structure was dedicated on September 3, 1891, before an audience of eight hundred, including many important educators of the Bay State. Reflecting the times, all the remarks at the ceremony were made by men, although two-thirds of those in attendance were women! Other physical changes in the campus also took place in the 1890's. The 1881 science annex was detached in 1891 from the old classroom building, which was sold to and torn down by A. J. Elwell, one of the town's leading business and financial leaders. After being moved more toward Grove and Summer Streets, the annex was turned into a sixteen room dormitory known as the "Cottage" or the Old Woodward Dormitory before it was destroyed in the 1924 fire. Despite the economic depression gripping the nation beginning in 1893, Bridgewater Normal witnessed two additional projects in this decade, a major enlargement of the "new building" in 1894 to house the Model School and the construction of the "first" Tillinghast Dormitory in 1895. Other than the old "Bank Block," c.1850, the Memorial Library, 1882, and St. Thomas Aquinas Church (enlarged in 1899), the town was not known at this time for its large brick

29 In Memoriam-Eliza Bond Woodward-1827-1887 (Boston: New England Publishing Company, 1887), found in the files on Bridgewater Normal located in the Special Collections of Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State College; many thanks to Mrs. S. Mabell Bates and Dr. Thomas R. Turner for bringing these files to my attention which hereafter will be cited as the files in the Maxwell Library; BI, Oct. 19, 1895; Crane, pp. 816-817; A. G. Boyden, "The State Normal School," Bridgewater Book, p. 32; Bates "Bridgewater Normal....", HH, pp. 117-119; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 28-29, 33, 37-38, 44, 51, 53, 55; Fiore and Wilson, As We Were, pp. 43-44, 49, 52, 56.

21
buildings, even though bricks had long been made by the Hooper's brick yard on Plymouth Street across the
Town River from the old fair grounds. In any case, the new buildings of the 1890's constituted the core of
the campus, which had grown to sixteen acres by the turn of the century.  

The graduating exercises on June 26, 1900, marked the end of the sixtieth year of the State Normal
School at Bridgewater. It was a beautiful summer day with trains, trolleys (electrics) and horse and buggies
transporting hundreds of visitors to the town where they made their way to Assembly Hall in the main
building of the Normal School. Taking note of the “tastefully decorated” hall, the Bridgewater Independent,
exhibiting a tinge of late Victorianism, wrote that the “crowds of fair visitors in holiday attire, who, joined
with the sweet girl graduates in their graduation gowns, made a formidable array of beauty.” In a rather
“interesting” juxtaposition in the program, devotional proceedings, led by Reverend George F. Smythe,
rector of Bridgewater’s Trinity Episcopal Church, were followed by the school singing the song, “Gypsy
Life.” Principal Boyden, who was now seventy- three years of age, addressed the graduates, reminding them
that the “spirit of the teacher is the most essential element in teaching.” One-hundred and twenty-five
graduates received diplomas on that day, thirty-two of them going to special students who had already
graduated from college or normal school or, in some cases, had five years of teaching experience. The other
students were awarded diplomas for having taken a four, three, or two year course. Only six of the
graduates, including one in the Kindergarten course, were from the town.  

The graduates of 1900 became part of the Bridgewater Normal Association, an organization of
alumni, which had held its first meeting in 1842, a time when the success of the school was hardly assured.
At this first gathering, Principal Tillinghast made remarks, and Horace Mann delivered a lecture on
punishment, a salient issue for teachers. The Association survived and prospered and, starting in 1883,
alternated its meetings between Boston and Bridgewater. The 1900 meeting took place at the school two
weeks before the graduation exercises. Following the business meeting and major address, the attendees

30 Frank A. Hill (State Board of Education) to Albert Gardner Boyden, May 4, 1894, files in the Maxwell
Library; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 61; BI, July 4, Sept. 12, Nov. 14, Dec. 5, 1891, Jan. 20, 1899;
31; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 57-61, 68; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 35, 52-53; Bridgewater
Book, p. 30b, picture; Townscape Institute, Form 42, pp. 147-148; Fiore and Wilson, As We Were, pp. 24-
25.
31 BI, June 29, 1900.
walked from Normal's Assembly Hall to the Town Hall to the meal that awaited them. Some of the more aware alumni might have commented that the New Jerusalem Church across School Street was located on the site of the original Town Hall, where the first classes of the Normal School had been conducted and that since the 1840's, the association had made use of the second town Hall, 1843, for some of the social aspects of its gatherings. 32

The June graduation at Normal marked the end of the 1900 school year and the beginning of summer. The Bridgewater Independent put it succinctly, commenting: "The town has put on its usual quiet summer aspects. The absence of the Normal school scholars makes a great difference in the liveliness of the streets." The long summer vacation gave the school a chance to do much needed repairs, painting, and cleaning to prepare the institution for the start of the busy fall semester. An unusually large number of applicants had taken the annual entrance examinations in June, a sure sign that the fall enrollment would exceed the 1890 suggested cap of 250. The total number attending classes in the first autumn of the new century was 28, almost identical to that of the Model School with its Kindergarten and grades one through nine.33

The Model School

The idea of a Model School was a part of the Normal School movement from the very start, and, in a broader sense, was one more example of the great impact that science had on many disciplines in the nineteenth century. Just as scientists would carry out their experiments in a laboratory or historians would learn how to examine documents objectively in a seminar, teachers would acquire pedagogical skills in experimental classrooms. In the very early years, the Bridgewater Normal students did their practice teaching "in a small school-house near the normal school, erected for the purpose by the centre school district." According to Albert G. Boyden, this might have been the Bates School (District No.7), which was located just south of the first Town Hall at the time. This changed in 1846 when the model schoolroom was housed in the lower floor of the first Normal School building. This arrangement was short-lived, however.

32 "Order of Exercises at the Annual Convention of Bridgewater Normal Association," Wednesday, August 18, 1847, files in the Maxwell Library; BI, Jan. 26, June 8, 1900; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 118-122; Fiore and Wilson, As We Were, p. 86.
33 BI, June 29, July 20, Sept. 21, 28, 1900.
Some of the Normal students objected to practice teaching, especially those with previous teaching experience. Opposition also came from some parents who had qualms about having their children "experimented with." With Principal Tillinghast's concurrence, the model school was closed in March 1850. Not until three decades later did this phase of Normal students' professional training begin to be reconsidered and then only in a limited way. Between 1880 and 1891, the town's Centre School (Number One) on Grove Street was used as a School of Observation for Normal students who planned to teach the primary-grammar grades. The emphasis was mainly on observation, but the seniors were to "have an opportunity to put to the test under the direction of skilled teachers the principles...learned in the normal school." But a more profound change was about to occur, one with important implications for both the Normal School and the Town of Bridgewater. 34

In September 1891, the concept of a teacher-training facility as part of Bridgewater Normal again became a reality with the creation of a model school to be housed in the new Normal building. Speaking for the State's Board of Education two years earlier, Principal Boyden had informed the town that the Commonwealth was ready to build a new schoolhouse of four rooms to accommodate one hundred and twenty of the town's scholars and, except for the salaries of the four teachers, would bear all expenses in building and maintaining this new facility. For the sum of one dollar, Bridgewater agreed "to transfer its school lot bounded by Summer, Grove and Maple Streets and by the State's school to the Commonwealth...." The town reserved the right to remove the buildings on the lot and to use the property until the new Normal building was completed. 35

Since the children in Bridgewater's center were to attend the new Model School, the town decided to sell at auction the Centre School situated on the lot "sold" to the state. There is some controversy as to the fate of this vacated schoolhouse, but a series of short statements in the Bridgewater Independent makes it quite clear that it was bought by Albert J. Elwell, who then used this structure to "rebuild" the eastern

34 "Plan for the establishment of the Model School in connection with Bridgewater State Normal School," August 20, 1891; a certified copy of this plan, penned by George M. Hooper, Secretary of the School Committee of Bridgewater, is in the files in the Maxwell Library; A. G. Boyden, "The State Normal School," Bridgewater Book, p. 32; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 16, 46, 68; Fiore and Wilson, As We Were, pp. 22, 59; MacCurdy, "Education," HH, p. 103; "Scrapbook--Bates or District No. 7 School," this school was closed in 1891 and moved to 969 South street.
35 "Plan for the establishment of the Model School...."
section of his block on the eastern side of Central Square. This is corroborated by Flora T. Little, who attended the Centre School and became one of Bridgewater’s leading citizens until her death in 1967, in her unpublished memoir, “A Wreath of Memories.” Using the name of the property as it was called for many years beginning around 1910, she writes: “...the Bowman block, now on the east side of the Village Green is none other than the old Centre School.” In any case, the school committee agreed on August 20, 1891, that the children in the center of the town would be placed in the new Normal primary-grammar school.36

This new school was to be an example, at least in theory, of how to run a good public school, and, at the same time, provide the Normal students an opportunity to observe and teach children. Unlike the common or outlying schools in Bridgewater, the individual classrooms of the Model School did not contain students of various grade levels, and separate space was even found for a kindergarten and ninth grade in 1893. Realizing the need for more rooms if the school was to continue to be a truly graded and multi-classroom facility, the state appropriated seventy-five thousand dollars in 1894 for an addition to the new Normal School building for an enlarged Model School. Under the general supervision of Principal Boyden and more directly under the control of Vice-Principal A. C. Boyden, this training school was successfully managed for eight years by its first principal, Lillian A. Hicks. 37

As the new century dawned, the Model School was firmly established, and its enrollment was increasing. Over two-hundred and eighty children entered the school in the fall of 1900, at a cost per pupil that was considerably higher than what the town was paying for students in the outlying schools. In September of 1899, Hicks became the supervisor of teacher training at Bridgewater Normal, and Brunelle Hunt succeeded her as principal of the Model School. One years later, the town’s school committee applauded Hunt’s appointment, asserting that it improved the discipline at the school. What data it had at this point to support this assertion is difficult to say, but Hunt, who was immediately in charge of a “very strong corps” of thirteen teachers, would proved to be an effective and innovative principal during the next

36 BI, July 4, 18, 25, Aug, 8, 22, 29, Dec. 5, 1891; Flora T. Little, “Wreath of Memories,” an unpublished memoir, multiple copies of which can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library; “Plans for the establishment of the Model School...”; “Scrapbook--Centre or No. 1 School.”
twenty years. Not withstanding some tensions in the relations between the town and this state-supported school administered by the Normal School, thousands of Bridgewater's children would attend the Model School in the decades to follow. More about this in the following chapters. 38

Education in Bridgewater -1901-1910

The configuration of Bridgewater’s education structure between 1901 and 1910 remained pretty much as it had been at the close of the preceding century. Eight and then six relatively small schoolhouses, scattered throughout the town’s twenty-eight square miles, and a high school, housed in the 1868 but recently enlarged Bridgewater Academy Building at the southern end of Central Square, constituted the town’s public school system. A short walk down School Street from the Common, Bridgewater Normal School, a state institution located in the town since 1840, occupied a physical plant mainly dating back to the 1890’s. A Model School, an integral part of the “new” campus of Bridgewater Normal, continued to play two important roles during the first decade of the twentieth century. It aided in the training of new teachers and, at the same time, provided schooling for about half of the town’s children from the kindergarten through the ninth grade level. While these local and state components of Bridgewater’s educational structure generally remained in tact during the early 1900’s, there were bound to be some changes as the town’s population grew from 6,000 in 1900 to almost 8,000 by 1910, along with indications that its ethnic make-up was beginning to be altered. In addition, the town’s school system would feel the impact of some state-mandated education requirements and certain economic, social, political and educational trends associated with the emergence of the United States as the world’s leading industrial nation by the early 1900’s. 39

At this time, an elected school committee and an appointed superintendent of schools, who also administered the Abington school system, oversaw the public schools of Bridgewater. The school committee or board consisted of six members who served for three years, but were elected on a rotational basis of two at each annual town meeting, thus hopefully ensuring a degree of continuity in educational

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38 “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 5-6;
39 See previous section on education in Bridgewater in 1900.
matters. Since the cost of public education was by far the biggest item in the town’s budget between 1901 and 1910 (and still is), this committee, whose members were not paid, had more than its share of work. It was a constant challenge to provide an excellent educational system and still stay within the economic constraints placed on the committee by the annual town meetings and occasional special committees appointed by the town to look for ways of cutting expenses to keep the property taxes at a “reasonable” level. Appointed in December of 1903, a Committee of Twenty, which included Hollis M. Blackstone, the Superintendent of the State Farm and Chairman of the School Committee, and William H. Sanderson, Superintendent of Schools, raised the issue of conducting “the schools as economically as is consistent with the proper education of the school children.” Throughout the decade, almost all the problems facing the school committee were related to the willingness and/or ability of the town to finance educational undertakings. (It might be noted that in 1905 a long-standing practice of allowing the Superintendent of Schools a free hand in spending the funds allotted to the school department came to an end when the selectmen now required that they directly approve all expenditures.)

Bridgewater was fortunate indeed in having a number of competent and dedicated citizens who were willing to serve on the town’s school committee during the early 1900’s. At monthly meetings held in the Academy Building, this committee of six, composed of men with professional and business credentials and a competent woman with a sense of civic duty, sought to cope with the myriad of issues and problems concerning public education. Despite the heavy burdens of heading the Bridgewater State Farm, Hollis M. Blackstone served on the school committee for seventeen years before deciding to retire from the school board in 1904. Replacing him in 1905 as the chairman of the committee was J. Gardner Bassett, who was educated in the Bridgewater public schools and the Normal School. Between 1874 and 1914, he was associated with the Bigelow School in Boston, serving as its headmaster from 1896 to 1914. He was also known for his business acumen, especially in the founding of the Bridgewater Brick Company in 1901 and his championship of the town’s Commercial Club.

41 BJ, Feb. 3, 1904, March 17, 25, 1905, March 8, 1907, Jan. 31, 1908, Jan. 28, 1910, Feb. 21, 1913, Nov. 6,
Before William H. McElwain, whose shoe factory on Perkins Street employed the largest workforce in Bridgewater, moved his residence to Boston in the middle of the decade, he was a member of the town’s school committee. Indeed, five years after his death in 1908, the first really graded and multi-classroom primary-grammar school in the town’s school system was named in his honor. Among several other civic contributions to the town, William D. Jackson, chair of Physics and Mathematics at Bridgewater Normal between 1883 and 1926, did a stint on the school board, serving for a while as its financial secretary. Another member of the committee for several years was Frank E. Sweet, a successful lawyer who served as an attorney for the Bridgewater Savings and Co-operative Banks. Richard Casey, known for his waiting room and newsstand on Broad Street and his leadership in the founding of the local chapter of the Knights of Columbus, began serving on the school board in September of 1905, when the selectmen and the school committee chose him to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of one of the elected school board members. Although he most likely did not think in these terms, his appointment was an indication of the increasing role the Irish, the second largest part of Bridgewater’s population, were beginning to play in the civic affairs of the town. Not even a brief and admittedly selective list of school committee members between 1901 and 1910 should neglect to mention Sarah T. Bates of South Street, who, among many civic contributions, served on this committee from 1894 to 1905, bringing much insight to the committee’s discussions and serving as secretary with all its attendant tedious but vital work. The town was shocked and saddened to hear of her death on February 13, 1905, following a stroke she suffered walking from Central Square to her home on South Street. Cora L. Keith filled the vacancy, ensuring that a woman would continue to sit on one of the two elected town committees (the other being the Board of Trustees of the town library), not limited to men. 42

A fuller discussion of individual members of the school committee could cite other able and dedicated public servants, but would support the conclusion that the board's membership in the very early years of the twentieth century mainly consisted of business and professional men who came from Yankee-English backgrounds. "New Immigrants," who hailed from southern and southeastern Europe and were still a very small part of Bridgewater's population, French-Canadian residents, factory workers in general, constituting by far the town's largest number of employees, and the small and declining number of farmers seldom ran for or were elected to positions on the school board. Whether their interests were adequately represented by those on the Bridgewater school committee during the first decade of the twentieth century might be a question needing further inquiry.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, three men held the post of Superintendent of Schools, working closely with the School Committee to manage the town's school system and help shape overall educational policies. William H. Sanderson, although not Bridgewater's first superintendent, had held this position for eleven years by 1901. Educational progress was made during these years, but even by the early 1900's much remained to be done, particularly in the matter of improving Bridgewater's outlying primary-grammar schools. In the few years before he resigned his position in 1905, Sanderson, who made his home on Summer Street in Bridgewater and served as the Superintendent of the Sunday School of the Unitarian Church, continued to take a keen interest in education, attending conventions of school superintendents and speaking at Plymouth County Teachers' meetings. Never hesitating to take part in the public discourse concerning the town's ability and willingness to pay for a good school system, he publicly asserted in the summer of 1903 that the increase in the tax rates in Bridgewater was not due to increased expenditures for the schools. Sanderson also wrote thorough and insightful accounts of school matters for the annual town reports. Indeed, the school committee decided in 1902 to condense its annual summaries since Sanderson's reports covered school matters in detail.43

Sanderson, however, hinted in his 1904 report, ready for distribution in early 1905, that he might soon retire. "When this school year ends," he wrote, "I shall have served the towns of Bridgewater and

Abington in my present position fourteen continuous years. This is a long term when the difficulties connected with work in this district are considered.” At the time these words were written, Sanderson was becoming embroiled in a financial controversy that would make his re-appointment problematic to say the least. In February, it had come to the attention of Henry L Crane, the town treasurer, that Sanderson had not turned over more than two hundred and fifty dollars to the town treasury from other towns in payment of tuition for some of their students attending Bridgewater schools. Sanderson admitted getting the money, but claimed he had used it for school uses. The situation became a bit more complicated when he failed to produce “his receipts or vouchers for the money which he said he had paid out.” In subsequent weeks, it became apparent that Sanderson would not be rehired, especially after an outside accounting expert from Boston could not account for over six hundred dollars of “‘Tuition Fees’ due to the town for non-resident pupils…during the years 1891 to 1904 inclusive.” While not denying that he was “an able educator,” perhaps the Independent concluded correctly when it editorialized that Sanderson’s “usefulness in Bridgewater is at an end.” A joint meeting of the Abington and Bridgewater school committees agreed and in late May 1905 voted not to rehire him. No criminal charges were made against Sanderson, and he and his family moved to Chester, Massachusetts, where he assumed the “duties as superintendent in that district.”

Immediately after the decision to seek a new superintendent, a sub-committee representing both towns, which included Bassett and Jackson from Bridgewater, began the search. The school committees of both towns met on June 21 in Bridgewater and unanimously chose C. A. Record to fill the position. Selected from a list of about thirty candidates, Record was a native of Maine and a graduate of Bates College. After teaching in his home state at the grammar and high school levels, he was elected principal of the high school in Norwell, Massachusetts, and then went on to become the superintendent of schools for the Norwell-Hanover-Hanson district for six years before accepting the call to serve the Bridgewater-Abington school district. Record only remained in his new position for four years, but by all accounts served Bridgewater well as he continued Sanderson’s efforts to cope with problems of the outlying schools and began to deal with new issues such as industrial education, evening school for recent immigrants, and

state-mandated medical inspections of public school students. In what was a deft move by the school committee, Record was also appointed as the recording secretary for its monthly meetings. When he decided to resign from his position in the Bridgewater-Abington school system and accept a similar post in Haverill, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1909, the Independent, which had urged the resignation of Sanderson, praised Record for constantly growing "in the esteem of committees, teachers, and pupils." 45

To fill the vacancy caused by Record's departure, John E DeMeyer, who at the time was the superintendent of schools in Scituate, Massachusetts, accepted the offer to come to Bridgewater. In his 1909 report, which only covered four months, he indicated that "no radical changes in the school policy have been attempted," and in the next year's report wrote that "no great steps forward" had been taken, but did see "an improvement in the quality of the work done." In his first year on the job, however, he did, face some of the issues and problems dealt with by his predecessors and would continue to so into the next decade. More about this later. 46

From 1901 to 1910, a very high proportion of the time and energy of the superintendents and school committees of Bridgewater was spent on maintaining, or some would say shoring-up, a system of primary-grammar school education carried on in small schoolhouses located in various sections of the town. While Bridgewater was in fact an industrial town in many ways in the early 1900's and an urban area at least by the standards set by the United States Bureau of Census, the pre-high school part of its educational structure, despite having some aspects of centralization associated with larger urban areas, was more like that in most rural communities in America, where the great majority of children received their first eight years of schooling, and in many cases their last, in one or two room schoolhouses run by native-born female teachers. In Bridgewater's case, there were eight such schools in 1901, down from a total of fourteen in 1876, and, in 1907, two more of them, the East and South, were closed. By the end of the decade these six outlying schools were still functioning: the Blackstone in Titicut, the Dyer in Scotland, the Flagg at the junction of Summer and Auburn Streets, the Main near the Bridgewater-West Bridgewater line, the Prospect on High

Street, and the Pratt on Orange Street in the eastern section of the town. 47

Although statistics can appear to be boring and certainly do not tell the whole story, a few might be cited here to give a general impression of the centrality of the outlying school to Bridgewater's educational system in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1901, according to Superintendent Sanderson's annual report, 849 students attended schools in the town. After subtracting 293 attending the Model School, associated with Bridgewater Normal, and 111 enrolled in the public high school, housed in the Academy building, this left slightly over fifty percent of town's school attendees enrolled in the outlying schools, with the largest number, 82, of them in the Main Street School. The figures in Superintendent DeMeyer's report of 1910 give a somewhat different picture, but still underline the significance of the outlying schools at the end of the decade. Out of a total school enrollment of 889, 356 students were receiving the primary-grammar school education in the six wooden schoolhouses still functioning in that year, although this enrollment was now topped by Model School with its 453 students. The Prospect School on High Street with its 101 students had replaced the Main School as the largest of the town's primary-grammar schools, most likely reflecting the continued growth of the Stanley Works, which provided a livelihood for some of the Irish and Italian families in the surrounding area. Prompted by the changes in the make-up of the population in this section of Bridgewater as the decade proceeded, the school committee suggested that a separate class be created in the Prospect School to instruct the children of some of the foreign-speaking parents in the English language. This was already being done in larger industrial cities such as Fall River, twenty miles south of Bridgewater. 48


48 "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Report, 1901, pp. 22-23, 1910, pp. 32-33; "Report of the School Committee," Annual Town Report, 1910, p. 4; see the picture of the Prospect School on High Street in Tales Around the Common, p. 32 and in the Images of America:Bridgewater, p. 44; my interest in the Prospect School stems from the vitally important fact I lived in this building in the late 1960's, long after it had ceased to be used as a school, but honesty compels me to admit that at the time I knew nothing about the building’s previous history; photographs of many of the other schoolhouses are found in the History Highlights on pages 102 to 107, and thanks to the research of MacCurdy, we know how each school was numbered and when they were closed.
Prospect School
(Pictorial History, 1994)
How many town voters were conversant with statistics concerning school enrollment is hard to say, but certainly most of them knew that education costs constituted the biggest public expenditure and had a direct impact on property taxes. At the town meeting in March 1903, for instance, a town budget of around $50,000 was approved with about two-fifths of that amount earmarked for education. The school committee projected that about two-thirds of these school appropriations would be used for the “common schools” (meaning the primary-grammar ones). By 1910, the town’s budget had risen to almost $59,000 with $24,000 of it for the schools. Of this last amount, $11,394 was for primary-grammar school education in the town’s six functioning wooden schoolhouses. 49

Maintaining, renovating, and staffing the outlying schools were constant challenges to the school committees and superintendents throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, and there was an increasing awareness in the town, including those administering the school system, that some consolidation and centralization of Bridgewater’s primary-grammar schools could not be put off for too long. The Sprague School (#3) on Broad Street was still owned by the town in 1901, but Superintendent Sanderson argued successfully that it “would be very unsatisfactory” to re-open it. The Blackstone School, (#12), built in the 1870's to accommodate in part the children of the state farm workers, was enlarged in the summer of 1901, making it, in Sanderson’s judgment, “by far the most valuable and comfortable house the town owns.” Following the plan of the school committee to take care of one common school each year, the Prospect School (#14) underwent a major renovation in the summer of 1902, with McNeeland Brothers building the cellar for the new addition and “Brockton parties” the actual structure. At a cost of about four thousand dollars, this school now had two additional school rooms with slate blackboards, clocks, and window curtains. Ever mindful of the public’s scrutiny when it came to spending taxpayers’ money, Sanderson asserted: “The building stands for a maximum of convenience at a minimum cost.” 50

49 BI, March 6, 1903; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1902, pp. 3-15, 1910, p. 12; “Town Meeting-March 2, 1903,” Annual Town Report, 1903, p. 13; “Report of the Selectmen,” Annual Town Report, 1910, p. 30; my readers might wish to know that while there are some variations in the statistics taken from the town reports depending on what part of the annual report is being cited, these small differences do not change the conclusions drawn in the text.
In 1903, it was Scotland's turn to have its 1848 schoolhouse, located on the corner of Pleasant and Elm Streets in School District No. 8, which dated to the 1770's, repaired and remodeled. Both Superintendent Sanderson and the school committee supported an appropriation of $2500 for the addition of a second classroom to the school and the hiring of a second teacher. There was some opposition, however. At the town meeting considering the matter, J. Gardner Bassett, who was not yet a member of the school committee, opposed the appropriation for a new classroom, but saw the need for an additional teacher. The ensuing debate, commented the Independent, was marked by "some very sharp argument, spiced with oratory, sarcasm and a few personalities." Defending the need for two classrooms to reduce the teaching load of the school's one teacher, Sanderson stated that "the gentleman (Mr. Bassett) drew a salary for teaching equal to all the salaries put together of our teachers in the outlying districts." Much to his credit, Bassett withdrew his opposition when leading citizens of Scotland, including Benjamin F. Ellis, rose to defend the renovation plans made necessary by the poor physical condition of the old school and undesirability of teaching forty students of grades one through eight in one classroom. Perhaps Bassett also decided to changed his mind when he heard that even the stove in the school had to be moved to accommodate that number of students, or that several students were "obliged to sit in chairs around the teacher's desk." 51

In any case, the town meeting approved the renovation plan, and construction began during the summer. It became apparent in August that the school would not be ready at the beginning of the school year because of delays caused by those doing the work rather through any fault of the school committee. By the late fall, the classrooms were complete, but the building by then had begun to be viewed also as meeting place for the entire Scotland community. A December photograph in the Independent, which this writer had not seen before, shows a gambrel roofed structure with the two schoolrooms on either side of the building's central area which consisted of coat rooms and a hall for school activities. Another hall, which was to be

finished by the people of Scotland, occupied the second floor of the center of the building and was to become what we would call today a community center, where socials and suppers would be held. 52

On December 14, 1903, about 150 people, including fifty from the town’s center, came to “christen the building,” which was named after Daniel Dyer, whose will had left money for the benefit of Scotland’s children. A. C. Boyden, Vice-Principal of the Normal School, congratulated the people of Scotland for the “combination of school and hall which they now had,” saying “it was in line with the present methods to make the school house the general education center, an idea copied from the old days, when the school house saw the adults assembled in the evenings for spelling and singing schools, writing classes and debating clubs.” For the citizens of Scotland, the concept of a tightly-knit community centered around their “new” school was easy to grasp since another institution, the Scotland Congregational Church, built in the early 1820’s, had, and still did to a degree in the early twentieth century, given a sense of community to this outlying part of Bridgewater. For many years to come, the Dyer School (#8), the name chosen by the citizens of Scotland and approved by the town’s school board, would continue to be an important public meeting place.53

While small maintenance jobs were continually being done in the outlying schools between 1901 and 1907, the next major renovation project did not take place until 1908 when the Pratt School, (#2) was enlarged, although the changes made were not as extensive as the ones we have just discussed. Located on Orange Street in Pratontown, an eastern area of Bridgewater, this wooden schoolhouse, was built six years before the American Civil War, but had been preceded by an earlier one erected in the early nineteenth century before the four parts of the old Bridgewater had gone their separate ways. The Pratt School of the early 1900’s had an enrollment of about thirty students, many of whose fathers were farmers or workers in

52 BI, Aug. 14, Dec. 18, 1903, Feb. 26, 1904; the photograph suggests that the “old” school was used for the center of the “new” school as had been the case in the rebuilding of the Blackstone School in 1901; it might also be mentioned that History Highlights include no picture of the Dyer School, and that the 1994 Pictorial History includes only a picture of the earlier Scotland School, although labels it the Dyer School; Dorothy Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, p. 32; Mann indicates that her information about the Dyer School came from Nellie (Barker) Warren, who became the second wife of Dr. Franklin L. Warren in 1939.
53 BI, Dec. 4, 18, 1903; Mann, “Education,” Tales Around the Common, p. 32; see on the Scotland Church.
the Jenkins leatherboard mill on Plymouth Street where it is crossed by a branch of the Taunton River. 54

In 1907, the enrollment at the Pratt School was still only thirty-eight, but things were about to change. Despite a protest from some parents, the school committee in 1907 closed the East School in the Darlington section of the town because of its small enrollment and decided to send its twenty or so students to the Pratt School, located a mile or so away, making for a long walk and, at times, a nasty one in the winter months. This consolidation of the two schools prompted the school committee in 1908 to ask for $750 to enlarge the Pratstown school. The town voted to do this, and by 1909 this section of Bridgewater had a two-class room school, one accommodating twenty-six students from grades one to four and the other thirty-one students from grades five to eight. This two-room building is no longer a school, but along with the old Pratstown Cemetery around the corner toward Walnut Street still constitutes an example of a rural setting so characteristic of Bridgewater in the early twentieth century. 55

With the Blackstone, Prospect, Scotland and Pratt Schools getting special attention between 1900 and 1908, and the East and South Schools closed in 1907 because of declining enrollment, this left the Main (§9) and Flagg (§6) Schools to be considered by the school committee and superintendent of schools. The Number 9 school, near the boundary between Bridgewater and West Bridgewater, was constructed (some say not as well as it should have been) in 1849, the year of the California Gold Rush, but was not named the Main Street School until 1888. Nine years later it had the advantage of being on the trolley line between Brockton and the Bridgewater Common. As the new century opened, it was one of the town’s larger schoolhouses in physical size and number of students. In 1902, with seventy-four students divided into two classrooms, covering grades one through eight, it remained second only to the Prospect School in enrollment. (It should be noted again that the only kindergarten in Bridgewater at this time was located in

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Prattown School
(Pictorial History, 1994)
As the decade proceeded, this school was not without its problems. In 1904, at a time when the school department, along with rest of town departments, was being asked to economize, the Main Street School, now over fifty years old, had to have a thorough shingling job to stop the roof from leaking. Around the same time, the unexpected departure in the spring session of the teacher for grades five through eight prompted the school committee to close this classroom and send the students to the Model School, which at the time apparently had enough space. Fearing that this action was a prelude to shutting down the entire school, a petition not to close the upper room was signed by seventy-eight of the district’s concerned citizens. In a meeting between the petitioners and the school committee in late July, Edwin D. Josselyn, who had spearheaded the petition drive, accused the committee of the “crime of taking our school away from us.” If the classroom was closed for economic reasons, he went on ask, what about the financial burdens placed upon the parents who had to provide car fares, better clothes, and dinners for those children being sent to the Model School. Whatever the ultimate motive in closing this classroom or the impact of the protest, the school committee decided to reopen the entire Main Street School in the fall. But one thing was sure. The closing and/or consolidation of schools were contentious issues in a town with a long history of neighborhood schools.57

From 1901 to 1910, the Main Street School continued to have the second largest enrollment among the outlying schools, in spite of a decline of about fifteen to twenty students toward the end of the decade. Apparently the school committee thought this school had a future since in early 1908 the town was asked to approve the replacement of wood stoves in this school with a coal-burning furnace, a one thousand dollar project requiring excavation and masonry. The annual town meeting approved, and the work was begun in July. In the following year, the school got a new coat of paint job and was provided with fire escapes. With Superintendent DeMeyer suggesting that if the town’s business expansion continued, as expected, “more rooms at the Prospect and Main Street Schools,” would be necessary, few people in the town would have

56 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1902, p. 40; Townscape Institute, 1984, Form 127, pp. 327-328; MacCurdy, “Education,” HH, pp. 103,105; “ Scrapbook--Main Street or No. 9 School.”

57 BI, Feb. 5, March 25, April 8, July 29, Sept. 23, 1904, Jan. 13, 1905; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1904, pp. 6-7; “ Scrapbook--Main Street or No. 9 School.”
predicted the closing of the Main Street School anytime soon.  

Perhaps even fewer citizens in the early twentieth century could have imagined that the small Flagg School, located at the intersection of Summer, Flagg, and Auburn Streets, would be the last of Bridgewater’s outlying schools to close its doors. When this did happen in 1947, the school department continued to own the building until 1976. And, as of the early twenty-first century, it still occupies the exact spot to which it had been moved in 1899. Built around the same time as the much larger Main Street School, the Flagg schoolhouse, not the first in this general vicinity, had a small enrollment from the start, with the number of students fluctuating between twenty and thirty in the years from 1901 to 1910. While low enrollments, at least temporarily, caused the closing of the East and the South Schools in 1907, the Flagg School remained opened, but only to serve students in grades one through four. Most likely if the trolley system had been extended along Summer Street to Flagg Street, these younger students might have attended the Normal’s Model School in the center of the town. Students in grades five through eight, numbering eleven at the time, were sent by rail to the Blackstone School in Titicut. When scheduling problems made this arrangement unsatisfactory, a horse-drawn “barge” was used to transport the students to their “new” school. At the close of the decade, about twenty-five young children were receiving their early education in the old Flagg Street schoolhouse, perhaps not taking too much notice of its lack of modern plumbing and lighting and certainly not being aware that their school building had received little attention from the town during the preceding ten years other than being painted in 1909. But this small outlying school did have one distinction in 1910. It was the only remaining schoolhouse in Bridgewater to have only one classroom and one teacher.  

Maintaining and updating six to eight old wooden schoolhouses were not the only major tasks of the school committees and the superintendent of schools. Keeping them staffed with competent teachers was
a perennial problem between 1901 and 1910. In a description we would not used today, the Independent on January 7, 1910, commenting on the end of the Christmas vacation, wrote: “The school maids returned Monday night and resumed their several duties, Tuesday.” This newspaper most likely was referring in the main to the twelve female teachers who had the difficult task of educating a good‘ portion of the town’s children receiving their early education in the common schools dealing with primary-grammar level education.  

What can be said about the individuals who were in charge of these outlying schools? In 1910, eighty percent of the nation’s teachers were females, often in their twenties. Indeed, pre-high school teaching had become identified as “women’s work,” quite a change from the decades before the Civil War when men dominated the newly-founded public school systems. In line with the rest of rural and small-town America, the change was very pronounced in Bridgewater, where all the teachers in the outlying schools between 1901 and 1910 were single females. Reflecting in good measure the makeup of the town’s population, the names of these teachers, which are found in the annual school reports, clearly indicate that almost all them during these years came from modest old-stock white families or, in smaller numbers, from Irish backgrounds. Most of them were graduates, in some cases recent, of the State Normal Schools, the Bridgewater one in particular. In 1905, for example, twelve of the thirteen teachers in the town’s outlying schools were products of these teaching institutions with ten receiving their training at Bridgewater Normal. A more in depth study might well show that a good number of them were natives of the town and educated in its public school system.  

What Bridgewater’s teachers in the early 1900’s thought about the conditions under which they taught is not easy to document, since their personal reminiscences either are difficult to find or simply were never written. But some things can be said. The three superintendent of schools from 1901 to 1910 lamented the low salaries paid to the teachers of the outlying schools and that the town was in no rush to raise them.

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60 BI, Jan. 7, 1910.
61 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1905, p. 19; a perusal of the lists of teachers in the annual town reports supports my conclusion about the ethnic background of Bridgewater’s teachers between 1901 and 1910, and is in line with the general conclusions drawn by the two secondary sourced cited below; Steven J Diner, A Very Different Age-Americans of the Progressive Era (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), pp. 178, 195-197; Lagemann, “Education since 1877,” Reader’s Companion to American History, p. 318
Pointing out that there had been "no changes in regular wages for our teachers for eleven years," Superintendent Sanderson suggested in 1902 that "there may be danger" in allowing the goal of "economical management outrun our zeal" to have "the best schools in the state." Superintendents Record and DeMeyer faced the same problem, but the teachers, who at this point in time were not organized, did gain small raises between 1907 and 1909, when it was realized that Bridgewater was losing some experienced teachers to other towns as well as failing to attract some of the best students who had recently graduated from the Normal schools. Applauding the increase, the Independent, expressing one view, praised the school committee for recognizing "the fact that a teacher is not a slave, to work for wages less than that paid the veriest menial." Yet, by the end of the decade Superintendent DeMeyer, worried that Bridgewater was still in danger of losing some teachers to surrounding towns, called for an additional pay increase for the town's teachers. Salaries for the teachers in the town's outlying schools at the end of the decade were in the $500 dollar range, with the beginning teachers paid less than this amount and those few with experience compensated with somewhat higher salaries. 62

Lack of adequate compensation was only one of many drawbacks of teaching in these common schools. Several general conclusions about class size in the Bridgewater's outlying schools between 1901 and 1910 might be drawn by looking at enrollment figures supplied by the superintendent of schools each year. While there were variations from school to school, most classes numbered in the twenties or thirties, or occasionally forty or over, as was the case in 1902 when forty-three students crowded into the Flagg School or in 1910 when the Main and Prospect Schools each had one class enrollment in this range. What might appear to be surprising is that classes in the Model School was consistently larger, averaging in the forties. All of this is not to say that class size in the outlying schools was optimum, but this was hardly the biggest problem facing the teachers in these schools. Rather, preparing lessons for different grade levels and having students of different ages in one classroom were their major challenges, although these related problems admittedly became less acute as the construction of additional classrooms permitted at least the separation of students in the grades one to four from those in grades five through eight. In 1907,

Superintendent Record, perhaps more concerned about the staffing issue, wrote that "a bright Normal trained girl," who practice taught in one grade, would leave her position in an outlying school "as soon as she had gained a little experience and recovered from her bewilderment." 63

It was difficult to maintain a strong system of primary-grammar schools when a mass exodus of teachers occurred as was the case in 1904 when eight of the twelve left, certainly in some cases for better salaries and fewer preparations. But these were not the only factors luring some teachers to greener pastures. In the early twentieth century, a good number of them, especially those just starting out in the profession, must have felt a sense of isolation living—perhaps boarding in someone’s house—in an area some distance from the village center. It can be said with some assuredness that none of these teachers had an automobile or their own horse and wagon. At least for those teaching at the Main, South, Dyer, Prospect, Flagg, and Blackstone Schools, the trolleys and/or the railroad afforded in varying degrees a way of getting to the town’s center where stores, churches, the public library, the Town Hall, and the Normal School all provided many economic, religious, social, political, or educational activities. Without immediate access to forms of transportation, the teachers at the East and Pratt Schools were especially isolated. Exacerbating this sense of aloneness was the lack of professional and personal contact with other teachers in schoolhouses of one or two classrooms. Daily opportunities to compare notes on subject matter, pedagogy, and the daily ups and downs of dealing with students either did not exist or were quite limited for some of the teachers in the outlying schools. Hopefully, some of them were able to attend the teacher institutes such as the one sponsored by the State Board of Education in Bridgewater on November 8, 1905, and were among the 300 teachers who enjoyed the "fine dinner" served on this occasion in Odd Fellows Hall by the Women’s Guild of Trinity Church. 64

Still, while those responsible for the overall school system lamented the state of the outlying schools and considered them the weakest link in Bridgewater’s public education, the teachers in these schools labored diligently to instruct about forty percent of the town’s children between the ages of six and

fourteen in what we might labeled the “basics.” Imagine the task of teaching arithmetic, composition, spelling, reading, penmanship, and bits of geography and history to students of several grade levels all in one classroom with the attendant problems of inadequate space and recitation time. Since Bridgewater Normal at this time was playing a leading position in nature study, perhaps some of the town’s teachers took their students on nature walks, not a bad way to escape for a while from the claustrophobic conditions of these classrooms. Aided by visits from singing and drawing supervisors from the town’s high school, some elements of “culture” were also part of the curriculum in these schools. Flora Townsend Little, a 1895 graduate of Bridgewater Normal who became the School Supervisor of Drawing in Bridgewater’s public schools in 1906, stressed the utilitarian and aesthetic value of drawing, a subject valued at her alma mater, especially since it was taught by Eliza B. Woodward between 1875 and 1887. In his annual report of 1905, Edmund F. Sawyer, Supervisor of Singing, was not nearly as optimistic as Little. “It is manifestly impossible” he wrote, “to do the kind of work in small detached schools, containing from five to eight grades, that can be done in schools in which all of the pupils are of the same grade.” At the other end of the curriculum spectrum, there was speculation that given Bridgewater’s industrial development and the fact that many eighth grade students would not continue schooling after the mandatory age of fourteen, it might be prudent to introduce manual skills at the primary level. But nothing came of this suggestion at the time.65

The variety of subjects and the range of student ages associated with the outlying schools was the main reason they were often, in some cases derisively, called the “anything” schools. These public schools served as useful centers for other than traditional education, however. In compliance with a law passed by the state legislature in 1906, which required all towns and cities of the Commonwealth to appoint a physician for the public schools, the Bridgewater School Committee in 1907 chose Doctor Calvin Pratt to fill this position. In a broad sense, this involvement of the government in matters of public health was part of the progressive reform “movement,” emerging in the United States in the early 1900’s. Dr. Pratt’s main task was to keep tabs on the health of the students in the outlying schools, as well as those in the Model and

High Schools. All students were to receive annual physical examinations and be tested for problems of sight and hearing. In his 1909 annual report to Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Pratt wrote that he had visited all the town's schools and had seen all pupil for five minutes each. If a student had a contagious disease such as impetigo, which was widespread in 1909, he or she could be sent home, but for many health problems it was the responsibility of the parents to take action once they had been informed by the school physician. The Stamps Savings program, which was discussed earlier, was another activity at the outlying schools. Sponsored by the Osamequin Club, this effort to promote the habits of saving and thrift was introduced in the outlying schools in 1901, after proving successful in the High and Model Schools. Four years later this club also assisted the Bridgewater Improvement Society in organizing a series of classes in sewing at the various outlying schools.  

The schoolhouses were also places where the residents of a particular neighborhood, especially the parents of students, could gather for social, cultural, and religious activities. Indeed, more research might lead to the suggestion that these buildings in varying degrees served as community centers in Bridgewater's outlying areas. Parents must have been delighted to attend the “Christmas Tree” celebrations at the Main and South Streets Schools in December of 1901. One wonders how many adults in early 1902 joined the students of the South School in forming a singing class of about thirty to prepare “a public entertainment... for the purpose of raising a fund for the purchase of a musical instrument for the school....” An entertainment given by the students of Miss Julia K. Gassett of the Blackstone School in June of the same year was of such “magnitude” that it drew part of its audience from the town’s center. Residents in the neighborhood of the Prospect School spent fifty dollars at a school sale featuring “fancy articles, candy, lemonade, ice cream and cake...”, not a grand sum, but enough to buy pictures in late 1902 for the newly renovated school. Perhaps five years later some of same folks attended this school’s concert entitled “A Harmonious Family” and were proud that they had helped to purchase a flag for the school. Around the

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66 “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1907, pp. 12-13; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1905, p. 5; Calvin Pratt, “Medical Inspections of Schools,” in the “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1907, pp. 20-22, 1908, pp. 18-19, 1909, pp. 20-21, 1910, p. 30 (listed as the “Report of the School Physician in 1910); Moore, Images of America Bridgewater, p. 44; the word “movement” is put in quotation marks to indicate that some historians of this reform era object to the use of this word since it overemphasizes the unity, goals, and achievements of the progressive reformers; see earlier sections on banking and the Bridgewater Improvement Association.
same time, many friends and parents of the pupils at the Main Street School attended a short play entitled "Little Miss Van Winkle," knowing that the purpose of this student production was to raise money to improve the school grounds.67

The remaining four schoolhouses were also places for neighborhood activities. In 1904, Dyer Hall, a part of Scotland's renovated school, was finished and furnished by the citizens of this tightly-knit community and immediately began to serve as a community gathering place. In late March of 1904, the Ladies' Sociable held a successful supper in the hall, the proceeds of which added to the hall fund. At the opposite end of the town, the Pratt School also had become a meeting place for the inhabitants of this eastern community, a trend that would become even more pronounced after the school was closed in 1935. The Baptist Church of Bridgewater, shortly after moving into its new sanctuary on Summer Street in 1902, also held services and conducted Sunday Schools in the East and Flagg Schools for nearby residents who found it difficult to travel to Central Square.68

While the outlying schools had a communal purpose, they should be judged mainly on their educational function. There were excellent teachers who prepared many of Bridgewater's youth for entering the adult world at the age of fourteen or for further academic work at the town's high school. It would be safe also to conjecture that many of the students of this decade would later have some fond memories of their school experiences, including a particularly nurturing teacher. Objectively speaking, however, these schools were not able to provide an adequate education for many of the town's children, a fact well-known by school authorities and many of Bridgewater's civic leaders and ordinary citizens. In 1906, the school committee succinctly suggested a better approach, asserting that Bridgewater "made a great mistake a few years ago when it refused to consider... concentrating all these schools into one graded centre school. Under such conditions the children would have been better trained, better cared for both physically and mentally." 69

That Bridgewater did not move in this direction between 1901 and 1910 is understandable, even if

68 BJ, Feb. 19, 26, April 1, Oct. 28, 1904; Townscape Institute, 1984, Form 150, pp. 369-370, Form 262, pp. 599-600; the section on the churches between 1901 and 1910 discusses the use of these schools by the Baptist Church.
regrettable. Its long tradition of small schoolhouses dating back to the eighteenth century made it difficult for some citizens to agree with the school committee's assessment in 1905 that the best education is "not easily obtainable in ungraded rooms" or with Superintendent Record's conjecture that things might have turned out differently had Bridgewater erected a central and graded school. But beginning in the middle of the 1890's, the town came to rely more and more on the Model School, a primary-grammar school associated with Bridgewater Normal and supported in good measure by the state. Located in the 1894 addition to the main Normal building, itself built in 1891, the Model School by 1910 was educating more of the children of Bridgewater than all of the outlying schools combined. Periodically, there was renewed debate over whether the town profited financially from its agreement with the state in the 1890's concerning the Model School. But there was most likely a consensus that the pedagogy at this training school was far in advance of that at the outlying schools. 70

In a way, the existence of the Model School was a roadblock to the town erecting its own graded and multi-classroom school. Instead, Bridgewater upgraded the physical conditions of the schoolhouses and reduced their numbers to six by sending the "displaced" students to another school with the town subsidizing the transportation costs. It has to be kept in mind also that with the town unwilling-some would also say unable-to support expenditures for a new town hall, a public sewerage system, or major renovations of the School Street fire station during early 1900's, the chances for a central school with separate rooms for grades one through eight were slim indeed. Those who advocated such a move perhaps found some solace in June of 1910 when "the entire corps of teachers in the public schools" was re-appointed. Nevertheless, Superintendent DeMeyer's 1909 evaluation of the outlying schools still hit the target. The success of the these schools, he wrote, "is greatly retarded...by the presence of three and four grades in a room."71

Bridgewater's High School

1901-1910

The history of Bridgewater’s High School, compared to that of the town’s outlying schools, is less complex and much shorter, dating back to the years just after the end of the Civil War. Prior to that time, what we now call secondary education was the function of the Bridgewater Academy, a private institution founded in 1799 to provide a more institutional approach to post-grammar school education. In compliance with a Massachusetts law of the late 1860’s requiring communities to provide public high school education, Bridgewater made use of a room for this purpose in the Centre School, located at that time near the corner of Summer and Grove Streets, on grounds later occupied by the Normal School. From the spring of 1869 to September of 1870, space in the first town hall on the corner of School and Bedford Streets was the second home of this new level of public education. The building of the new sanctuary for the New Jerusalem Church in 1871 at this site prompted a return of the high school facility to the Centre School where new quarters had been prepared, a step most welcomed by Martha Keith, one of the first teachers in the High School, who many years later recalled the “dreadful’ conditions in the former town hall where “the odors of cabbage, onions, and the like” came from “the tenement below the school.”

The Centre School was not to remain the permanent home of the town’s fledgling high school. In 1875, the trustees of the Bridgewater Academy decided to end its educational enterprise of seventy-five years and rent its relatively new building (1868) to the town for use as a public high school. Any hope on the part of the trustees that some day their school might re-open faded completely in 1880 with the signing by the town of a ten-year lease on the building. In 1894, however, the State Inspectors of Public Buildings forbade Bridgewater’s school committee from the using the building any longer unless “suitable heating, ventilating and sanitary accommodations were provided.” Not only were these things done, but three years later the building was enlarged, taking on the appearance which it retains over a century later. Whether younger passersby in the twenty-first century are aware that this handsome edifice, which is especially striking at night when its exterior is beautifully illuminated by lights, housed the town’s high school for over

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72 BI, May 1, 1908; much of the information in the first paragraph is based upon the comments of Martha Keith at the first reunion of the Bridgewater High School Alumni Association in late April of 1908; Walsh, “Bridgewater Academy,” III, p. 113; see the previous section on Bridgewater’s High School through 1900.
seventy-five years is another matter. 73

Compared to the large high schools in nearby cities such as Fall River, New Bedford, or Brockton, Bridgewater's was a small one in the years between 1901 and 1910, not surprising in a town with less than eight thousand inhabitants, over a thousand of whom were "residents" of the State Farm. With a degree of pride, however, Superintendent Sanderson in 1904 pointed out that 15 percent of the town's school population was enrolled in the high school compared to only 8.8 percent in Brockton and 7.5 percent in the state as a whole. The total enrollment in the town's high school during the decade showed some fluctuation with 101 in 1901, 134 in 1903, 129 in 1905, 101 in 1907, and 119 in 1910. Figures also clearly indicate that considerably more girls than boys attended high school at any given time. Most likely this had to do with boys dropping out of school at the mandatory age of fourteen to enter the work force if they had no plans to go on to some form of higher education. Also, despite promptings from Superintendent Record, Bridgewater during this decade did not established any type of industrial education as part of the high school curriculum. Girls, on the other hand, were more apt to take the commercial program or a course of study that would prepare them for entry into the Normal School. Perhaps the school committee's determination in 1905 to discourage what later would be called social promotion was another factor in the decision of young men not to enter the high school. 74

What statistics are available suggest that a much higher percent of the high school enrollment consisted of students graduating from the Model School than those who had been educated in one of the town's schools. In 1901, for instance, the numbers were 64 to 47. After finishing the eighth grade, any student, whether from the Model School or one of the outlying schools, had to attend a ninth grade class at the Model School before going on to the high school, which in these years consisted of grades ten through thirteen. This unique arrangement was thought to be especially helpful to students from the common

schools, allowing them to make up for any academic shortcomings associated with their training at these schools. In effect, this meant that anyone graduating from Bridgewater High School had had five years of education at this level. But, as figures in the annual school reports clearly show, many more students in the town started high school than those who went on to the senior class or graduation. In 1903, to cite one example, the total enrollment consisted of 40 freshmen (grade 10), 38 sophomores (grade 11), 31 juniors, (grade 12), and 22 seniors (grade 13). A listing of graduates in 1910 included only thirteen names even though the schools total enrollment fluctuated between 119 and 127 during the year. To the extent that the names of those who graduated in that year is any indication, the high school population remained heavily weighted toward Bridgewater’s dominant ethnic groups, the Yankee-English and Irish, though by this time the town was on the verge of demographic changes, portending a more diversified school population in the decade to follow.75

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Bridgewater High School was headed by three male principals: Dr. Edwin H. Whitehill, 1898-1904; Alfred C. Fay, 1904-1910; and Harry A. Blake, 1910-. Their annual salaries ranged between $1600 and $1700, a rather handsome amount compared to what was paid to the teachers at this level and certainly to what those teaching three to eight grades in the outlying schools received. This is not to suggest that these three principals were overcompensated, especially when considering their academic and professional backgrounds and that their job included teaching classes, administering the school, developing curriculum, and disciplining students when the need arose. Dr. Whitehill not only taught all the science courses, but also some of the Latin classes. Professionally active, he was the vice-president of the Teachers of Plymouth County. While not opposed to high school athletics, he felt that all students should be trained “in self-control, courtesy, and a sense of justice…and perhaps least of all physical upbuilding.” In 1904, Dr. Whitehill decided to resign and was honored in late June at a reception attended by practically all the students of the school and some graduates.76

Alfred C. Fay, who became the principal of the high school in the fall term of 1904, came "highly recommended as a gentleman, scholar and disciplinarian." A 1893 graduate of Harvard, Fay, although only thirty-six when he agreed to come to Bridgewater, had already had various experiences in high school teaching and administration in New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, serving, for instance, as principal of Framingham High School. In addition to his work as principal in Bridgewater, he also taught mathematics and was considered to be a "teacher of more than ordinary ability." Showing an interest in more than his particular academic field, Fay was sufficiently learned in the field of art to address the senior class in 1905 on the "Art of High Renaissance." His approach to discipline can best be seen in an episode in which four high school boys caused the no-school signal to be sounded. The guilty parties were made to return their football sweaters and spent time sawing wood, rather an efficient way of building an athlete's muscles. 77

Fay's resignation in early 1910 came as a surprise to some in the town and was labeled "a sudden step" by the Bridgewater Independent. Although he had made many friends in his adopted town and with the help of his wife had hosted student gatherings at their Grove Street home, Fay was evidently disenchanted for some reason with the town's school department. While on a leave-of-absence, but still collecting his salary, he announced in February 1910 his intention of running for the school committee with the hope of becoming its chairman. In a not so veiled attack on J. Gardner Bassett's leadership of the school board, Fay, in a public announcement, wrote: "The present chairman of the board...is, of course, in many respects a good man for Bridgewater, but his varied and diversified interests, such as his Grammar school in Boston, his brickyard, his hotel at Oak Bluffs and his investments in the West make it utterly impossible for him to devote a proper amount of time to the schools as he and his friends have often confessed to me...." Then, less than two weeks after his official retirement date, Fay introduced a motion at the adjourned town meeting on March 10, calling for the dissolution of the union between the Bridgewater and Abington school systems and the combining of the positions of high school principal and school superintendent. Apparently a majority of the town voters did not see much merit in Fay's two objectives since he failed in his bid to be

elected to the school committee. DeMeyer stayed on as superintendent of the two school systems, Bassett continued to be chairman of Bridgewater's school committee, and Harry A. Blake was chosen to become the new principal of the high school. 78

Since most of Blake's career in Bridgewater was after 1910, only a few preliminary comments will be made in this chapter. He graduated from the high school in Dexter, Maine, and went on to take his college degree from Bates College in the same state. Like his two predecessors at Bridgewater High School, Blake was kept busy administering the school as well teaching classes in science and mathematics. In its 1910 report, the school committee, perhaps not surprisingly, simply noted Fay's resignation, but then went on to praise the "great improvement in the personnel of the school as well as an increase in the enrollment" under Blake. More important than the increase of ten students in the high school over the previous year, however, was Blake's revision of the course of study for the four years of high school work within three months of his taking over the school in March of 1910. 79

Before looking at the changes in the high school curriculum between 1901 and 1910, a word or two about the high school faculty. It was the responsibility of this small cadre of teachers to impart to the town's high school students the necessary knowledge, skills, and values deemed necessary for further study at an institution of higher education or for beginning a business or professional career upon graduation. In a more general sense, one suspects that another goal of the high school teaching staff was to prepare all students for living productive personal and communal lives in a country that had become the greatest economic power in the world and was beginning, under President Theodore Roosevelt, to play a leading role in international affairs. This was quite a tall order for a staff of six to eight teachers, which included the principal and the teacher-supervisors in singing and drawing. Other than the principal and one or two men, the faculty throughout the decade was mainly made up of young, single, and well-educated women. Teaching Latin, Greek, German, mathematics, science, English, and history at this level required some depth of subject matter usually not acquired at this time at a Normal School, although degrees from Bates, Radcliffe, Mt.

Holyoke, Tufts, or Harvard did not mean that teachers with such backgrounds were necessarily skilled in the art of pedagogy. But to attract teachers with strong academic backgrounds and those who were able to teach commercial subjects, such as stenography, it was necessary to pay salaries quite a bit higher than those received by the so-called “school mums” in the outlying schools. The annual compensation of $600 to $800 for the Bridgewater High School teachers in 1904 was substantially more than the $400 to $500 salaries of those laboring under adverse conditions in the eight schoolhouses in operation that year. Still, one wonders if the female teachers at the high school in 1904 knew why a new male teacher got $920, more than a female teacher who had been at the school since 1894.

A higher salary was not the only advantage of teaching at the high school. Specializing in one or two subjects in graded classes provided the instructors at this level with the desire and opportunity to grow in their chosen academic fields. In the summer of 1902, for instance, one teacher studied at Dartmouth College, another at Harvard, and a third was asked to teach at the Normal summer school in Hyannis. Enjoying the camaraderie of fellow teachers (something some outlying teachers must have envied), helping to direct student plays, musical presentations, and athletic activities, planning the annual fall reception for parents, and taking students to the nation’s capital or some cultural event in Boston were especially pleasant and rewarding experiences for the town’s high school teachers. Living within walking distance of the Academy Building in Central Square was preferable to being isolated in an outlying district of the town. While the village center around the Common was hardly as exciting as the downtowns of larger urban areas, it did have numerous stores, two banks, places for lunch, millinery shops, the main post office, and churches for the Protestant members of the high school faculty. The trolley and railway transportation provided easy access from the town’s center to cities like Boston and Providence, vacation spots on Cape Cod, and to the home towns of some of the high school teachers. Unlike some of the teachers in the district schools, it appears that few, if any, of those at the high school were born, raised, and educated in Bridgewater.

If the high school instructors read the annual school reports during this decade, they must have noted with some pride how much more optimistic the comments about the high school were compared to

81 BI, July 4, Nov. 21, 28, 1902, May 29, 1903, March 27, Sept. 11, 1908, June 10, 1910.
those about the ungraded schoolhouses. Still, the retention of teachers at Bridgewater High School was almost as problematic as in the case of the outlying schools. The three changes in the principalship during the early 1900’s not only worked against continuity in the school’s administration but also in its teaching staff. Superintendent Sanderson’s 1904 report pointedly deplored “the wholesale departure of good teachers” and hoped that the town would not “be called upon to repeat the experiment of changing half the high school teachers...in a single year.” Another way of looking at this problem is to compare the list of high school teachers in 1901 to that of 1911. The only name that was on both lists was Myrtie B. Snow, a graduate of the high school in Peterboro, New Hampshire, and one of few graduates of Bridgewater Normal to teach at the town’s high school in the early 1900’s. She started teaching English and drawing at Bridgewater High School in 1894, and, during her tenure of twenty-four, became one of the school’s most popular and beloved teachers, witnessing many changes in the school’s teaching staff and curriculum. But at least in June of 1910, it could be reported that the “entire present corps of teachers in the public schools were re-appointed..., a somewhat unusual occurrence....”

In spite of limited resources and a small and changing faculty, Bridgewater High School, building upon educational and physical changes for the better in the 1890’s, showed a marked improvement in the quality of its education between 1901 and 1910, especially when compared to the two decades following the school’s establishment. On becoming the superintendent of schools in 1890, Sanderson recalled the school committee telling him that “the high school was good for nothing” and that it could not possibly at that time “fit” students “for college or technical schools.” But, influenced by national trends in education and responding to local needs, the town’s high school underwent some major changes in the waning years of the nineteenth century. An important curricular revision of 1892 allowed students to choose one of three academic programs—the English, General, or College Preparatory. The academic requirements of these courses of study were modified in 1895 to take into account the school department’s decision that all students entering high school first had to take a ninth year of grammar school education at the Model

82 BJ, Feb. 26, July 1, 15, 1904, June 17, 1910, Nov. 9, 1923; “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1904, p. 8, 1910, p. 32, 1911, p. 40, 1914, p. 47; thanks to the work of the Ousamequin Club, the first permanent scholarship fund at Bridgewater High School was created in honor of Myrtie R. Snow in 1923, five years after her unexpected death.
School. Accompanying these academic changes were physical improvements made in the Academy Building and, most notably, a major enlargement of this edifice in 1897. By the early 1900's, a high school diploma could only be secured by completing satisfactorily a certain number of academic credits, including those received in music and drawing, and "on the recommendation of the teachers as a body." In a statement that might appear to some as a left-handed compliment, Sanderson wrote in his 1904 annual report: "I say without hesitation that Bridgewater high school has come to be good for something." The two succeeding school superintendents and the school committees of this decade agreed with the positive intent of this evaluation, particularly as it related to preparing some of the high schools students for study at a variety of institutions of higher education. 83

While there were some indications between 1901 and 1910 that Bridgewater was starting to be influenced by the idea of a comprehensive high school, where students would be divided into academic, commercial, and vocational tracks, the college preparatory program with its rigorous scholarly requirements remained central to the school’s mission. Latin, Greek, history, English, literature, science, mathematics—these remained essential subjects for those Bridgewater students going on to such colleges as Harvard, Brown, Wellesley, Dartmouth, Radcliffe, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Indeed, as teachers and parents helped craft preparatory programs for individual students, the academic requirements for entry into a particular institution always had to be considered and, in some degree, limited the taking of free electives, a concept that was then being introduced at the college and high school levels. Whether noted in the graduation program, the Bridgewater Independent, or the annual school reports, the citizens of the town were always informed of those high school graduates going on to college and what institutions they would be attending. Superintendent Sanderson asserted in his 1904 report that the high schools of the state were "still hampered by the traditions of the academies," but then proceeded to boast of the high number of Bridgewater students who went on to college between 1895 and 1904, including twelve to Harvard. The first annual report of Principal Fay called for a rich general course for those students not going on to higher

education, but then included the words “for those who perhaps have not the ability or temperament to go on further.” In June of 1907, Fay reported with satisfaction that the Worcester Polytechnic Institute had agreed to accept the certificate of graduation from Bridgewater High School in place of an entrance examination. That the college preparatory course of study was Bridgewater High School’s most highly regarded program at this time was generally accepted, but there were signs suggesting a broader curriculum even in the early 1900’s.  

It is not surprising that a good number of Bridgewater High School graduates in the early twentieth century took advantage of the nearby Normal School, not yet an institution that granted college degrees, to further their education and, in many cases, to go on to teaching careers after taking one of four courses of study. Indeed, fifty-six of the 182 students who graduated from the town’s high school between 1895 and 1904 went to Bridgewater Normal. Generally not in the high school’s college preparatory program, most of these students were in the “General” course of study, a fairly vigorous academic program, which entailed four years of prescribed courses, including some taken by those who were headed to four years colleges. Now and then changes were made in the requirements, allowing for greater choice in the so-called electives. Greek and Latin, for examples, remained in the curriculum, but became optional for some students. Drawing, on the other hand, was an important subject and required for those students going on to the Normal School. These students had to keep in mind that acceptance into this school was based upon an admission exam and, since 1894, a high school diploma. Recognizing the important role the high school played in preparing some students for Normal school education, Blake, the new principal of the high school, announced in 1910 that the General Course would be abolished and replaced by a Normal Preparatory Course to give students headed in that direction “a more definite fit for their work...”  

A small number of young men and women in Bridgewater saw a high school education as a way of  

attaining office and clerical skills increasingly demanded by the business life of the town and, indeed, by corporate America in general. Limited by its small size, the town’s high school, nonetheless, moved to fill this educational need, although it was not until a re-organization of the curriculum in 1910 that a commercial course of study was officially listed as one of four programs offered at the school. As the century opened, students interested in pursuing a commercial education could take such subjects as typing and stenography but were enrolled in a four year program known as the English course of study which specifically included history and English classes. With a faculty of only six to eight members, only one of them could be assigned to teach the commercial offerings of the curriculum. In the graduation class of 1903, there were nine students who had taken the English program, and, presumably, most had taken a number of commercial courses. Yet, Superintendent Sanderson, in his report for that year, went out of his way to voice his opinion that stenography and typewriting should not be taken simply for utilitarian reasons. 86

Despite some doubts in 1904 about the efficacy of the commercial program, steps were taken during the next six years to put it on more solid ground. Rather than abandoning the attempt to train some students in the skills needed for office work, Grace V. Knowles, a Radcliffe graduate, was hired to take over the commercial curriculum with the lofty aim of preparing Bridgewater students for work in “commercial offices in any town or city.” Principal Fay was quick to assert, however, that business students would continue to take courses in English, history and languages. In a re-arrangement of the whole course of study, typing, bookkeeping, and stenography remained the core commercial subjects, but classes in commercial geography and commercial arithmetic were added. The procurement of two “Underwood” typewriting machines for the commercial department underscored the school board’s commitment to revitalizing this part of the curriculum. By 1906, Superintendent Record could cite the “Commercial Department... as a large contributor to the general efficiency of the school.” Two years later, a three year commercial program, which included penmanship, was introduced for students who “wished to put their business knowledge to practical use upon leaving [evidently not graduating] from school.” Ending the decade on a high note, the commercial course of study at Bridgewater High School was officially recognized, and plans were made to

86 BI, June 26, 1903; “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1903, pp. 22, 36; Steven A. Diner, A Very Different Age, pp. 156-165; this last source gives an excellent analysis of office and clerical workers during the first two decades of the twentieth century.
create a special classroom, divided by a glass partition, to accommodate all the subjects in the commercial
curriculum, including a newly created course in “Office Work”. 87

For those high school students not going on to further schooling or seeking to acquire commercial
skills, the General course of study between 1901 and 1910 offered instruction in the various academic
disciplines and in a general way tried to touch upon some of the “basic areas,” listed several years later in
the National Education Association’s Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. Among these were those
promoting good health, citizenship, ethical character, and “fundamental processes” like reading and writing.
These considerations were all worthy ones and enunciated many time by school officials in Bridgewater
during this decade. But, however understandable given the size and resources of Bridgewater’s High
School, the overall curriculum at this time had little to offer students of this small industrial town in the way
of manual, industrial, or domestic training, certainly a reason why many young adults did not go to high
school or dropped out before graduation. The possibility of broadening the school’s offerings to include
such training was raised by Superintendent Record and Principal Fay between 1904 and 1908, but got no
where, despite signs that the state legislature might move towns and cities in this direction. At the end of the
decade, Superintendent DeMeyer understood the need for such instruction, but saw no chance of
establishing “trade or industrial schools in Bridgewater....” He did suggest that the “introduction of more of
the elements of Manual work in connection with... drawing would prove valuable.” Other than the
commercial ones, practical courses for young women at the high school also got no further than the talking
stage. In early 1905, Principal Fay felt that before too long “our School Board will be obliged to consider”
adding “Sewing and Cookery” to the curriculum. The Bridgewater Improvement Association, with the
assistance of the Ousamequin Club, sponsored and set up sewing classes in the town’s public schools in
1905, and evidently one of them was to be at the high school. But owing to “the large number of applicants,”
the idea was given up. What later would be called “Home Economics” would have to wait for another day

Report, 1906, p.11, 1908, pp. 11-12, 1910, p. 21; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report,
1904, pp. 3-5; “Special Report of Principal Alfred C. Fay,” Annual Town Report, 1904, p. 21; “Special
to be added to the high school's curriculum. 88

Besides what was learned in the classrooms, a variety of other activities, later labeled extracurricular, added immeasurably to the overall education of many high school students between 1901 and 1910. How enjoyable and educational it must have been in late December of 1904 for those students who presented "The Building of the Ship," a cantata in honor Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of New England's most revered poets. A century later, it is perhaps difficult to imagine such a production, which included music, poems, and essays by the students, being presented in the Town Hall and then followed by dancing, with the high school orchestra furnishing the music. Three years later, a sacred concert, which included among other pieces a portion of Gounod's oratorio "The Redemption, 89 was performed in the same place by the high school chorus of 100 voices and featured several soloists from Boston. On a less grand scale, series of plays were performed by the high school's junior class in 1904 with the assistant of Myrtie Snow, who had now been teaching at school for ten years. 89

Special lectures and field trips also broadened the educational experience of high school students in the early 1900's. In February 1903, Reverend Charles E. Stowe, the erudite minister of the Central Square Church, across the street from the Academy building, addressed the pupils on a Friday afternoon on "The Life of Washington." Without a doubt many students were familiar with some of the facts of the first president's life and his contributions to the new nation, but most likely few knew that the lecturer was the youngest son of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who in the 1850's wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a book that figured so prominently in the coming of the Civil War. Especially designed for seniors and their parents and friends, a number of lectures and readings were given in the Assembly hall of the school on Thursday mornings during January and February of 1905. Principal Fay not only instituted this series of lectures, but also delivered three of them dealing with the history of art. It would not be surprising if field trips proved more appealing to some students than listening to rather scholarly addresses by their teachers and principal.

Attending the Merchants and Manufacturers exposition in Boston on October 3, 1903, was an exciting

excursion for a number of pupils, made even more appealing by free admission and reduced rates on the railroad. Beginning with the graduating class of 1910, the trip to Washington during the spring vacation was anticipated by the seniors perhaps as much graduation a few months later. Described by the Independent as "a red letter day in the lives" of the students, a combination of rail, steamer, and automobile transportation sped the students on their way to the nation's capital, perhaps in the longest journey yet taken by some of the students about to graduate from a small high school in a town of less than eight thousand. One would hope that the two chaperones, Misses Carpenter and Snow of the faculty, enjoyed the week-long event as much as the student undoubtedly did. In any case, Principal Blake agreed in 1911 to support the "custom," as "long as the pupils conduct themselves properly" and "do not allow the raising of funds [for the trip] to interfere with school work." 90

Not surprisingly, playing on one of the high school's sports teams proved to be among the most popular non-academic activity for many students between 1901 and 1910. The first twenty-five years or so of Bridgewater High School had coincided with the emergence of organized sports in the United States, a phenomenon related to the growth of an urban, industrial, and more ethnically-mixed society. One year after the town moved its high school into the Academy building in 1875, for instance, the National League of Professional Base Ball Clubs was established, creating a boom in spectators sports during the next two decades. While Bridgewater retained some of its rural vestiges in the late nineteenth century, more and more of its inhabitants became workers in the shoe, iron and steel, and brick industries. This economic change effected the attitude toward sports in several ways not only in the small town of Bridgewater, but, indeed, throughout emerging urban and industrial America. For workers who labored long hours in a factory, becoming spectators at an organized sport events became more of an option than engaging in informal, or shall we say "boyish" play more associated with a rural, farming society. To satisfy the growing demand for spectator sports, a new form of entertainment for much of the population, leagues of organized teams in a variety of sports were formed not only nationally, but also locally in large and small communities across the country. This trend, in a general way, had a strong impact on the role that sports would play in

the high schools as their numbers greatly increased during the early twentieth century. 91

It is not easy to say to what degree athletic teams were a formal part of the overall educational program of Bridgewater High School between 1901 and 1910. Unlike the disciplines of singing and drawing which had supervisors and course offerings for credit, the curriculum did not include at this point classes in physical education or, what was called later, an Athletic Director. To what extent the very few members of the faculty who served as coaches to a particular team were paid is not easy to determined, but it could be that the one full time male faculty member in 1904 got a considerably higher salary than other teachers because he coached the football team. There was an Athletic Association within the school which coordinated field sports. Its constitution and by-laws were amended after the school committee in 1903 adopted a code of rules and regulations governing athletics in the High School. In that year also the Association voted to change its constitution to read that “all members of athletics teams of the High School shall be members of the Association.” Since the town did not include any money in the school budget for sports, the Association had to rely on donations from some townspeople and funds raised by holding an annual spring fair at the high school. The one on May 2, 1902 “proved a drawing event”, ensuring “plenty of balls to play with and bats to hit them with —if they can,” wrote the Independent playfully. After the sale had ended at half past nine in the evening, dancing to the music of Ferguson’s orchestra lasted until midnight. 92

Baseball, which nationally “outdistanced other spectator sports in popularity” and saw the formation of the American League in 1901, was also the most prominent of the field sports at Bridgewater High School during this first decade of the twentieth century. Anticipating the 1901 season a bit prematurely, the Independent wrote on February 15: “Baseball will soon be the thing at the High School.” One of that year’s highlights for the school and, indeed, the town came on May 11 when the Bridgewater Nine defeated Brockton High School eight to three, a victory made even more delicious and impressive since it followed an earlier defeat of Bridgewater by the “Shoe city boys” and was played at Brockton’s Highland Park, not at Bridgewater Normal’s South Field on Grove Street, where the home games took

place. Bridgewater had other triumphs (and defeats) in these years as it competed in leagues composed of high school teams from surrounding communities. But no victory was as sweet as the one on June 17, 1903, when before a crowd of 600, Bridgewater’s team displayed its mettle by defeating its “dearest foe,” Brockton, in the third game of the series. As the league’s champion, it proudly brought home a large silver “Cup” to be placed in the Academy Building for all the Bridgewater citizens to behold. This elation stands in sharp contrast to the situation three years later when all hope of organizing a high school baseball team was abandoned, “much to the disappointment of the young enthusiasts.” My research tells me nothing about the reasons for this development, but it appears that a team known as Bridgewater High Independents was formed and played against other high school teams. By the end of the decade the high school again had a team, but the 1910 season was hardly a memorable one.  

Football also appealed to some of the Bridgewater High School boys and the town’s spectator fans during the early 1900’s. Descended from a rowdy medieval one, this game evolved in the more immediate sense from British soccer and rugby in the late nineteenth century. The most popular sport at the intercollegiate level by the 1890’s, contests were often marred by brutality and violence, with 18 players in 1905, for instance, dying from game-related injuries. Whether the Bridgewater fans and boys who were playing football on the high school team were aware of this national scandal and the steps taken, including a White House conference called by President Theodore Roosevelt to make the game less violent, is difficult to say.  

Like baseball, football at Bridgewater High had its best days in the first half of the decade, met hard times after 1905, and saw a revival in 1910. In early September of 1902, “20 men reported for practice to Capt. Fred Lawrence,” quite an impressive number considering there were only fifty-six boys in the entire high school. Most of the games were played against rival public high schools in the surrounding...

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93 BJ, Feb. 15, April 5, 19, 26, May 3, 17, 31, June 7, 21, 1901, May 2, 16, 23, June 13, 1902, April 16, May 29, June 5, 12, 19, 26, 1903, April 8, May 13, July 22, 1904, April 14, 21, June 9, 1905, June 1, 1906, June 17, 24; “Ten Years Ago,” BJ, July 1, 1910; evidently Bridgewater also won the pennant in 1900; Pictorial History, 1994, p. 37; this last source includes a picture of the 1905 Bridgewater High baseball team, but many other team pictures are not dated; and it would have been helpful also to the present writer if History Highlights had included some information on the period before 1910 in its section on sports.

communities, with the home ones at South Field since Bridgewater High did not have its own playing field. Occasionally there were contests with other rivals, including the Normal School, Thayer Academy of Braintree, a team of town boys, and one from McElwain’s shoe factory. None of these engendered as much interest and “excitement” as the annual B. H. S. vs. Alumni football game on Thanksgiving morning, however. It must have been a disappointment to the many fans who ritually attended this particular game that the absence of a high school team between 1906 and 1909 meant that another form of entertainment would have to fill the hours before the traditional early afternoon turkey dinner. The prospects for high school football brightened in the fall of 1910 when at a meeting of the Athletic Association the majority of the boys (I assume that the high school girls were not part of this organization) favored the formation of a football team and received permission from Principal Blake to do so, if enough boys could get their parents’ consent. Bartholomew Casey, who twelve years later would take over his father’s newspaper and ice cream store, was chosen captain, and Principal Blake agreed to coach the newly-formed team. While the makeup of Bridgewater’s population had begun to change by this time, those who made up the new team were either from Yankee-English or Irish backgrounds, the two groups which made up by far the greatest part of the town’s and high school’s population. 95

Basketball was another popular sport at Bridgewater High School during the early 1900’s and had the distinction of being played by both sexes, although on separate teams. Invented in 1891 at the Y.M.C.A. in Springfield, Massachusetts, by James Naismith, this game, unlike baseball and football, was “a fully modern and synthetic game,” originally meant as a man’s game to be played indoors, between the end of the football season and the start of baseball. In the 1890’s, thanks to Senda Berenson of Smith College, basketball was given women’s rules, which encouraged passing and limited dribbling and running. By the end of that decade, women’s intercollegiate games became common. With both the male and female versions of basketball having their origins in Massachusetts, perhaps it is not surprising that before long basketball teams were also being formed in the Bay State’s high schools, including Bridgewater’s. 96

Girls' basketball teams were very active at Bridgewater High, especially from 1901 to 1905, with games being played both in the spring and the fall. In September of 1901, for instance, an interclass schedule of games was arranged among four teams, two freshman, one sophomore, and one made up of juniors and seniors. Bridgewater High School teams in the early 1900's also competed with teams from surrounding communities, including the Howard Seminary in West Bridgewater, the Woodward Institute in Quincy, and those of public high schools such as Oliver Ames in North Easton. On the managerial level, the Bridgewater team was accorded a degree of recognition in the September of 1903, when Mary L. Powers, a half-time stenography teacher, was elected by the Athletic Association to manage the girls' basketball team, although her tenure in this job was cut short by her decision to leave the high school in June of 1904. At this point in my research, it appears that the Bridgewater teams practiced and played their interclass and home games with other high schools on an outside court on the grounds of the Academy Building. My assumption receives some support from two accounts in the Independent. One in 1904, after citing a defeat for the Bridgewater team, went on to say that the High School girls have asked for a return game because they “think they can make a win on a grass court and no walls.” The other reference, a year later, reads: “The old basket ball court at the high school had been repaired and set in place on the campus.” Girls' basketball would have a long history at the high school, but appears to have been eclipsed somewhat between 1907 and 1910 by the growing interest that some boys were beginning to show in the game.

One of the obstacles to forming a boys' basketball team at Bridgewater High was the lack of an adequate space for practice and games. In November of 1907, the Athletic Committee appointed a committee to meet with Principal Arthur Clarke Boyden, the Normal School's new principal, concerning the possibility of a high school team using the court in the basement of the 1891 Normal Building on School Street, left vacant in June of 1905 with the dedication of a new state-of-the-art gymnasium directly across the street. An agreement was reached with Principal Boyden, but the old facility with its low ceilings, limited space, and lack of direct access to “baths and dressings rooms” was hardly a choice facility even for a fledgling team. In any case, practice began, and a schedule of games with out-of-town teams was

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97 BI, March 22, Sept. 27, 1901, May 9, 23, 1902, Sept. 18, 1903, Feb. 26, May 20, July 1, 1904, Sept. 22, 1905: History Highlights, p. 189; I cite this last source, which includes a picture of the girls' basketball team of 1936, to show that this sport remained popular with the young women at the high school.
arranged. Thanks to the Bridgewater Historical Collectors’ Pictorial History, 1994, we have photographs of the 1908-1909 and the 1909-1910 Bridgewater High School basketball teams. The latter one includes newly-appointed Principal Blake, who served as the team’s coach. Teams of the different classes also played games against each other. One can imagine how humiliated the seniors must have been late on the afternoon of March 16, 1908, after being trounced by the sophomores by a score to thirty to nine.\(^98\)

As enjoyable as the Bridgewater students and town spectators found baseball, football, and basketball, there were some problems and issues associated with these competitive sports. At the beginning of the 1901 baseball season, the Independent urged the high school team to “bring home every baseball scalp you can find—if you can do it by straight, clean, hard playing.” While hopefully we would not use the word “scalp” in this context a century later, the idea of a clean and fair victory was—and still is—an ideal worth promoting, but not always realized. More than once in the early 1900’s high school players and spectators had to be chided and reprimanded for unsportsmanlike behavior. Concerning a home game between Bridgewater and Taunton on South Field in June of 1901, for instance, a local reporter wrote: “The Taunton partisans behaved themselves much better than the friends of the Bridgewater nine, and the latter made themselves objectionable from the beginning to the end of the game . . . with most of the time . . . spent in personalities of an objectionable nature.”\(^99\)

Sometimes high school players, most likely including some from Bridgewater, were guilty of infractions which detracted from the professionalism of a particular sport. In some football games, unnecessary roughness and the use of “questionable language and noisy arguments” in responding to “every close decision of the referee” detracted from the benefits of the sport. Another especially vexatious issue in the 1902 season was the practice of some teams in the high school baseball league using outside players, and, indeed, in one game in late May of 1902, Bridgewater went to Attleboro and discovered this team intended not only to use non-students, but also a teacher. In retaliation, the Bridgewater nine decided to play a graduate of their own school. On hearing about the situation, Principal Whitehill, a supporter of fair and clean competitive sports, moved quickly by asking for the ejection from the game of Bridgewater’s


\(^{99}\) BJ, April 5, June 21, 1901, June 19, 1903.
new captain and manager. Some members of the team leaned toward mutiny by threatening to in effect organize an independent team, but Whitehill did not budge, upholding Bridgewater High’s reputation for fairness in athletics. In a letter to Whitehill, a week or so later, the principal of Weymouth High School admitted that, much to his regret, two outsiders had played on that town’s team in a game against Bridgewater on South Field. It was difficult for the home team to complain too loudly since it had used in the same game three substitutes, who, I presume, were not at the time enrolled at Bridgewater High. At the very least, there was a need to tighten up the rules and regulations governing the inter-high school games in the early 1900’s.

Even more important than this matter, however, was the larger question of what role competitive sports should play at the high school level. Citing the growing influence of colleges on the private academies and public high schools, Principal Whitehill in 1902 expressed his concern about any tendency “to make athletics of first importance in school life.” “Physical upbuilding,” he averred, was not as important as “training in self-control, courtesy,” a “sense of justice,” and “alertness . . . .” (Some might argue that these personal attributes were promoted by participation in sports.) Two years later, Whitehill’s successor, Principal Fay, had a somewhat different perspective. “Our schools,” he asserted, “must encourage athletics in every legitimate way . . . But we need to encourage exercise for all.” With the new Normal gymnasium under construction at this time, Fay was hopeful of making arrangements “whereby our boys may have the benefit” of this new state facility. The high school girls, I assume, were not to be included in any arrangements.

By the middle of the decade, Bridgewater’s school committee must have felt compelled to address at least the issue of competitive sports at the high school when it told the town that the high school would not be maintained “as a loafing place for boys and girls” (at least the fairer sex got equal treatment this time), and that there was no intention of supporting “the school for the purpose of furnishing members to a Baseball Team, or any other Athletic Team except under proper conditions.” Although it is difficult to document what individual students thought about the controversy over the role of competitive sports at

100 BH, May 30, June 6, Oct. 10, 1902.
Bridgewater High at this juncture, at least one contemporary account mentioned the considerable friction between the students and faculty caused by the supposed opposition of some of the latter to athletics. If this student perception had merit, some questions have to be raised. Did this opposition come from the women teachers who constituted the overwhelming majority of faculty? Or did it come from the two male faculty, one of whom served as a coach for the football team? Could it be that the faculty and the school department were concerned that too much attention paid to sports would detract from the high school’s academic mission? The general matter of school athletics was of such import that Principal Fay decided to speak to the students about it at the opening of the 1908 fall term. After boasting a bit about his own background as an athlete, he denied being opposed to organized sports, even suggesting that if eleven boys of “sufficiently high” academic standing wished to form a football team, he would not object. Toward the end of the decade there was a revival in competitive sports at Bridgewater High, but some of the questions raised about their proper role in the overall school’s program remained partly unanswered, not only in this town, but in most communities across the nation. 102

While Bridgewater between 1901 and 1910 grappled with many of the same problems as other small communities in maintaining a high school, the town was faced with the unique situation of not having a publicly-owned high school building. Beginning in 1875, as mentioned earlier, the town had chosen to rent the building of the once highly revered but now defunct Bridgewater Academy, situated at the southern end of Central Square, and to use it to house the rather recently established public high school. Not all the inhabitants of the town had found this to be a satisfactory arrangement, and several abortive attempts had been made before 1900 to have the town secure ownership of the Academy building. The matter of public ownership was again discussed at the annual town meeting in March of 1900, and a committee of fourteen, representing all the school districts, was chosen to work with the school committee to investigate the matter and then to report at the next annual meeting. Arguing that “the town should manage all public school property,” Superintendent Sanderson hoped that a transfer could be made, but no report was forthcoming in 1901 or in 1902. Claiming some progress in its talks with the trustees of the Bridgewater Academy, the town’s committee finally felt compelled in 1903 to release some of the correspondence written during the

negotiations. What the letters revealed was the unwillingness of the Academy's trustees, who controlled and maintained the Academy building, all the while receiving an annual rent of nine hundred dollars, to transfer the building to the town. They based their decision mainly on a deed dating back to April 18, 1822, from Jane Lazell, et al, heirs of Deacon Isaac Lazell, which provided for a half acre of land (part of the land given to create a Common) to be used as a site for a new academy to replace the one lost by fire earlier in that year. The trustee of the early 1900's, a group that included such well-known citizens as Dr. Calvin Pratt, chairman, J. Gardner Bassett, Hollis M. Blackstone and Joshua E. Crane, Jr., believed that any transfer of the property to the town would "disturb the trust in their hands." Those who were pushing for the transfer, including members of the committee of fourteen, were not able to learn from the trustees the actual legal obstacles to any transfer.

Between 1903 and 1910, the quest to secure town ownership of the Academy building continued to be, at least sporadically, a public issue in Bridgewater. Proponents of such a move were able to use some of the legal arguments put forth by Louis D. Brandeis, a Boston lawyer and legal advisor and friend of William H. McElwain, the head of Bridgewater's large shoe factory on Perkins Street. Indeed, it was McElwain, a member of the town's school committee and of the committee of fourteen, who sought, at his own expense, advice from Brandeis. Somewhat cautious in his legal opinion, Brandeis suggested that by leasing the Academy Building for over twenty-five years and no longer maintaining a private academy there, it was permissible for the trustees to dissolve the corporation of the Bridgewater Academy and then transfer the building to the town. Or, as an alternative, the trustees could lease the Academy Building to the town for ninety-nine years at an annual rent of one dollar. The committee of fourteen decided to choose the second plan, receiving the town's approval at the annual meeting on March 2, 1903. But four weeks later the committee had to report that the trustees of the Academy were not willing to go along with long-term lease. Instead the trustees voted to lease the building to the town for five years and continue the old rent of nine

\[^{103}\] BI, March 22, July 19, 1901, Feb. 27, 1903; any reader wishing to grasp the details of the transfer issue might wish to read the newspapers accounts; "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Report, 1901, p. 27; "Selectmen's Report," Annual Town Report, 1902, p. 36; Townscape Institute, Form 52, pp. 168-169; Walsh, "Bridgewater Academy," HH, pp. 109-115; Moore, Images of America - Bridgewater, pp. 42-43; this last source has good pictures but corrections in chronology need to be made-the third Academy building was erected in 1868 and the last major addition was made in 1897; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 9-11, 1994, p. 34; "Lazell Isaac (Major) 1756-?-Merchant," HH, p. 269.
hundred dollars a year. Perhaps somewhat uneasy about their position, the trustees in 1904, in a very close vote, chose not to charge the town any rent for that year. Still, one of them was reported as saying that this "decision had no significance for the future...." 104

Three years later, nevertheless, it was reported that the trustees were seeking permission from the state legislature to dissolve the corporation which controlled the Academy Building and transfer it to town ownership. A bill to accomplish this was introduced into the House committee on rules by Representative Roland M. Keith who at the time represented Bridgewater in the General Court. Then, early in May of 1907, the Education Committee gave its approval of the measure, which specified that three-fourths of the trustees and a majority of voters at a town meeting had to support the conveyance of the property. It looked as if after all these years, the town would soon own its high school building. Originally the move was to take place by the spring of 1908, but earlier in that year the Education Committee agreed to extend the time limit to May 19, 1909. In the meantime, the town meeting in March voted to have the school committee meet with the trustees of the Bridgewater Academy to "attempt to come to some understanding with them..." concerning the matter of the transfer. This meeting made it clear once more that the trustees, or at least three-quarters of them, did not favor the project. Putting the best face on this rejection, the school committee wrote in its 1909 annual report: "For the benefit of those who may feel disappointed at such a result of our inquiry, we call attention to the fact that the rental received by the trustees from the town seems to be wisely expended in the making of repairs and improvements from time to time." In the same year, the trustees increased the rent to twelve hundred dollars, pointing out that the Academy building had recently been placed on the list of the town's taxable property. In any event, the town continued to rent this private building to house its high school. There was little if any talk at this juncture of Bridgewater constructing a publicly-owned high school facility. This was not to happen for another fifty years or so. 105

Whether privately or publicly owned, it was important to maintain the Academy Building in good


condition. Newer than some of the small outlying schools and certainly more imposing than any of them, the structure was only thirty-three years old in 1901, and in 1897 a major renovation had lengthened its front facing the Common. The everyday maintenance was the town’s responsibility with a janitor hired to clean the building, make sure it was adequately heated in the cold winter months, and take care of the school grounds, so visible to visitors and inhabitants of the town as they conducted their business in Central Square. Bridgewater was fortunate in having Adrian Z. Pratt as the custodian of the building for many years. Perhaps he was instrumental in the selectmen’s procurement of twenty-five tons of Cumberland coal for the high school during the national coal strike in the fall of 1902. The fact that he had a fireman’s license and, indeed, was the town’s fire chief between 1900 and 1902, certainly figured prominently in allowing Bridgewater High School, perhaps, to be the only one in the area not obliged to close during the harsh winter of 1903-4. He was also given credit for his part in keeping the area around the school in “very attractive” condition. When he decided to retire in May of 1904, the “scholars” of the school presented Pratt with “a large box of cigars,” (It was a different era!) in appreciation of his many years of service. According to one report, he “was equal to the occasion and thanked the scholars in each room.” His immediate successor did not have a fireman’s license and, not being permitted to restart the fires on the cold morning of May 17, 1904, the school had to be closed. Much to the delight of the students, an “engineer from the state farm was sent up and the building was heated for the afternoon session.” The new janitor only stayed for a year and was replaced by Frederick A. McFarlin, who came from the west and was highly recommended. 106

One advantage for the town in renting the Academy building was that the trustees were solely responsible for making any repairs or structural renovations. Owing to the major projects of the 1890s, only relatively small maintenance undertakings were necessary in the very early 1900’s. In 1902, for instance, passersby most likely took note of the new coat of paint on the school, while the students inside found their intellectual pursuits more pleasant and, hopefully, more productive on the new desk covers. The most extensive exterior and interior repairs and alterations of the decade came in the summer of 1908, during the

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106 RI, July 19, 1901, Oct. 10, 1902, April 29, May 6, 13, 20, 1904, Sept. 1, 1905; Herbert K. Pratt, The First One Hundred Years, no pagination; this brief, history of the Bridgewater Fire Department can be found in the historical files in the Memorial Library.
renewed drive to turn the Academy building over to the town. Perhaps some skeptics might have seen the improvements made by the trustees as a way to show their ability to maintain and, indeed, improve the high school building. Whatever the motivation, the trustees contracted with George A. Turner to do some remodeling of the exterior of the building and some repairing of its interior. A solid cement foundation replaced the wooden one under the portico facing the Common, new steps installed, and the six Corinthian columns with "their beautiful carved capitals" strengthened. To conform with the six Corinthian capitals on the front section of the edifice, four similar capitals were put on the corners of older part of the structure or what was known as the "ell". New pilasters were placed around the building and two new coats of paint added greatly to its overall appearance. Passersby with aesthetic sensibilities were surely elated when a space for rubbish at the rear of the building was enclosed with lattice work, removing a much talked about eyesore in the village's center. 107

Students and teachers in the fall of 1908 certainly took notice of the interior improvements made during the summer. Some ceilings and walls were replastered, the woodwork was stained, and the upstairs doors were rearranged to swing outward from the rooms, insuring greater safety in case of a fire. No faculty had any qualms about the building of a teacher's sanitary "into part of the type writing room," although the town's unwillingness to spend money on a sewerage system in this decade meant a new large cesspool also had to be constructed in the school yard. With these changes and the additions in 1909-1910 of a new floor and steel ceiling in the assembly hall, the Academy Building was more than fit to serve as Bridgewater's high school for many years to come. 108

The graduation ceremony, however, could not be accommodated by this building. Fortunately, the Town Hall, a few steps away, was available for this annual June event, held during a weekday evening. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is hard to imagine that upwards of four hundred people were able to crowd into the second floor hall of this edifice, a structure which, by the way, many saw in the early 1900's as not reflective of Bridgewater's growing population and economic expansion. But with a little


artistic effort, the stage each year was transformed into a space worthy of the grandeur associated with this academic highlight for the twenty or so students who had spent four years (not counting the extra ninth grade experience in the Model School) engaged in scholarly pursuits leading to a high school diploma, an attainment not as common as it would become in future decades. Typical of the newspaper accounts describing the platform at graduations was the following one in 1901: “At the back of the stage was a great mass of ferns in which was inlaid in silver letters the class motto, ‘Immer Vorwarts.’ Around the arch was hung violet drapery with ferns above, and the platform was banked with green. Around its edge was a trail of white roses and carnations, and four large stands of pink and white peonies stood in front of the graduation class.”

For a small graduation class in a small town, the ceremonies were also impressive. The exercises always included an invocation by one of the clergy in the town; Reverend Charles Edward Stowe, minister of the Central Square Church, rendered the one in 1906. Under the direction of the music supervisor, vocal and instrumental pieces of well-known composers, such as Beethoven, Faure, Gounod, Mendelssohn, Strauss and Sullivan added immeasurably to the solemnity of the exercises. Graduation speakers, including deans from Harvard and Brown or an agent of the State Board of Education, were sometimes the highlights of the day. One suspects that many graduates listened more intently to the words of their principal and the superintendent of schools, who had their offices in the Academy building and knew the individual graduates. Until 1905, the superintendent awarded the degrees, but starting with J. Gardner Bassett this pleasant task was taken over by the chairman of the town’s school committee, perhaps because it was deemed more appropriate that it should done by an elected town official. Graduating students were also involved in the ceremonies, sometimes presenting essays on some current topic. In 1905, for instance, Myron W. Thompson delivered an address on “The Future Government of the Philippines,” arguing against the policy of imperialism.

The most poignant moment for the graduating seniors, of course, was the calling of their names.

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109 BI, June 28, 1901.
and the receiving of their diplomas, with their proud and applauding parents and friends looking on. While the graduates were divided into groups according to the three courses of study, the preparatory, general, or English, those students going on to four year colleges received special recognition by their names being listed first in the program along with their chosen institutions of higher education, a practice that undoubtedly reflected the historical connections at this time between the traditions of the private academies of the nineteenth century and the growing number of public high schools in the 1890's and early 1900's.

With an annual graduation class of around twenty or so during the early 1900's, it was only natural that there was a certain esprit de corps between those who had the opportunity to work hard for a high school diploma. The annual tradition of conducting Class Day exercises during the week before graduation began in 1905, although one alumnus, trying to set the historical record straight, recalled his small class of six having held such a day fourteen years earlier. Some students certainly felt a combination of nostalgia and anticipation as their classmates presented the class history, prophecy, and poem. By the early 1900's, it had also become traditional for the graduating class to present a gift to its alma mater. One wonders whatever happened to the handsome statue of "The Winged Victory," placed in the senior room by the Class of 1902. The graduates of a particular class continued to keep in touch by holding class reunions, quite often centering around a dance at the Town Hall and featuring the music of the Bridgewater Band led by Robert H. Ferguson, who in 1909 took over his father's shoe store on the eastern side of Central Square. Commencing in 1905, the idea of establishing an alumni association began in earnest. Led by graduates of the high school, including Priscilla Alden, Alice Bowman, Ethel Boyden, Ernest A. Burrill, James J. Gorman, Thomas Hooper, and Herbert Marshall, the over four hundred alumni still living in late December of 1907 could note with pleasure the formation of the Bridgewater High School Alumni Association and for the annual dues of twenty-five cents could officially become members of this organization. 111

The Evening School

Before leaving our discussion of the Bridgewater public school system between 1901 and 1910, a

111 BI, July 5, 1901, July 4, 1902, April 7, June 30, Nov. 7, 1905, June 22, 1906, June 20, Nov. 22, 29, Dec. 6, 1907, Jan. 3, 31, March 6, April 24, May 1, 1908.
word or two about the creation of an evening school in 1908, established mostly for the benefit of recently-arrived residents of the town, who saw the need to receive some formal instruction in English and other basic subjects taught at the primary-grammar school level. Figures from the Massachusetts Census of 1905 give some indication of the need for this type of educational endeavor. Similar to other Bay State communities in this decade, the percent of Bridgewater's foreign-born population increased as immigrants flocked to Americans shores. While the foreign-born Irish numbered 724 in 1905 and accounted for almost one-third of the town's foreign-born population, the demographic configuration of Bridgewater showed some early signs of change as immigrants, especially from the non-speaking English countries of Eastern and Southern Europe, began to trickle into the town, lured by employment possibilities in the town's shoe and iron-steel industries. By the middle of the decade, there seems to have been a consensus that an evening school would not only be of economic and social benefit to the town and its new non-English speaking residents, but also help to assimilate them into the civic life of the community by making them "better citizens." 

In late 1907, a petition signed by sixty-six residents of the town was presented to the school committee asking that an evening school be started. Those making the request were "foreigners employed at the McElwain factory and other manufacturing concerns of the town." The initial response from the board was positive, and Superintendent Record was directed to investigate the feasibility of having evening classes to aid some of the town's new residents acquire "a better knowledge of English than they can procure in the usual haphazard way of picking it up that is common among them." After looking into what methods other towns were pursuing and receiving assurances from four or so Bridgewater teachers in the outlying schools that they would be willing to do the teaching for compensation, Record made a positive report, the implementation of which was facilitated by an unexpended balance in the town's school budget. The project moved ahead, and in early January 1908 more electric lights were placed in the classrooms in the Academy Building where the instruction was to take place.

On the evening of January 6, 1908, thirty-five of the sixty-six signers of the petition began their

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lessons that were held three nights a week from seven until nine o’clock, and that was after most of them undoubtedly had worked a long day in one of the town’s factories. Although the Polish (called Polanders at this time) and the Armenians numbered only eighty-two and twenty-two, respectively, of Bridgewater’s 1,927 foreign-born residents in 1905, they made up most of the class, which included two girls, that began attending Bridgewater’s first evening school during the cold month of January 1908. The project flourished from the start. Attendance soon increased to about one hundred and the town continued to allocate a few hundred dollars annually so that some of Bridgewater’s new residents could better adjust to a new place and way of life. Beginning in the fall of 1908, to make sure that the town’s money would not be wasted by some students not attending a good number of the evening sessions, a deposit of two dollars was required of all students, but would be returned to those whose attendance record was ninety percent or better. 114

Most citizens of the town undoubtedly agreed with the school committee’s evaluation in 1908 that the evening school was a good thing for the new residents and the community in general. While there was little or no controversy over the establishment of classes to help some of the town’s immigrants to speak and write English, the use of such words in the contemporary sources of the early 1900’s as “the alien population,” “foreigners”, and “them” are indicative of a town that was on the verge of seeing its homogenous population of Yankee-English and Irish give way to one composed of many more ethnic groups. The hope was that the evening school would play a role in assimilating new immigrants into the established society. Similar to the millions of immigrants pouring into the United States between 1901 and 1910, the new residents of Bridgewater were torn between becoming Americanized and retaining some of their cultural ways acquired in their early lives spent in the countries of their origins.

Bridgewater State Normal School-1901-1910

Bridgewater’s public school system was only part of the town’s educational scene between 1901

and 1910. Unlike some of the larger communities in the Bay State, Bridgewater did not witness the establishment of parochial schools, but the existence of a State Normal School with its Model School of a kindergarten and grades one through nine, located only a short distance from the Common, placed Bridgewater in a unique educational position in southeastern Massachusetts. By 1901, Bridgewater had had sixty-one years in growing accustomed to the impact of this evolving state institution on the town’s physical appearance, as well as on its economic, social, cultural, political, religious, and, of course, educational institutions. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the town and the Normal School, both shaped by continuity and change, continued to have a symbiotic relationship that was usually congenial, but occasionally contentious.

The citizens of the town certainly noticed developments at the Normal School, with some changes receiving more attention than others. The decision of Albert Gardner Boyden to retire as the Normal’s principal in 1906, after forty-six years in that position, and the promotion of his son Arthur Clarke Boyden to fill the vacancy became well-known immediately while changes in the school’s faculty or curriculum during the decade most likely went unnoticed by many of Bridgewater’s inhabitants. The construction of a new gymnasium on School Street in 1904-05, the most important physical addition to the campus during the decade, caught the eye of many passersby, and for, those with extra time on their hands, its construction provided a daily diet of visual entertainment. Every September, the town’s citizens, especially those living in and around the center of the village, became aware of the growing number of young women, or “Normals” as they were often called, who strolled along the sidewalks of Central Square, having just moved into one of three dormitories and undoubtedly looking forward to the intellectual challenge and toil of the new academic year. Some of the strollers certainly stopped at Cole’s Drug Store, located on the eastern side of Central Square, to indulge themselves in some ice cream made in this popular meeting place. As the decade wore on, in what proved to be a mixed blessing, more and more of Bridgewater’s children were being educated at the Model School rather than in one of the town-run common schools, a trend that intensified the relationship between the town and the Normal School. Some in Bridgewater were quick to take advantage of the cultural offerings of this state-supported institution, in particular those presentations under the auspices of the Normal Club. Being a sports-minded town, it is not surprising that home games played in the Normal gymnasium or on the South Field were widely attended by the local inhabitants. It was
in June, however, when hundreds of non-residents flooded the town to attend the Normal's graduation exercises, or the meeting of the Normal Alumni Association, that many of Bridgewater residents realized most that in their midst was a state institution helping to connect their small community to a world beyond its own boundaries.\footnote{BI, Jan. 4, April 5, Oct. 11, 1901, April 4, 1902, Jan. 16, 1903, Jan. 26, 1906, Oct., 29, 1909; Dickinson Rich, \textit{Innocence Under the Elms}, p. 31; Mann, \"I Remember...Or Was I Told,\" \textit{Tales Around the Common}, p. 51; \textit{As We Were}, p. 144; See also \textit{One on the Normal School}.}

That Bridgewater Normal was well-established by 1901 and, indeed, had attained a state, national, and, to a degree, an international reputation can, in good measure, be credited to Albert Gardner Boyden, principal of this institution for the preparation of teachers since 1860. His association with the school had begun twelve years earlier. In 1848, the year in which the United States formally concluded its war with Mexico and two years after Bridgewater had become accessible by rail transportation, Boyden made the decision to enroll in the one-year program at Bridgewater Normal. Following his graduation in 1849, he took a postgraduate degree at the school and during the next ten years pursued an educational career which included stints of teaching at his alma mater. The first forty years of Boyden's principalship is an amazing story, one in which his name and Bridgewater Normal became almost synonymous. Indeed, any full study of the Normal School movement in America would be compelled to devote considerable attention to him, if one considers that 3,000 students graduated from Bridgewater during Boyden's watch. The first chapter of this work only touches upon the highlights of his leadership of the institution through 1900. In this author's considered judgment, a thorough study of Boyden's contribution to the movement for the formal training of public school teachers needs to be done. Perhaps it could take the form of a definitive biography.\footnote{BI, Nov. 2, 1902, Feb. 6, 1903, Feb. 12, 1904, Jan. 5, Feb. 10, April 10, 1905, Feb. 9, Aug. 31, 1906; A. G. Boyden, \"The State Normal School,\" \textit{Bridgewater Book}, pp. 31-32; Bates, \"Bridgewater Normal...\", \textit{HH}, p. 118.}

What generally can be said about the last five years of Boyden's principalship and his private and public life as a long time resident of his adopted town? In 1901, he was seventy-four years old, an age when many men have long retired or at least were coming to grips with the idea of ending their careers. Whether or not Boyden was yet thinking of passing the reins of leadership to a younger man at this point is difficult to say. But three years later, his son Arthur, who since 1896 had served as Normal's vice principal, turned...
down a “flattering offer” to become the superintendent of schools in Newton, Massachusetts, at a considerably higher salary than he was receiving at Bridgewater. Perhaps this was an indication that the father and son had discussed the issue of succession. But in the very early 1900's, Albert G. Boyden, as was his wont, was still looking ahead. While taking pride in the new campus buildings erected in the previous decade and that the institution now offered five courses of study, he began in 1901 his “agitation for a new building for a gymnasium.” Also in this year, he publicly aligned himself with the possibility that the higher requirement of all the State Normal Schools might lead to the creation of State Normal Colleges, something which in effect did happen in 1932-33 when the Normal Schools became State Teachers Colleges. During the waning years of his principalship, Boyden also continued his commitments to the well-being of his profession, town, and church, serving, for examples, as one of the vice-presidents of the American Institute of Instruction, the moderator of the town’s Central Square Congregational Society, and the chairman of a special finance committee of the town chosen in December of 1903 to rationalize and reduce Bridgewater’s expenditures.117

After presiding over the dedication on June 24, 1905, of what would later officially be named “The Albert Gardner Boyden Memorial Gymnasium,” Principal Boyden and his second wife, the former Clara Adelia Armes, who taught at Bridgewater Normal between 1871 and 1879, and whom he had married in 1897, two years after his first wife, nee Isabella Whitten Clarke, of forty-forty years had passed away, sailed to Europe for a much deserved vacation. The Boydens were home in time for the school’s opening on September 10, with the Normal’s principal at the age of seventy-eight ready for another academic year, although a bout of singles soon confined him to his house for a while. Perhaps it came as no surprise when Boyden, in his forty-sixth year at the helm, tendered his resignation to the State Board of Education on January 4, 1906, to be effective on August 1. The appointment of Arthur C. Boyden as the new principal made Albert Gardner Boyden’s decision easier, “knowing that there will be no break,” commented the Independent, “such is likely to follow the advent of new men and methods.” His resignation did not go unrecognized, words of appreciation coming from such luminaries as President Theodore Roosevelt and


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Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, who praised Boyden for sending “a stream of graduates of the Bridgewater Normal School...year by year to Harvard University to continue the studies in which they have been well grounded at Bridgewater.” The most poignant tribute to Boyden came in June of 1906, when 800 graduates returned to the campus for the convention of the Normal Association “to pay their loving respect to the retiring principal.” Boyden was undoubtedly gratified by all the adulation showered upon him, but the death of his second wife on April 19, 1906, meant that the last decade of his life was marked by a degree of loneliness. His association with Normal School did not end in 1906, however. After his retirement, he became its principal emeritus, and, despite periods of ill health in his middle eighties, he continued to teach until a short time before his death on May 30, 1915, at his home, Groveside, on corner Summer Street and Park Avenue. Not only did the Normal and Model schools close this day, but out of the respect for this beloved citizen of Bridgewater, so too did all the places of business in town during the hour of the funeral held at the Central Square Church. 

In what might be considered an act of nepotism a century later, the leadership of Bridgewater Normal school was passed from Albert Gardner Boyden to Albert Clarke Boyden in August of 1906. “In foreign countries,” commented the Bridgewater Independent, “it is customary to hand the father’s title down to the son,...but handing the toga of principalship of an institution with the standing and usefulness of the Bridgewater Normal school from father to son is very much out of the ordinary.” But the paper went on to say that the elder Boyden by “handing the reins of government to his son ...is but placing the management of the affairs in the hands of one fitted by education, temperament and environment to carry on the excellent work of the father.” The son was to have the next twenty-seven years to prove the efficacy of this evaluation.

Unlike his father, who had already entered adulthood when he first arrived in Bridgewater, Arthur Clarke Boyden was born here in 1852, the year Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose son Charles would serve as the pastor of Bridgewater’s Central Square Church in the first decade of the twentieth century, wrote her

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provocative book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Arthur C., following in his father's footsteps, graduated from the Normal school in 1871, but then went on to receive an A. M. from Amherst College in 1876. After marrying Katherine Chipman Allen of New Bedford in 1877 and teaching three years at the Chauncey Hall School in Boston, he returned to Bridgewater Normal in 1879 to teach history and science. By the time he was made the assistant principal of the institution in 1896, Boyden, who worked closely with his father, had become an important professional figure in his own right, respected in the Normal school and in wider educational circles.  

In the decade before becoming this institution's principal, Boyden was increasingly known for his professional, civic and church activities. While continuing his teaching and administrative duties, which included overall responsibility for the running of the Model School, he somehow found time to serve as the President of the Teachers' School of Science connected with the Boston Society of Natural History, give speeches such as the delightful one on "Romance in American History" before the Ousamequin Club on May 23, 1904, act as the chief organizer of the Model School's Nature Study exhibit, which won a Gold Medal Award at the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis, and, in the spring of 1906, join George Martin of the State Board of Education on a trip to the Western states to study various educational institutions. This whirl of professional activity did not preclude his active participation in town affairs as shown by his leadership roles in the work of the Fellowship Lodge of Masons, the Bridgewater Improvement Association, and the board of trustees of the public library. As his father continued to do so in these years, A. C. Boyden was deeply committed the Central Square Church, teaching the men's Bible class and taking his turn as the moderator of the church.  

Most of A. C. Boyden's principalship of Bridgewater Normal came after 1910 and will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters, but given his prior twenty-seven years of experience at the school, it is not surprising that there was a smooth transition of leadership from father to son. Realizing that part of his job was to speak and write about education and specifically the training of public school


teachers, he was always ready to so in a variety of forums. In late January of 1907, he delivered an address on “Modern Tendencies in Education,” before the Connecticut Valley Grammar Masters Association in Springfield, Massachusetts, and in that spring spoke to about 300 teachers at a teachers institute held in nearby Rockland about the teaching of history, a subject which had interested him for over three decades. Based in part upon ideas garnered from his trip to the Western states in 1906, he submitted a report to the State’s Board of Education in early June 1907, suggesting among other things that the Normal Schools in Massachusetts might take steps to prepare teachers of secondary schools, manual arts, and agriculture. Within his own institution at the end of this decade, Boyden praised the adoption of the plan of admission by high school certification since “it eliminated ... objections against the system of examinations.” Another step forward during the early years of Boyden’s tenure as principal was the decision to allow some practice teaching to be done in the schools of surrounding communities not just in the Model School. Most of the physical expansion of campus under Boyden would come after 1910, but the creation of the Natural Science Garden in 1907, thanks to a generous gift of land of nearly two acres by Albert G. Boyden, would prepare the way for the building of greenhouse in 1911. Even more exciting was the successful effort in 1910 to secure legislative approval of $175,000 for the building of a new dormitory adjoining South Field. The stories of these two additions to the campus will discussed in the chapter covering 1911 to 1920. 122

An historical monograph of Bridgewater Normal would include a thorough discussion of the individual faculty members who taught at the school from 1901 to 1910. In our look at the Town of Bridgewater for these years, only a few general points, supported by some examples, will be made concerning the teaching staff, followed by some details about those instructors who were better known in Bridgewater because of their involvement in town activities of one kind or another. Excluding the Model School, around thirty teachers served the institution for varying lengths of time during this first decade of the twentieth century, the great majority of them being single women. (The preponderance of women is even more so when the Model School teachers are included). Indeed, the number of male instructors could be counted on almost one hand. About one half of those teaching in 1901 had started their tenures at

122 BI, Feb. 1, April 19, June 7, July 12, Aug., 16, 23, 1907, April 1, May 6, June 10, 17, 1910, April 14, 1911; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 88-91; Bates, “The Normal School...,” HH , p. 119.
Bridgewater Normal before the turn of the century. Dr. Francis H. Kinnayer, born in Bavaria before Germany became one nation, educated at the Universities of Munich and Giessen, came to the United States in the 1860's, fought in the Union army, and joined the Normal faculty in 1870 as an instructor of Latin and Foreign Languages, was the school's senior faculty member in 1901. Unlike Kinnayer, who would stay at Bridgewater Normal until 1919, Isabelle S. Horne resigned in 1906, after being in charge of the department of vocal culture and reading for thirty years. Principal Boyden, who was about to retire himself, praised her “interest in the promotion of all social, dramatic, and generally uplifting enterprises undertaken by the members of the school...” 123

Some additional resignations, new appointments, and changes in professional duties altered the makeup of the faculty during this decade. In the fall of 1901, Emily C. Fisher, an instructor in English, resigned and was replaced by Mary A. Emerson, a graduate of the four years' course at Bridgewater Normal and Wellesley College. Five years later, Florence I. Davis, a biology teacher at Durfee High School in Fall River, became the head of a new department of biology and gardening at Bridgewater Normal—an interesting appointment since at this time male faculty generally taught the courses in the sciences and mathematics. In 1910, Elizabeth H. Perry, who roomed in first Tillinghast Hall, resigned, receiving praise as an artist and teacher of drawing. After serving as the first principal of the Model School from 1891 to 1899, Lillian A. Hicks went on to become the Supervisor of Training, an important position which she held until 1910. 124

While some in the town followed such academic matters, perhaps many more were aware of the various roles played by some faculty in the affairs of the town. Those civic-minded citizens who attended the public ceremonies on Memorial Day, the one holiday at this time financed by town funds, must have been impressed by the passionate commitment which Professor Kinnayer showed in presiding over the annual ceremony in honor of the Revolutionary and Civil War veterans who gave their lives for the nation. On a lighter note, some in the audience must have wondered how long it took him to grow his beard, an impressive one even in an age when it was common for men to sport such an adornment. Over a decade after Kinnayer joined the faculty, William D. Jackson, who was educated in the Bridgewater schools and

123 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 92, 101-102, 153-155; BI, Oct. 7, 1904, Sept. 29, 1905; As We Were, pp. 16, 67.
124 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 73, 67, 92, 100; BI, Sept. 29, 1905.
taught for a short time in England, came to Bridgewater Normal where, until 1926, he taught physics and mathematics. In addition to his teaching, Jackson was very active in the affairs of the town between 1901 and 1910, serving, for examples, as the head of the Trustees of the Public Library beginning in 1906, the treasurer of the Central Square Church, a director of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, and a member of the executive committee of the Village Improvement Society, later called the Bridgewater Improvement Association.  

A year before the dedication of the new Normal building in the fall of 1891, Harlan P. Shaw started his career at Bridgewater Normal as an instructor in chemistry and physiography. Some in the town might have been aware that he published a number of school textbooks, but perhaps he was better known in Bridgewater as a house builder and real estate dealer, although he was quick to point out that “his building interests was only a side line.” Still, in December of 1908, for example, he played a leading role in a syndicate of Bridgewater people that bought a seventy-two acre estate in West Bridgewater, on which suitable homes for hundreds of Brockton factory employees were to be built. In Bridgewater itself, Shaw erected twenty-three houses by 1910. Despite a busy life in teaching and this “side line” between 1901 and 1910, Shaw was an important and active member of the newly-formed Baptist Church in Bridgewater and over a number of years held many town positions, including his long tenure, 1911-1923, as a member of the school committee.

Equally well-known in Bridgewater during the first decade of the twentieth century was Frank E. Gurney, who received his early education in the Brockton public schools, spent six-months at Amherst College, where he received a special certificate for excellence in Latin, and graduated from Bridgewater Normal. In September of 1891, just as this school’s new building was being dedicated, he began a twenty-three year career at his alma mater, teaching astronomy, bookkeeping, algebra, geometry, and even assisting in the Latin classes. After his marriage to Cornelia Churchill of Brockton in 1893, he moved to Bridgewater,

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where, before his sudden death in March of 1914, he emerged as one of the town’s most committed and energetic citizens. His positions included: secretary and treasurer of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, treasurer of the Central Square Church, secretary of the board of trustees of the Academy building, trustee of the public library, and member of the executive committee of the Bridgewater Improvement Association. In this latter position, he spearheaded the B. I. A.’s efforts to improve garbage collection in the town and to erect a granite drinking fountain at the northern end of Central Square. Gurney’s greatest aesthetic contribution to Bridgewater, however, was the house he erected near the campus on Summer Street, a few years before his death. This house is patterned after Washington’s Mount Vernon and remains one of the most beautiful residences in the town. 127

In February of 1897, around the time the trolleys began to link Bridgewater to other nearby communities, Charles P. Sinnott started his teaching career at Bridgewater Normal, replacing Frank F. Murdock, who had been appointed the principal of the new Normal School at North Adams. A native of Duxbury, Massachusetts, Sinnott was an 1881 graduate of the four year course at Bridgewater Normal and of Harvard in 1889 and had held teaching positions in Normal schools in Wisconsin and Georgia before returning to his alma mater to accept the chairmanship of Geology and Geography. Author of several books in his field, he, while not as active in town affairs as some of his colleagues at this time, nonetheless, was able to commit some energy to other activities beside his duties at the Normal School. At various times between 1901 and 1910, for instance, he was on the executive committee of the Bridgewater Improvement Association. In 1908, he collaborated with Gurney as one of the trustees of the syndicate to buy the West Bridgewater Farm on which houses for Brockton workers were to be built. Sinnott, who was to live until 1943, was described in 1916 in the Bridgewater Book Illustrated as: “An able educator and prominent in civic and social life.” 128

127 Bl, Jan. 24, 1902, April 17, 1908, June 25, 1909, April 15, 1910, April 3, 1914; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 63, 101, 154; “Ninth Annual Meeting, April, 27, 1909,” Bridgewater Improvement Society, p. 33, unpublished; Townscape Institute, Form 250, pp. 575-576; there is some confusion in this last source; Bl. April 3, 1914; See the section on the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, 1902-1910.
The participation of the female faculty at the Normal School in town activities between 1901 and 1910 was far more limited and generally of a different nature than that of their male colleagues, due in good measure to a climate of opinion and social mores that limited women’s involvement in politics and professional fields such as banking, real estate, and the law. Moreover, women generally could not vote in town elections and could not hold elective town offices other than as a school committee member and a trustee of the public library. The establishment of the Ousamequin Club in 1898, the Bridgewater Improvement Association in 1901, and the Bridgewater Visiting Nurse Association in 1902 did provide some opportunities for women on the Normal faculty to contribute to the town’s cultural and civic life. By 1901, the Ousamequin Club, the early history of which is discussed in , had emerged as the leading women’s organization in promoting the cultural life of Bridgewater, and it is not surprising that several of the female faculty at Bridgewater Normal joined this club and, indeed, in some cases were very active members. Anne M. Wells, who came to the Normal School in 1893 to head the Kindergarten-Primary Course, served as the Club’s treasurer in the early part of the decade, and in 1904 Clara C. Prince, a teacher of music and mathematics at the Normal since 1879, served as one of the organization’s vice-presidents. Other faculty members through talks and committee work made valuable contributions to the Club’s programs. In October of 1903, Elizabeth H. Perry, mentioned earlier, gave a lecture to the organization on “Arts and Crafts,” a movement much in vogue at the time. Anna Brown, an instructor of expression, addressed the Club on the topic of the monologue shortly after joining the Normal faculty in 1907. M. Alice Emerson, cited above, used her professional expertise by serving on the organization’s literary committee. Added to the leadership role in the Ousamequin Club in the early 1900’s of Flora T. Little, who was an art teacher and supervisor of drawing in the town and Model schools, the contributions of the Normal faculty to this organization helped promote a closer relationship between, what we would label today, “town and gown.”

Compared with their male counterparts on the Normal faculty, the female instructors, with the

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exception of Flora T. Little of the Model School, did not play a major role in the Bridgewater Improvement Association between 1901 and 1910, a bit surprising considering how important women were in establishing and supporting this organization in the early 1900's. Indeed, the realization of an improvement society must be credited in good measure to the Ousamequin Club. L. Eveline Merritt, who came to the Normal School in 1895 to assist in teaching art, was an early member of the Village Improvement Society and was elected to the executive board of the Bridgewater Improvement Association for the 1906-1907 year, but her service was cut short when she resigned from the Normal in July of 1907. Clara Prince, cited above, was also a member of this organization, serving on an appointive committee in 1910 to solicit new members for the association. The other organization which owed its origin to the Ousamequin Club was the Bridgewater Visiting Nurse Association formed in 1902, but not incorporated until 1910. Again, Mrs. Little's role in this organization was pivotal, especially in her capacity as vice-president. But the commitment of Anne M. Wells also needs to be highlighted. This member of the Normal faculty was a chartered member of this organization and served on its executive committee until at least 1910. 130

A few obvious conclusions can be drawn from this admittedly limited and prosaic discussion of the contributions of the Normal faculty to the communal life of Bridgewater in the first decade of the twentieth century. Despite busy professional lives as teachers and scholars, some members of this state institution felt compelled for a variety of reasons to serve their community in ways that not only benefited the town, but at the same time enriched their own lives, socially, culturally, and economically. As we have seen, both male and female faculty members contributed to the well-being of the town, although generally in different ways. Their involvement in town affairs did not go unnoticed, especially since that even by 1910 the town's population still only numbered between seven and eight thousand. Without having done a statistical survey, the present writer feels safe in averring that a much higher percent of the faculty in these years lived in Bridgewater then would proved to be true in the ensuing decades, when the ubiquitous automobile allowed many Americans to live miles away from their places of employment. Living in the community where they taught certainly had something to do with some members of the Normal faculty taking an interest in and

making a commitment to a better communal life for the Town of Bridgewater during the early 1900’s.

What can be said about the Normal School students during the early 1900’s and their general impact on the town? Commenting in September of 1906 on the fall return of students to the campus, an annual occurrence of more than half a century by this time, the Bridgewater Independent approvingly wrote: “Next week will see an influx of students to commence the school year at the Normal. All will be glad to welcome back the young people for their advent adds much to the life of the town in a number of ways.” Those citizens who had a room to rent to a student not able to secure one at the Normal dormitories were especially grateful for the added income. Herself a Bridgewater High and Normal graduate, Louise Dickinson Rich’s account of the town’s reaction to the September return of the “Normals,” on the other hand, presents a different view. “The streets were full of them, walking six abreast and crowding resentful taxpayers into the gutters,” she writes, adding that the “town was of two minds about the Normals.” “They did bring trade, such as it was...,” she admitted, but then went on to say that “the consensus was that that didn’t give them the license to act as if they owned the place,” simply “because they bought a few peanuts at Hayes’ or a banana split at Casey’s.” Perhaps some town residents also might have resented the use of Carver Pond on Summer Street by Normal students if it led to crowding at this popular spot known for its boating, fishing, swimming, and picnicking grounds. Thankfully, at least one problem for the town had not yet emerged. Few students, if any, yet arrived in Bridgewater by automobile, creating the traffic jams so common in the decades to come.131

Compared to the ten thousand or so students attending Bridgewater State College in the early twenty-first century, the size of the student body of the Bridgewater Normal School in the early 1900’s was small indeed. When the new buildings were erected in the 1890’s, it had been anticipated that the school would grow to about two hundred and fifty students. In the 1906-1907 academic year the number of pupils did reach this mark, perhaps not an inconsiderable achievement in light of the opening of four new normal schools in Massachusetts by this time. By 1909-1910, the enrollment was three hundred, the largest in the history of the school and included a higher number of students who could not be accommodated in the three

131 BI, Sept. 19, 1902, Sept. 6, 1906, Sept. 13, 1907; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, p. 31; A. C. Boyd, Memorial Volume, pp. 73-74; As We Were, p. 74.
dormitories. 132

By far, the largest number of students at the institution were young women taking the two-year course to qualify for teaching in the state's public elementary and grammar schools. Typical of the imbalance in the numbers of men and women students are the figures of 1902, showing that out of the 109 students taking the entrance exams only nine were male. Throughout the decade, the annual enrollment figures included a small number of experienced teachers and college or normal school graduates who came to the campus to take special elective or advanced courses; in 1903 these students totaled twenty, a number that increased to almost sixty by 1908. Not surprisingly, the great majority of students in this decade came from Massachusetts. Yet, one enrollment compilation indicates 606 students from twenty-three others states and forty-five students from eleven foreign countries had attended Bridgewater Normal during its first sixty years. In the early 1900's some foreign students continued to take advantage of what the school had to offer in the way of training teachers as did some of the new graduates of Bridgewater High School. In September of 1903, almost a quarter of Bridgewater High's graduating class of twenty-one was in the Normal's entering class, including Edward Allen Boyden, son of Assistant Principal Boyden. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, a special course of study for those planning to go to the Normal school was created in the town's high school in 1910, another indication of the symbiotic relationship between town and Bridgewater Normal. 133

No attempt will be made here to describe and analyze the curriculum of the Normal School in any detail as it evolved into what it was by the early 1900's, but a few salient points are in order. In 1865, as the Civil War was coming to an end, Massachusetts, aware that a one-year course at a Normal School was not sufficient to educate "thoroughly" teachers to staff the Commonwealth's public primary and grammar schools, mandated that all Normal students had to take at least a two-year course of study in order to receive a diploma. Those taking this program studied a smattering of subject matter that at the time was the core of what was taught in the first eight grades of the public schools. Most importantly, these prospective teachers were introduced to the subject of psychology and teaching techniques, specifically designed to develop the reading, writing, and arithmetic skills of the students at primary-grammar school level. During the last three

132 BI, Sept. 16, 1903, June 7, 1907, Sept. 10, 1909; see chapter one on the Bridgewater Normal School.
133 BI, July 4, 1902, June 26, Sept. 11, 1903, Sept. 18, 1908; "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Report, 1903, p. 36; As We Were, p. 147.
decades of the nineteenth century, the curriculum at the Normal School expanded, so that by the early 1900's students were being prepared to teach other subjects, including drawing, natural sciences, geography, nature studies, physical education, and music, and, in a general way, to be concerned with the moral training of the state's children. By the early twentieth century, the thinking and writings of John Dewey on psychology and education surely influenced the Normal curriculum, as the ideas of Johann Heinich Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator, had done during the early years of the school. 134

The students of Bridgewater Normal were fortunate in doing practice teaching at the Model School, which, beginning in 1894, was housed in a new extension of the main building, itself only three years old. This experience allowed for a degree of specialization since each student chose a certain grade for his or her apprentice teaching. With one of the few kindergartens in Plymouth County, the Model School of Bridgewater Normal was able to train a small number of students for this level of instruction. It also meant that Bridgewater, which sent many of its children to the Model School, had an advantage in this relatively new level of education. Still, training at the Model School did not completely prepare those students who started their careers in the small schoolhouses in towns like Bridgewater where children of different ages and grades occupied the same classroom. As the Normal enrollment increased, the decision in 1907-1909 to allow some students to do their apprentice teaching in the public schools of nearby communities was a particularly necessary and far-reaching one. 135

By the early 1900's, the Normal Schools of Massachusetts, including Bridgewater's, had long offered other programs besides the one training beginning primary and grammar school teachers. In 1869, four years after instituting the two-year requirement, the State Board of Education voted "that a supplemental course of study, occupying two years, be introduced into each of the four Normal Schools, which shall comprise Latin, French, Higher Mathematics, Ethics, Natural Science, and English Literature." This four-year course of study was soon joined by one of three years, which included the two-year program

135 BI, June 24, 1904, June 30, 1905, April 19, 1907, July 1, 1910; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 91; As We Were, pp. 25, 59; see chapter one on the Bridgewater Normal School and chapter two on the Bridgewater outlying schools.
and electives from advanced studies. These more advanced programs served a number of purposes. The need to staff the growing number of public high schools in the state, including the one in Bridgewater, made it necessary to have trained teachers with a greater mastery of subject matter in various academic fields. Also, some students, as cited above, took these advanced courses of studies to prepare themselves for entering colleges which offered degrees, something talked about, but not yet done by the Normal Schools. Joining some other institutions of higher learning, Harvard in 1906 began to grant "full privileges, with credit according to the work done in the Normal School." It also worked the other way with "a number of college graduates" taking "their professional preparation in the normal schools." Whatever motivated students to take these longer and more advanced courses of study, their numbers at Bridgewater Normal steadily increased as evidenced by the diplomas presented each June. By 1907, out of a total of ninety-four degrees, twenty-two were granted to students in these three and four-year programs, compared to only seven in 1901. It should be kept in mind, however, that almost two-thirds of the diplomas in 1907 went to students who had taken the two-year course. 136

Bridgewater Normal was also concerned with enabling college and Normal school graduates and teachers with five years' experience to enhance their command of subject matter and pedagogical skills. Each year between 1901 and 1910, a small number of certificates were given to students in these categories who took a one-year program of special elective courses. 1905 was a banner year with seven students receiving certificates. Teachers' Institutes, held throughout the state and under the direction of the Secretary of the Board of Education, was another way Bridgewater Normal contributed to teaching effectiveness in the state's public schools. Its faculty spread the influence of the institution by serving "as instructors, especially in the subjects of nature study, history, geography, elementary science and English." In Middleboro, on October 3, 1902, for examples, A. C. Boyden and C. P. Sinnott participated in one of these institutes, speaking on teaching history and geography, respectively, in grades four through nine. Indeed, the outlines used by the Bridgewater teachers at these meetings "were in great demand." Sinnott was also among a small number of Bridgewater faculty who taught in the summer school at Hyannis Normal School.

during the first decade of the twentieth century. 137

Most citizens of Bridgewater were not aware in any detail of the evolution of the Normal’s curriculum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The physical transformation of the institution was another matter, since it was easy enough to take the short walk from the Common and, in a few minutes, see the major changes in a campus which at the turn of the century encompassed about sixteen acres. In 1901, some older citizens still remembered the construction of the wooden buildings of the early Normal school, but many more had fresh memories of the large brick buildings erected in the 1890’s which, in effect, created a new campus. Perhaps some passersby in the early 1900’s took more pleasure in viewing the changes in Boyden Park as it became one of the town’s most beautiful spots. Sports enthusiasts noted with approval the emergence of the South Field on Grove Street, acquired by the school in 1895, as Bridgewater’s premier place for watching organized teams play baseball and football, when it was not being used as a playground for the children of the Model School. But it was the construction in 1904-1905 of the Normal gymnasium on School Street, the last building erected during the long principalship of Albert Gardner Boyden, that captured the most public attention during the first decade of the twentieth century. 138

A state-of-the-art facility for its time, this gymnasium, named in A. G. Boyden’s honor at the time of his death in 1915, was the culmination of his consistent interest in physical well-being and training. At the start of his principalship in 1860, “some outdoor sports and gymnastics” were introduced at Bridgewater Normal. The 1880’s and 1890’s witnessed a number of steps contributing to the growing interest in sports and gymnastics at the school. Boyden Park, which officially became part of campus in 1886, provided space for tennis and croquet, and the South Field on Grove Street, acquired in 1895, served as a playground for the pupils of the newly established Model School, and as a field for baseball and football, two competitive sports which were becoming very popular at the Normal and High Schools, and, indeed, in the town and the nation in general. Interest in physical training further increased in 1891 when the new Normal building

137 BI, May 31, 1901, May 16, June 3, Aug. 15, 1902, June 30, 1905, Aug. 20, 1910; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 73-74; As We Were, p. 52.
138 The Townscape Institute, 1983, Form 202, pp. 477-479; Moore, Images of America, Bridgewater, p. 128; the description of the Albert Gardner Boyden Gymnasium under the picture on page 128 of this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence; As We Were, pp. 28-29; see chapter one on the Bridgewater Normal School.
included a facility in the basement for the new game of basketball and Swedish gymnastics under the
direction of Frank F. Murdock. Two years later, Bessie L. Barnes started her eleven-year tenure as an
instructor in physical training, soon becoming “beloved” and highly respected at Bridgewater Normal.
Despite these advancements in this field, Principal Boyden was acutely aware at the beginning of the new
century that the school was not providing adequate physical training for its students, most of whom were
young women, as they prepared for teaching in the Commonwealth’s public schools. 139

Arguing that such training was “indispensable to the complete command of the body as the
instrument of the mind,” this Principal of forty years began to agitate in 1901 for a new physical training
facility. He pointed out to the state authorities that the room in the basement of the school’s main building,
“with its cramped space and lack of “baths and dressing rooms…..,” no longer served the needs of an
expanding school. Fortunately for the Normal School, the Unitarian Church was showing an interest at this
time in selling the lot of land directly in front of the church on the corner of Summer and School Streets.
Seizing the opportunity, Boyden began negotiating with the church to buy the land as a site for a new
gymnasium and in general “to protect the future interests of the school….“ In the short run, however, there
were obstacles to overcome, and it would be two more years before the project got underway. 140

There was some opposition to the erection of a gymnasium, especially at this location, in the town,
the church, and the state legislature. Admitting that this spot would be a convenient one for the Normal
School, the Bridgewater Independent wrote on December 20, 1901, “that a building of any sort would hurt
the looks of …one of the most beautiful corners of Bridgewater.” In contrast to its later support for the new
gymnasium, the paper continued its editorial by saying : “The old graveyard is a beautiful, if somewhat grim
tract of land, and with the strip owned by the church should be kept free of buildings.” From the beginning
of this controversy, some residents of the town proposed that the town should buy the lot to prevent any
structure from being placed on it. Indeed, in early 1902, several citizens started a drive to raise money by a
popular subscription for the purpose of purchasing the lot from the church. It was even reported that
Principal Boyden would not “buy the land for the state if there was a strong feeling among the townspeople

139 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 76, 154; As We Were, pp. 27-28, 133, 135-137.
140 BL, Dec. 20, 1901; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 76.
Meanwhile, a special church meeting was held on February 3, 1902, to decide whether or not to sell the land to the Commonwealth. J. Gardner Bassett, owner of the new Bridgewater Brick Company, made a motion that the land under discussion be sold to the state for $3,500. Six members attending the meeting opposed the motion, and it was reported that one of them went so far as to offer contributing "one tenth of the purchase price toward saving the lot...." Fifteen members supported Bassett's proposal despite the opposition of Flora P. Townsend (she married Walter S. Little on September 6, 1902), who, it was said, pointedly remarked that Mrs. Georgianna Cook, one of the motion's supporters, was married to one of the town's brick makers. (Presumably, it was thought that any new gymnasium would be made of brick). Whatever the truth of this story, what was apparent by this time was that local opposition would not be able to thwart the project from moving forward. The question now was whether the General Court would appropriate the money to buy the land and then vote to finance the building of a new gymnasium for Bridgewater Normal. 142

Getting the state to purchase the lot appears not to have been a problem, but getting the General Court to appropriate a considerable amount of money for the construction of new gymnasium at Bridgewater Normal was not so easy. By early April of 1902, a sum of not more than $3,500, to be expended by the State Board of Education, was made available to the school. When Principal Boyden proceeded, however, to ask the General Court for a sum of $55,000 for the building project, some legislators were more than surprised, inquiring if a "much smaller sum" would suffice. "No," he replied, "we had rather do without unless we could have a good one." But the matter began to move forward in early 1903 when George A. Turner, a citizen of Bridgewater and its rookie representative in the state legislature, introduced a resolution asking for nearly $60,000 for the new gymnasium and some other improvements at Bridgewater Normal. By this time, the Bridgewater Independent was supporting the project, writing optimistically: "The legislature is apt to be generous in granting appropriations for the normal schools, and it is very probable that the school here will be granted the sum asked for.... This will add about $60,000

worth of value to the property in the town, and will unquestionably be an architectural feature as well.” Admitting that the new gymnasium would not add to the taxable property, it would, the newspaper went on to say, “indirectly benefit the town as much as if it were.” In the middle of March, after some members of the house and senate education committees came to Bridgewater to inspect the site for the proposed gymnasium, the house committee unanimously gave its support for a new facility. “It has been many years,” commented the Independent, “since a committee from the general court has made a visit to this town.” Yet, despite the optimism, events did not unfold as smoothly as anticipated.143

“May Not Get Money” was the title of a short article in the Independent on April 17, referring to the House of Representative ways and means committee’s refusal to support a bill to fund a gymnasium, an electric light plant, and a coal shed for the Bridgewater Normal. Representative Turner remained undaunted, telling a local reporter: “If physical exercise is a necessary part of education—and I think the modern system considers that it is—then the appropriation...is warranted.” Although not alone in the fight to overcome the opposition of ways and means committee, considered the “watchdog” of the treasury, he led a successful fight to secure the support for the measure on the floor of the House of Representatives.144

Backed by the education committee, representatives from Plymouth County, most of the House’s leaders, his constituents in Bridgewater, and Principal Boyden, Turner confidently argued, in his maiden speech in the General Court, why the appropriation should be supported, pointing out to its critics that a new draft of the bill provided for the payment to be spread equally over two years. Reflecting the views of Principal Boyden, Turner noted the inadequacy of the present physical training facility, especially when it came to locker rooms. By way of illustration, he pointed out that a couple of “days a week most of the girls who do not live in the school buildings are obliged to attend their classes wearing two skirts, their gymnasium suits under their street clothes.” By combining the number of children attending the Model School and those students enrolled at Bridgewater Normal, he could accurately say: “There are now 700 pupils at the school who are being educated, and who need physical training.” Turner ended his speech by reminding his listeners that the “Commonwealth and the country is dependent on the young men and women

143 BI, April 4, 1902, Jan. 30, March 20, April 17, 1903; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 76.  
144 BI, April 17, 1903.
who are growing to maturity; we should see that their foundations are substantially laid." On April 21, in what was considered to be "the biggest defeat of the ways and means committees" in several years, the House of Representatives by a voice vote overwhelmingly agreed to finance a new gymnasium for Bridgewater Normal. Representative Turner could rightfully take much of the credit for the bill's passage in this branch of the General Court.  

Following this victory, the State Senate, thanks to the work of Senator Pratt and the approval of the ways and mean committee, voted for the appropriation in early May. A week later, Governor John L. Bates, supporting his fellow Republicans, who controlled the General Court, signed the bill providing the funds to erect a new gymnasium at Bridgewater Normal, the school's first major building project of the twentieth century. As is often the case, the actual construction was delayed a bit. In early June, surveyors began to take measurements for the new gymnasium, and it was predicted that the work would get underway in the summer. The townspeople were reminded of what was coming when a Normal force at the end of July began removing several large shade trees on corner of Summer and School Street. There appears to have been little or no protest at this point to the coming change to this beautiful landscape so familiar to Bridgewaterites since the early eighteenth century. Most citizens had come to accept that what was to happen at this corner was a fait accompli; in some cases, even as a sign of progress. Perhaps others in the town were more concerned with diseases that had begun to ravage the trees all over the town, but especially in nearby Central Square.  

The project finally got started in November of 1903. McNeeland Bros., a Bridgewater company, was chosen to do the excavation for the cellar while F. D. Williams of Taunton was awarded the building contract. It was hoped that if the work was carried on as quickly as possible, the facility would be completed during the following summer, a projection that proved to be overly optimistic. Since many townspeople enjoyed watching the construction of the gymnasium, they were most likely not as concerned with meeting deadlines as the school officials and the company doing the work. All phases of the project drew onlookers, but none more so than the placing of the steel arches for the roof and the skillful work of the

145 BI, April 24, 1903.
146 BI, May 6, 13, June 12, July 31, 1903.
rivers early in May of 1904, usually a beautiful time of year in Bridgewater to be out-of-doors. Not as appealing and certainly not as readily exposed to public viewing was the work done, after some delay, by the steamfitters in the late summer of that year. By the late fall, the concrete sidewalk around the almost completed building was laid, and, shortly thereafter, the grading of the lawns was done.\textsuperscript{147}

By the spring of 1905, the new gymnasium was ready for inspection and occupation. On the evening of April 25, the Normal faculty, including the teachers at the Model School, were given an opportunity to view the new building. Included in the list of invitees were the wives of the male faculty, but as far as I can tell, the single women instructors, who made up the largest part of the Normal teaching staff, were not invited to bring a guest of their choosing. Elizabeth F. Gordon, an instructor in Physical Training, who was appointed as the successor of Bessie L Barnes, was in charge of this evening event at which a party of about thirty-five got a chance to take stock of the new gymnasium and “then partake of ices and cake.” Four days later, many of the town’s citizens accepted Principal Boyden’s invitation to come and see what was considered “to be one of the best arranged and equipped gymnasiums in the state.” The students at Bridgewater Normal also got their turn to see the new facility when they and the faculty “passed a pleasant evening in the new gymnasium” on May 5, a get-together especially enjoyable for Principal Boyden since his grandson, Allen, then a student at Normal, teamed up with a classmate, Chauncey Waldron, in the role of a trick elephant. Watching a women’s basketball game baptize the new facility on May 17, undoubtedly gave some students an even better appreciation of the latest facility on the Normal campus.\textsuperscript{148}

What would these first visitors to the new gymnasium have noticed about this latest architectural addition to the Normal School, which, by the way, is now the oldest structure on the campus of Bridgewater State College? Facing the front of the building on School Street, it was obvious that it was mainly made of brick and was covered with a slate shingle roof, both features of the main campus edifice across the street. Not nearly as large as that building, which stretched across the present-day quadrangle almost to Grove Street, the total dimensions of the gymnasium measured ninety by seventy feet if the front projection is included, although it is doubtful if any visitor took the time to check on this. Indicative of the Queen Anne

\textsuperscript{147} BL, Nov. 13, 1903, May 6, 27, Aug. 26, Nov. 25, 1904.
\textsuperscript{148} A. C. Boyden, \textit{Memorial Volume}, pp. 76-79; BL, April 28, May 5, 12, 19, 1905.
architecture of the period, it is a somewhat ornate structure compared to the simple wooden 1845 Unitarian Church next door, built in the Greek Revival style. (One cannot help also to contrast this 1905 gymnasium with the Kelley Gymnasium of the late 1950’s). The report of the Townscape Institute of the 1980’s succinctly describes the “irregular form” of what officially became the Albert Gardner Memorial Gymnasium in 1915, writing: “Its facades are enlivened by stone string courses and round arched windows. Rising 2 ½ stories to a wide gable, its 3 bay main façade is flanked by low octagonal towers. Substantial, multi panel chimneys project from its slate shingle covered roof.”

Keeping in mind that the interior of this structure underwent changes in the 1950’s, as it was converted into the college library and then in the 1960’s into quarters for the Art Department after the Maxwell Library was erected, some general points about the inside of the building as it opened in 1905 should be noted. In the basement, which could be entered by the door on the side nearest the Unitarian Church and by another facing Summer Street, there was a “small kitchen, a janitor’s room, and baths and lockers for both girls and men.” (Notice how females and males were not accorded equal treatment in this instance by the Independent). Some of older students surely remembered the lack of certain amenities of the gymnasium in the basement of the building across the street. From this ground floor, the first and second floors could be reached by using the spiral staircases within the two towers in the front of the structure, although most students likely entered the first floor by using the main entrance on School Street, which led to a large corridor off of which were “a retiring room” and a director’s office. Directly above this area were two small meeting rooms on the second floor. Rising to the height of the building, the main part of the gymnasium’s interior had exposed brickwork and cypress sheathing. The playing court was on first floor and was encompassed by an exposed running track on the second floor.

On June 24, 1905, at the end of Albert Gardner Boyden’s forty-fifth year as the principal of the Bridgewater Normal School, the new gymnasium was dedicated. The building was crowded, although some attendees were disappointed that Governor William L. Douglas was not able to be there. With its architect, Richardson, giving the keys to George Aldrich, chairman of the State Board of Visitors, the latest addition

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149 BI, Nov. 13, 1903; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 78; Townscape Institute, 1983, Form 202, pp. 477-479.
150 BI, Nov. 13, 1903.
to the school was formally turned over to the state officials. Decorations of tricolor bunting, flags in various places, and the music provided by Ferguson's Bridgewater Band all added to the festive nature of the gathering. The intellectual significance of the occasion was highlighted in an address by Laurence L. Doggett, President of the Y. M. C. A. Training School of the Springfield, Massachusetts, who traced the history of physical training and education from the Greeks to the concepts of Friedrich W. A. Froebel, a nineteenth century German educator who had stressed "the harmonious development of soul, mind and body." Recognizing that the new gymnasium would not have been possible without the help of several members of the state legislature, a few of them, including ex-representative Turner, were also called upon to make some brief remarks. But the day really belonged to Albert Gardner Boyden. 151

Aldrich, who presided at the dedication, aptly said: "We have gathered to dedicate Mr. Boyden's latest building enterprise. He first began this enterprising career in 1861, and there has been something doing ever since." Given his long-time commitment to physical training as part of the education of the Normal school students, the seventy-eight year old principal certainly must have felt a sense of pride in his latest achievement. After speaking on "The Development of Physical Training in Bridgewater," Boyden ended his comments by thanking several members of the state legislature who had been instrumental in getting the state to approve the new gymnasium. Perhaps as he was taking part in the day's activities, Boyden thought a bit about the trip that he and his wife would be taking in the middle of July to Europe or, maybe, even about the start of the new academic year in September. And it is altogether possible that he had already decided that in a year he would relinquish his principalship, bolstered by the idea that his son, Arthur Clarke, might be asked to carry on the mission of Bridgewater Normal. Whether or not he had any inkling that the new gymnasium might some day be named in his honor, this writer does not know. One thing is for sure, however. He had no way of knowing that the new campus addition of 1905 would one-hundred years later be Bridgewater State College's oldest building. 152

In addition to the gymnasium, the premier physical addition to the Bridgewater Normal campus

152 BI, June 9, 30, 1905; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 76.
between 1901 and 1910, several other projects, either completed or anticipated, are worthy of mention. By the early 1900’s, the use of electricity as another source of lighting was well underway in Bridgewater with the Normal School being no exception. Indeed, in the summer of 1903, the state legislature agreed to provide the institution with its own lighting plant, and, by the end of July, the equipment, including the dynamo, arrived and was placed in a former ash room on the lower floor of Normal Hall (I presume the old dormitory of 1869). Within three months, the plant was ready for use and three hundred lamps installed, not only reducing the expense of lighting, but also providing a “quality of light far better than before.” (Whether this caused a marked increase in the level of student scholarship, I have no way of knowing). This lighting plant and the heating system proved to be neither adequate nor safe for a campus that, by the end of the decade, had expanded and was on the verge of adding another major dormitory (to be discussed in the next chapter). In June of 1910, the funds for this project were pretty well assured with the first expenditure going toward a new dynamo and boilers. Coal, still used for heating the campus, continued to be stored just off of Plymouth Street, on the northerly side of the railroad tracks, in sheds constructed in 1904 from the funds appropriated by the state legislature to build the gymnasium. In the summer of 1909 Bridgewater Normal received and stored one thousand tons of coal, an indication of how important this form of fuel was in the early years of the century. 153

Of a more aesthetic and educational nature than dynamos and coal sheds was the creation of a natural science garden at Bridgewater Normal in the summer of 1907. The idea for this project can be traced back to the school’s long-standing interest and leading role in the emerging nature study movement and “the natural expansion of the school garden movement which had developed so rapidly all over the country” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a more immediate sense, the laying out of this botanical garden was made possible when Principal Emeritus Boyden gave nearly two acres of land on Park Avenue to Bridgewater Normal in the spring of 1907. Many passersby soon noticed the addition of “another beautiful corner” to the Normal school grounds…,” and the Bridgewater Independent, concisely capturing its educational value, wrote: “This lot of land…will be fitted up as an out door laboratory for

biological study and experimentation. It will be used in training teachers for practical work in establishing and managing school and home gardens and will be of practical assistance in teaching Nature Study and Geography." In a similar vein in 1919, Principal Arthur Clarke Boyden, himself a leading "enthusiast" and "exponent" of nature study for many years, also praised his father's gift of land for the natural science garden, commenting that it promoted "the teaching of the elements of agriculture, horticulture and floriculture." By this time, a greenhouse had been erected on the site, the story of which will be discussed in the next chapter. 154

Townspeople and Normal students and faculty were aware of the routine maintenance and improvements of the campus grounds. By 1901, Boyden Park had become an admired part of the town, and news items about it regularly appeared in the Independent. During the first decade of the century, ice harvesting continued to be an important winter occupation in Bridgewater, and the Normal School, no longer getting its ice from a small pond on Dean Street, relied on the ice house on Campus Pond in Boyden Park. "Ice harvesting has commenced at Boyden Pond, the ice being nearly eight inches thick," reported the Independent on January 16, 1903. In the following year, the ice was so thick that it killed many fish and frogs which rose to the surface of the pond during the April thaw, providing passersby something to look at, but more work for Normal's maintenance crew as it sought to rid the surface of the water of such an ungainly sight. There were less odious tasks, such as the righting of the Park's rustic gate after it had been blown over by a wind storm in late November of 1901. Tennis players in the town and school were undoubtedly happy with the courts laid out in Boyden Park in September of 1902. Showing his interest in avian activities, Principal Boyden pleased the town's bird lovers, including Emma A. Hermann, Bridgewater's leading milliner, by placing "a bird house of elaborate construction" in the park in March of 1903. Thanks to the ground workers, the Normal campus, including Boyden Park, looked its best during the June graduation, an annual event in which many in the town took pride. 155

154 BI, July 12, Aug. 16, 23, 1907, April 14, 1911; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 74-75, 88-91; Bates, "Bridgewater Normal School...," HH, pp. 118-119; Moore, Images of BridgewaterBridgewater, p. 125; this source includes an excellent picture of the botanical science garden, but my research indicates that the land was given to the Normal School by A. G. Boyden in 1907, and not Walter and Flora Little; As We Were, p. 30.
155 BI, Feb. 8, Nov. 29, 1901, Sept. 26, 1902, Jan. 16, March 13, 1903, April 1, 1904, July 17, 1908; Pictorial
Boyden Park was not the only part of Normal to receive attention during this decade. Park Avenue and Summer and School Streets came under the care of the town’s street department, headed by Robert J. McNeeland, but the school contributed its share to maintaining these thoroughfares. In the early spring of 1902, for example, Principal Boyden got the Normal crew to clean up the roadside of School Street, across the way from the school buildings. At the same time, fifty loads of earth were spread on South Field, something of interest not only to Normal’s students and faculty, but also to the town’s high school teams and other Bridgewater sports organizations which made use of this facility. Nor was the beauty of the school’s grounds ignored, as shown by a “large flower garden” laid out between the three main halls of the campus in July of the same year. Normal and Woodward Halls, the remaining examples of wooden buildings after 1891, were given fresh coats of paint in the summer of 1905, not long after the new brick gymnasium was dedicated. In the early 1900’s, in preparation for the coming academic year, extensive repairs and thorough cleaning of the Normal’s physical plant were usually done during the summer months because the buildings were not in constant use as they would be in later decades. 156

The care and the expansion of Normal’s campus, while mainly promoting the school’s academic goals, also allowed its students to become more involved in competitive sports during the early 1900’s. Mirroring national trends, men’s team sports became more and more an integral part of campus life, even though males were only a small part of the student body. The baseball, football, and basketball teams which represented Normal were controlled by the school’s Athletic Association; and the South Field, Boyden Park, and the new gymnasium all served as arenas for playing competitive sports as well as providing room for spectators from the town and school. 157

Starting in April and lasting until the end of the academic year in June, the Normal baseball nine had a busy season, playing games with a variety of opponents, including teams fielded by surrounding colleges, public high schools, private secondary academies, and the Normal Alumni. The home games were played on South Field along Grove Street, an adequate playing ground made more attractive in 1902 by the

History, 1987, p. 53, 1994, p. 31; As We Were, pp. 26-27; Tales Around the Common, p. 27.
157 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 122; As We Were, p. 133.
enclosing apparatus consisting of old burlap being replaced by "6-inch cedar posts and canvas...suspended by means of hooks." In the same year, the idea of constructing a small moveable grandstand on the field was suggested by some, but at this point in my research I do not know if this was ever done. In any case, the crowds attending the games could be quite large. It was reported, for instance, that over seven hundred spectators watched the Alumni team defeat the school team by a score of three to one at the biennial reunion at Bridgewater Normal in June of 1910. 158

The football season started in late September and went well into November. Reflecting Normal's status as a school somewhere between a high school and a four-year college, its football schedule included games with the same variety of teams as in baseball, with home games also being played on South Field. By the early 1900's, college football was becoming a less dangerous game, and, writing in October 1902 about a game between Bridgewater Normal and Brockton High School, the Independent could report with some satisfaction that although accidents were "numerous," they were "not serious, and in general the game was free from un-sportsmanlike conduct." One wonders if Principal Boyden in the last year of his long tenure at the school was among the town and school spectators of the first game of the 1905 season between Normal and South Boston High School Alumni, in which his grandson, Allen Boyden, figured prominently in the Bridgewater victory. 159

Literally created in the 1890's in Springfield, Massachusetts, basketball became a favorite sport of many Normal students by the early 1900's, making "Boyden Park a very lively place after supper time...." Interclass tournaments were very popular and helped to promote considerable interest "in this form of physical exercise." But it was the completion of the new gymnasium in 1905 that led to the development of basketball as a major organized and competitive sport at Bridgewater Normal among the young men of the school. That the male gender at Normal dominated this branch of athletics is somewhat surprising since a set of rules for a female version of basketball had been created and, as was discussed earlier, the girls of the town's high school organized teams in this sport. In any case, the Normal basketball schedule was a busy

158 BI, May 17, 24, 31, 1901, April 25, May 9, 16, 23, 1902, April 16, June 26, 1903, April 7, 14, June 23, 1905, May 25, 1906, June 24, 1910; As We Were, p. 135.
one from December into March and kept the competitive spirit alive between the end of the football season and the start of the baseball one. By February of 1906, the Independent was able to report: “Normal still continues to win at basketball and the team is fast making a reputation for itself among the first class teams of the state.” A month later, Bridgewater defeated Boston University by a score of 55 to 2 in a game that was not only lopsided but farcical within five minutes of its start. The 1907 season was equally impressive for Normal’s team which scored a total of 501 points against 236 for all its opponents, including teams from Boston Latin, M. I. T., Harvard, and a number of high schools. These were especially good years for basketball at Bridgewater Normal, a time in which William Moore, the congenial janitor of the gymnasium, started the annual tradition of entertaining the members of the team at his Bedford Street home some evening at the end of the season. 160

Tennis was another branch of athletics at Bridgewater Normal. Interest and enthusiasm for this sport pre-dates 1900 and was one in which the women at the school took a special interest. A tennis club was in charge of the courts laid out in Boyden Park, and competitive tournaments between the classes took place in the spring, with a cup being presented to the winner. The 1907 season, an especially active one, saw the club’s membership reach fifty-two. In a gesture that promoted town-gown relations, Principal Boyden in the summer of 1908 permitted the young people of the town to play on the courts rather than having them go unused. “Sets are played each day of the week,” wrote the Independent, “and some crack players are talking of organizing a tournament.” 161

Competitive games were not the only events in this decade which provided entertainment for the Normal students and the townspeople. An annual concert under the auspices of the Normal Glee Club was presented in the Assembly Hall and was opened to the public. In May 1910, the Bridgewater Alumni Choral Society was organized with the expressed purpose of presenting “to Bridgewater people high grade music similar to the Brockton Choral Society.” While the name Alumni Chorus was retained, many from outside the school were asked to assist in the society’s concerts. In December of 1910, for example, four invited

160 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 122; BI, May 23, 1902, Nov. 10, Dec 8, 1905, Jan. 12, 19, Feb. 9, March 9, 16, 1906, Jan. 3, Feb. 1, March 15, 22, 1907, April 24, 1908; AS We Were, p. 133.
161 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 122; BI, May 23, 1902, May 25, 1906, June 28, 1907, June 24, 1908; AS We Were, pp. 133, 136.
soloists and a large orchestra aided the chorus in the presentation of “Stabat Mater”. Some Normal students staged quite a different musical presentation in February 1908 when the school became another town institution to offer a minstrel show. In a statement that would be inappropriate to most Americans later in the century, the Independent wrote: “When the applause and laughter which the skit created had subsided, the grand cake walk was on, and no better exaggeration of the Negro character was ever delineated than that acted by the Normal boys.” Such was the tenor of the time, that this town newspaper could go on to report that the Normal school “and those taking part in the performance are greatly pleased at its success and deeply grateful to the merchants and public generally for their generous support.” On a different cultural level, the Bridgewater State Normal Orchestra, formed in 1892, played at the school’s graduation for the first time in June of 1908, undoubtedly adding to the solemnity of the occasion.  

Plays, lectures, and debates were part of the cultural life of Bridgewater Normal, and some town citizens took advantage of these presentations, realizing that they enhanced the intellectual life of a small town of several thousand inhabitants. In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the works of William Shakespeare were more familiar to the average person than is the case a century later. In February of 1902, for instance, it is not surprising that Normal students and town folk attended a series of four lectures on the English dramatist and poet held in Assembly Hall. In addition, an annual Shakespearean play was given each year in the same auditorium. The Merchant of Venice was the choice in January 1910, and, to arouse interest, invitations were printed in the old English style and handed about the town. Stereopticon lectures were also popular in Bridgewater in the early 1900’s, and the Normal School, along with such organizations as the town’s churches, sponsored this type of cultural event. Many townspeople and most of the Normal School members enjoyed Hon. Nathan W. Littlefield’s lecture on “Holmes and Haunts of the Pilgrim Fathers in England and Holland,” given in Assembly Hall during the Christmas week of 1903. (Surely all those in attendance were aware that Bridgewater was the first inland community created by the Pilgrims of the Plymouth Colony.) Along with readings and recitals, lectures were also part of what was called the Normal literary course, a monthly series of artistic and intellectual presentation open to the public. At times, a contemporary issue such as the labor problem was the subject, although one wonders

162 BI, Feb. 7, April 24, May 1, Oct. 30, 1908, Oct. 7, 1910; As We Were, pp. 115, 120.
how many of the factory workers, who formed the greatest part of the town’s workforce, had the time or inclination to attend these lectures. Debates on current public questions also interested some of the Normal students, but most likely only a small number of the town’s inhabitants attended an interesting one on the equitability of the income tax held at the Normal School on May 6, 1907.  

The newspaper ads in the early 1900’s did not always attribute a specific cultural event to a particular Normal School organization since the great majority of these activities were sponsored by the Normal Club, the origins of which can be traced back to the early 1840’s. At this time, some students of the fledgling Bridgewater Normal joined the “Bridgewater Speaking Club,” which had been founded in the fall of 1839 by several students of the Bridgewater Academy. Even before the Normal School got its first building in 1846, some of its students were instrumental in re-organizing the original speaking society by adopting a new constitution and changing its name to “The Bridgewater Young Men’s Lyceum.” The newly-named group was “open to all young men,” but, in effect, came under the control of the Normal students. 

If Bridgewater’s lyceum was not among the earliest of the 3,000 such organizations in the United States in the second quarter of the nineteenth century “designed to promote the diffusion of knowledge,” it managed to survive into the twentieth century despite additional organizational and name changes. In 1895, for instance, the lyceum at the Normal School became the “Normal Congress,” but, like the United States Congress, women were still not admitted to its membership. Realizing the inappropriateness of this in a school where women by far were the largest part of the student body and, indeed, constituted the better part of the audiences at the society’s gatherings, the organization was renamed the “Normal Club” in 1898, and at this time women were admitted to its ranks. Arthur C. Boyden was elected the first president of the “new” club, and three committees were created to plan musical, literary, and social events.  

Membership in the Normal Club was limited to the students and faculty, but its musical and literary

163  
164 A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 116-118; Boyden traced the connection between Normal Lyceum and the Normal Club; BI, Dec. 5, 1891; As We Were, pp. 115-117.  
meetings were open to the public. Tickets could be purchased at O. B. Cole’s Drug Store—$1.50 for the
season or 35 cents for an individual performance. The 1901-02 season got off to a fine start by featuring the
return visit of The Gerris male quartet of Brockton, a group that had so delighted the Bridgewater audience
the previous year. In October of 1903, Leland Powers, the well-known impersonator, gave a dramatization
of “David Copperfield,” to open up the Normal Club course for that academic year. A lecture entitled “The
Little Brown Jap and the Big Russian Bear” was given by Peter McQueen, a war correspondent, in
December of 1904, around the time these two countries were edging toward peace after a short but bitter
conflict. Two months later, at the close of the second musical entertainment of that season, a large audience
complimented William L. Bates, the accompanist of the evening, by singing the “Alma Mater,” which
combined his music and the words of Zelma Lucas. This piece became the institution’s official song and
was sung at many formal and informal gatherings for almost a century. Most appropriately for an institution
training elementary school teachers, the club presented in March of 1906 a concert consisting of songs
which mothers of various races sang to their small children. Continuing what later would be considered a
multi-cultural approach, a musicale a year later featured songs and ballads of different nationalities,
although music of Northern European countries dominated the program. The foregoing discussion gives
only a taste of the types of cultural presentations given under the auspices of the Normal Club in the first
decade of the twentieth century. By 1912, many of the functions of this club would be sponsored by less
encompassing organizations such as the Normal’s glee club, orchestra, debating teams, and the Dramatic
Club. 166

Other organizations of a more social nature began to make their appearance at Normal around the
turn of the century, although informal social groups had long existed at the school. “Kappa Delta Phi,” a
fraternity of young men, dates from this time and had “for its object the promotion of all enterprises and
activities of merit that bear the name of the school, and the cultivation of such a wholesome, loyal,
intelligent spirit among its members as shall perpetuate the fraternity as a worthy exponent of our Alma
Mater.” The annual banquets of this fraternity were well attended and enjoyed not only by the students, but

166 BI, Oct. 11, 1901, May 9, 1902, Oct. 9, 23, 1903, Dec. 9, 1904, Feb. 24, April 21, May 5, Oct. 13, 1905,
also by the male faculty, who were made honorary members. On April 30, 1906, the gathering, held at Young's Hotel in Boston, was reported to be a “brilliant” affair, attended by about forty male students and faculty. Among the speakers were Professors Arthur C. Boyden, Sinnott, and Jackson. Two months later, to mark the end of the school year, another fine meal was consumed at the Bridgewater Inn, after which two students added to the evening's éclat by debating the question, “Should Tiddle De Winks be Abolished?” Not to be outdone by the Normal men, the “young ladies” formed “local sororities, for the purpose of developing a strong school spirit, of building up higher ideals of student life, and of encouraging the social life of their members.” Other organizations added to the social life at Normal during the early 1900's, with the new gymnasium serving as a meeting place for large affairs sponsored by the classes and social rooms in the dormitories accommodating the meetings of smaller groups. 167

Between 1901 and 1910 Normal graduates continued to rely on the meetings of the Normal Association to maintain and renew the friendships made during their years at the school. As had been the case since 1883, the alumni met every year, alternating their conventions between Bridgewater and Boston. The 1902 gathering, for example, was held in June at the Normal school and featured Reverend Charles G. Ames, pastor of the Church of the Disciples of Boston. His advice to attendees was that “teachers should rise above the mere technicalities in their teaching and have other than mercenary motives.” (Perhaps some in the audience, including some of the Bridgewater teachers who staffed the town's eight wooden schoolhouses, thought about their “huge” salaries and easy working conditions!) In any event, the meeting closed with the singing of a hymn, after which the members formed into classes and marched to the Town Hall where a luncheon was served. The next year, the association met at Hotel Brunswick on Boylston Street in Boston, on Saturday, March 14. Many of the graduates, including those from Bridgewater, used rail transportation to get to the state's capital to attend this meeting to which Lieutenant-Governor Curtis Guild and members of the Committee on Education from the General Court had been invited. 168

The annual gatherings of 1904 and 1906 were poignant ones for the association and, especially, for Principal Albert Gardner Boyden. Over four hundred graduates gathered in the Assembly Hall on June 19, 167 BI, May 4, June 22, 1906, June 28, 1907; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 123-124; As We Were, p. 124. 168 BI, June 13, 20, 1902, March 20, 1903; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 121; As We Were, p. 86.
1904, at 10 o’clock, to begin the program of the day. Surely many of them expressed satisfaction that the construction of the new gymnasium was well-underway, and maybe even more of them looked forward to the “banquet at noon in the town hall” and the ball game in the afternoon between the school nine and the alumni to be played on the South Field. The most noteworthy moment of the day, however, followed the prayer offered by Reverend J. Rockwood Jenkins of the Trinity Church in Bridgewater. After Principal Boyden was introduced and rose to make some comments, “one of the most remarkable scenes which the school room has ever witnessed,” averred the Independent, took place. To honor the beginning of his fiftieth year of service to Bridgewater Normal, “the entire meeting broke into cheers, the alumni rose to their feet, waved handkerchiefs and hats, and continued the demonstration for several minutes.” Only after struggling to control his emotions, was Principal Boyden able to extend a welcome to the alumni and give a short report of what the school was doing. Had he made his remarks about six months later, he might have reported that Mrs. Lucy Maria Leonard, who was born in Bridgewater to Ira and Lucy Conant, had passed away, leaving only one surviving member of the first class to enter Bridgewater Normal in 1840. 169

The Association’s gathering in June of 1906, also held in Bridgewater, was equally significant, but for a different reason. Over 800 hundred alumni were welcomed back to the school and, indeed, the town on this occasion. Among an impressive list of speakers were John D. Long, ex-Governor of Massachusetts, Principal Boyden, and George H. Martin, Secretary of the State Board of Education and former teacher at Bridgewater, and Emily C. Fisher, who had once taught English at the school. The Bridgewater Band under the direction of Robert H. Ferguson, who had not yet taken over his father’s shoe store in Central Square, played music during the dinner served in the new gymnasium by the Normal students. But the spotlight was on the two Boydens, father and son. Having announced that he would retire in August, Albert Gardner Boyden’s speech appropriately traced the growth of the school during his forty-six years as principal. While praises were heaped upon him, he and the audience realized that a new era would soon begin “when Albert gives way to Arthur.” The outgoing principal was assured that Bridgewater Normal was in good hands and that his son, Arthur Clarke, would continue to guide the institution in the right direction. But in his address,

169 BI, June 24, Dec. 9, 1904; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 121.
it was only natural for the Principal-elect to speak of the "possibilities of the future...."

In the years between 1901 and 1910, June was the month of graduations in Bridgewater, a time for those receiving diplomas from the High, Model and Normal Schools to think about what lay ahead of them. Each of the three graduations aroused considerable interest, but it was the one at the Normal School that perhaps was the most exciting for this small town, since hundreds of outsiders, including state officials and parents of the graduates, arrived by trolley, railway, and even a few by horse and buggy or automobile to attend the graduation exercises honoring the latest corps of trained teachers. The Normal campus was especially beautiful at this time of year, and, if the weather was good, many passersby enjoyed seeing those parts of the graduation celebration held out-of-doors, in particular the Ivy March. On June 27, 1902, for example, the Independent could report with satisfaction that a "more perfect day for the exercises could not have been conceived and those who attended the Normal graduation this year will long remember it as a most impressive occasion." Four years later, the "weather was all that could be asked for...," when, for the last time, Principal A. G. Boyden presided over the graduation ceremonies.

The graduation ceremony was held on a Tuesday morning during the early 1900's, but a series of events for the graduates began the previous Friday. There was a predictable pattern to the five-day celebration, though there were some innovations during the course of the decade. All the graduates of the four courses of studies at the school were invited to a cake and ice cream reception on Friday evening, hosted by Principals A. G. and, then, A. C. Boyden at Groveside (no longer extant), their home, overlooking Boyden Park, on corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue. The tradition of holding a debate between two competing school teams on the Friday before graduation began in June of 1907, soon becoming institutionalized after Professor Frank E. Gurney and his wife pledged to give fifty dollars a year to the winning team. In 1910, the Gurney prize debate dealt with the imposition of a national income tax, an issue much discussed at this time.

The weekend before graduation was a busy time at the Normal School, even more so if it was the

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171 BI, June 26, 1902, June 29, 1906; As We Were, p. 87.
172 BI, June 14, 1901, June 13, 27, 1902, June 19, 26, 1903, June 24, 1904, June 21, 1907, June 28, 1908, June 24, 1910; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, p. 117; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 43.
107
year to hold the annual meeting of the Bridgewater Association on the campus. On the morning of Saturday
June 18, 1910, as five hundred people descended on the school to renew ties with their alma mater, many of
the students who would be graduating in a few days perhaps realized for the first time that they too would
soon be part of the alumni organization which started in the 1840’s. In June of 1903, after a hiatus of over
twenty years, the tradition of holding a Sunday baccalaureate service for the graduates was re-instated.
Whether or not attendance was required my research does not tell me, but, in any case, the members of the
graduating class for that year gathered in front of Normal Hall and then marched to the Central Square
Church, where Principal Boyd was a leading member, to listen to Reverend Charles Edward Stowe, son
of Harriet Beecher Stowe, preach the baccalaureate sermon and the church choir sing special music. On one
occasion, the Trinity and Unitarian Churches also hosted this event, and in 1908 the service began to be held
in Assembly Hall of the Normal School itself. 173

The day of graduation was an especially busy one for those students receiving diplomas during this
decade. Held in the Assembly Hall of what was still a relatively new building, the graduation exercises were
conducted between ten and twelve o’clock on a Tuesday morning and followed a fairly predictable pattern.
The invocation was offered by one of the town’s ministers, the music was led by Clara C. Prince, who had
joined the Normal faculty in 1879, and a class gift was presented to the school, the one in 1904, for example,
being a statue of the Discus Thrower, which was to be placed in the almost completed new gymnasium. In
what has remained an integral part of the graduation proceedings, a main guest speaker and the principal of
the Normal School congratulated those about to receive their diplomas and offered some sage advice on
how to cope successfully with the personal and professional challenges that lay ahead. The most poignant
moment for the graduates, of course, was when they crossed the stage of the “beautifully decorated”
Assembly Hall to receive their diplomas. Most of them were young women who, having taken the two-year
course, were now licensed to teach in an elementary or grammar school grade in a public school. Others
who had completed one of the longer courses of study looked forward to teaching the higher grades in a
public or private school or, perhaps, going on to a four-year institution, such as Harvard, to earn a college
degree, something still not offered at a State Normal School. Experienced teachers who attended the

173 B1, June 26, 1903, June 24, 1904, June 30, 1905, June 29, 1906, June 7, 1907, June 19, 1908, June 24, 1910.
Normal School for a Special Course hopefully returned to public school teaching with a greater knowledge of subject matter and more advanced pedagogical skills.\footnote{174}{BI, June 28, 1901, June 13, 1902, June 19, 1903, June 24, 1904, June 30, 1905; A. C. Boyden, \textit{Memorial Volume}, pp. 44, 154; \textit{As We Were}, p. 90.}

The graduation festivities did not end with the granting of diplomas in the morning. A commencement dinner was served after the exercises, either in the large dining room of Normal Hall or the new gymnasium. Beginning in 1901, the custom of “planting the ivy” on the afternoon of graduation day began. No better description of this ceremony and its symbolism can be found than in Principal Arthur C. Boyden’s memorial volume dedicated to his father. Although published in 1919, by which time the ritual of the Ivy March was perfected, this march, he asserts, “attracted crowds of interested spectators” and, indeed, was considered to be “the most spectacular feature” of graduation day. Boyden captured the spirit of the Ivy March when he wrote that the planting of the ivy was “a symbol of love and affection for Alma Mater.” Ending the graduation celebration, was an evening social event known as the senior promenade or more accurately label by some as “The Walk-Around.” Whatever its nomenclature, this event was not an occasion for dancing, something evidently not allowed by either of the Boydens at Bridgewater Normal in the early 1900’s. Capturing the essence of the 1901 gathering, the \textit{Independent}, reported that “the annual ‘Prom’ was held at the Normal school in Assembly Hall, in the evening from 8 to 10. There were over 400 people on the floor and music furnished by Ferguson’s Orchestra was enjoyed by all. The hall was decorated in flowers and evergreens. In all there were 15 promenades and the effect was very pretty. Different members of the graduation class led the marches and everything went off well.” Beginning in 1905, this event was held in the new gymnasium, which provided a more commodious arena for the reception of guests and the promenades that followed.\footnote{175}{BI, June 28, 1901, June 27, 1902, June 26, 1903, June 17, 1904, June 30, 1905, June 29, 1906, June 7, 21, 28, 1907, June 19, 1908, June 25, 1909, June 24, 1910; A. C. Boyden, \textit{Memorial Volume}, pp. 118, 126; the description of the picture on page 120 of the source just cited appears to have an error since the first Ivy exercise was in 1901, before the building of the new gymnasium, the corner of which can be seen in the photograph; \textit{As We Were}, pp. 81-82.}

\textbf{The Model School -1901-1910}
While a good number of Bridgewater’s citizens in the early 1900’s took an interest in the Normal’s annual graduation and, indeed, in the institution as a whole, many more were intimately connected to its Model School, since this is where many of the town’s children received their early education and, in some cases, a ninth grade diploma. My readers might wish to refer back to the brief discussion of the model school concept presented in the previous chapter, but a few salient points are worthwhile reviewing. After a rather checkered history, the idea of a training school to help prepare Bridgewater Normal students for teaching at the primary-grammar school level became a reality with the creation of such a school in 1891, located first in the newly-erected Normal building facing School Street and, then, in the 1894 addition to this edifice which stretched towards Grove Street. By the turn of the century, this Model School not only included grades one through eight, but had added a ninth grade and a kindergarten, the latter being a rarity in Plymouth County. Students attending the Centre School on Grove Street were transferred to this new multi-classroom school, which was under the supervision of Bridgewater Normal and financially supported by the state, with the town paying the base salaries of the principal and teachers in charge of this model school. By 1901, its enrollment had gone from 129 students and four teachers in 1891 to a student body of 411 and teaching staff of 13. This growth permitted Bridgewater to put off a decision to move toward some centralization of its primary-grammar public school system for over a decade, albeit not without some tensions between the town and Bridgewater Normal.176

Although this Model School stood apart from the rest of the public school system in Bridgewater in many ways, its presence in the first decade of the twentieth century had a major impact on the town’s educational configuration. The school committee recognized this as early as 1901 by writing in its annual report: “There is not another town of this size in the state which has the benefit of so large and well-equipped a building, where classes can be graded according to modern methods, supplied with all needed material, and presided over by teachers who are intended to be the best that can be procured.” Contrast this

176 “Plan for the establishment of the Model School in connection with the Bridgewater State Normal School,” found in the files of Maxwell Library; “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1904, p. 4; As We Were, pp. 25, 59; Albert J. Elwell purchased the Centre School at a public auction on July 19, 1891, using it for the “rebuilding” of the eastern half of his block in Central Square between the Bridgewater Inn and the Fairbanks-Prophett block; this project can be traced in the Bridgewater Independent issues of July 4, 18, 25, Aug. 8, 22, 1891; see chapter one on this matter.
evaluation with the many problems, previously discussed, which beset the six to eight small schoolhouses scattered in the outlying districts of the town. Over and above the perennial debate of the whether or not Bridgewater gained financially by having this state-supported primary-grammar school in its central district, enrollment figures in this decade clearly show the importance of the Model School in educating a very high percent of the town’s children. Superintendent Sanderson’s report of 1904, for instance, list this school’s enrollment at 440, a figure more than one hundred higher than the total number of children attending the eight outlying schools. In 1910, the proportions remained about the same, with the outlying schools accommodating 331 students compared to 423 for the Model School. It was apparent, however, that the latter had reached its saturation point and would not be able to increase its enrollment at a time when two of the town’s schoolhouses had been closed and Bridgewater’s population had begun to increase due to the influx of the so-called “New Immigrants.” But more about this later. 177

In the fall of 1901, Brenelle Hunt, a graduate of the four-year course at Bridgewater Normal and a teacher of some experience in grammar schools, started his third year as the principal of the Model School, which, in a general way, came under the purview of Arthur Clarke Boyden, the vice-principal of Bridgewater Normal. Hunt, who made his home on Broad Street, would continue at this position until 1918, at which time he became a member of the Normal faculty as an instructor in psychology and school management. His salary as principal was one thousand dollars, considerably more than any of the twelve teachers or the two supervisors of drawing and singing under his control. Among other professional commitments and attainments were his active involvement in the Plymouth County Teachers Association, his election to the Massachusetts Schoolmasters Club in 1905, and the earning by exam of a superintendent of school’s certificate, granted by the State Board of Education in 1906, although he voiced no interest in pursing this type of work. Principal Hunt appears to have been an efficient administrator, devising, for example, an excellent card system in 1901, whereby a complete record of each pupil was kept for the entire career of that student’s stay at the school. 178

Like their counterparts in the town-run primary and grammar schools, the regular classroom
teachers at the Model School were all unmarried females. But the conditions under which they taught were
strikingly different. Their classrooms were located in the Normal building that was less than a decade old as
the twentieth century began, making it quite a bit newer than any of the outlying schoolhouses. Unlike the
teachers in these latter buildings, those of the multi-classroom Model School taught only one grade, thus
relieving them of some of the burdens of preparing a variety of lessons and teaching pupils of different
levels, all in a single room. Perhaps these advantages were somewhat counterbalanced by classes of forty or
more, larger than generally found in of the town’s schools. Whether or not all the instructors in the Model
School were master teachers, “the best that” could “be procured,” and possessed great knowledge of their
subject matter and superior pedagogical skills is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, their salaries, compared to
those paid to outlying teachers, who generally had less education and teaching experience, were
considerably higher, since they were supplemented by compensation given to these teachers by the state for
supervising many of the Normal students who did their practice teaching in one of the Model School’s ten
grades. Being in touch with other professionals on a daily level and enjoying the advantages of living in the
center of the town added to the attractiveness of holding a position at the Normal’s Model School. 179

While a full account of this school during the early 1900’s would wish to discuss many of its
teachers, only a few of them will be mentioned briefly in this tome. In 1908, Adelaide Reed, after teaching
in the ninth grade for twelve years, decided to retire. Before coming to Bridgewater Normal, she had taught
in Newton and Somerville, where she “had worked with several well-known masters and educators, among
them the venerable school superintendent of Somerville, Gordon Southworth, the author of many school
text books.” Her last official act in a professional career of over forty years was to present sixty-one
diplomas to the 1908 graduating class of the Model School. “Her quiet, refined manner and clear teaching,”
wrote Principal Arthur C. Boyden, “left an indelible influence on a large number of young people.” She
passed away in 1911, after only four years of retirement. 180

179 “Report of the School Committee,” Annual Town Report, 1901, p. 3; “Report of the Superintendent of
180 BI, June 26, 1908; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 92, 156.
Martha M. Burnell, who came to the Model School one year before Reed, perhaps is the most recognized name in the long list of teachers at this school in the twentieth century, in part because she became its principal in 1918. Indeed, the new training school built in 1926 was named in Burnell’s honor at the time of her retirement in 1938. Born in 1868 in West Baldwin, Maine, she graduated from Gorham State Normal School in 1894 and, in the following year, began her career at the Model School in Bridgewater by teaching the eight grade. By the early 1900’s, Burnell was well-known in the town for her teaching and her active participation in the Central Square Church, where she did a stint as the superintendent of the Sunday School and sang soprano solos in the choir. In early April of 1903, ill health obliged her to temporarily give up her teaching and return home to Maine for a much needed rest. Her closest friend in Bridgewater was Rachel Crocker, the town’s children’s and assistant librarian. Crocker and Burnell shared a home on Maple Avenue for a number of years and spent their summer vacations at the Burnell’s family home in Gorham, Maine. These two friends were the first two Bridgewater women to vote in a state and nation in 1920. But this is getting ahead of our story.\(^{181}\)

The establishment of a kindergarten at the Model School in 1893, under the direction of Anne M. Wells, was part of a broad educational movement. Influenced by the ideas of Prussian educator Friedrich Froebel, the first kindergarten in the United States, albeit a private endeavor, was founded in Boston, Massachusetts, by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody in 1860.\(^{182}\) Thirteen years later, the first kindergarten in a public school was started by Susan Blow in St Louis, Missouri. So essential had the training of would-be teachers in the area of what is now called early childhood education become by the 1890’s, it was deemed imperative that Bridgewater Normal move in this direction. Wells’s first year as the head of the Kindergarten-Primary Department was especially difficult since the new Normal building of 1891 did not include space for education below the first grade. To overcome this problem, it was decided to temporarily use the general library in the new edifice, during the morning, for kindergarten classes. The long-range remedy for this situation came in 1894 when the state legislature appropriated $75,000 for an addition to the 1891 Normal building to be mainly used as a Model School. For its part, the town “agreed that in exchange for

accommodations” (in the Model School) for some of the town’s children at the grammar school level, it would share in the financial upkeep of the new kindergarten. Students attending the Model School were not required to start at the kindergarten level, but every spring parents were urged to formally apply if they wished their child to be enrolled in the class. 182

From the start, the kindergarten class was more than popular and required two teachers, Wells and Frances P. Keyes. Enrollment figures varied a bit in the early 1900’s, numbering from forty to fifty students. Very few accounts, I suspect, were later written by adults who began their education at the Model School’s kindergarten in the first decade of the twentieth century. Luckily, Louise Dickinson Rich in Innocence Under the Elms presents us with at least one reminiscence. Attending this class in 1905, the year in which her father, James H. Dickinson, moved his family to Bridgewater to become the editor of the Bridgewater Independent, she later admitted that her temperament and family heritage had not prepared her for the “strict regimentation of the average school of the day...,” and that she had not generally enjoyed her time at the Model School, despite it being “run along extremely informal, relaxed and flexible lines....” But her year in the kindergarten was among the better ones at the school. Confessing that she still “would rather have been at home,” she remembered Miss Keyes and Miss Wells as “two gently firm, placid, even-tempered women” who genuinely liked children. The two large kindergarten rooms, “connected by an enormously wide door,” she had found “sunny and pleasant,” and recalled that they were “full of plants and birds in cages and fish in a tank....” “Each morning,” she writes, “we opened the session by standing with linked hands ...singing “Good Morning, Merry Sunshine,” if it was a pleasant day, or “Good Morning, Dear Teachers,” if it wasn’t.” 183

Several other teachers of the Model School and some department heads of the Normal school were also cited by Rich, quite often in a critical way. Indeed, the only one she seems to have really “loved” was

182 BJ, June 13, 1902, May 6, 1903, Aug. 5, 1904, Nov. 1, Dec. 7, 1907; evidently, no formal document recorded this agreement between the town and Normal, but Albert G. Boyden wrote in the Bridgewater Independent on August 5, 1904 that both parties had agreed to this deal; “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1907, p. 26
her fifth grade teacher, Jennie Bennett, one of the three Bennetts who taught at the school in the early 1900’s. In her most complimentary evaluation of anyone on the Model School staff, Rich observes that “Miss Bennett wasn’t young or pretty” and “looked like a schoolteacher,” but was “energetic” and “acted like a human being.” It is hard to say what Miss Bennett would have thought about this rating, but she most likely would have agreed with her pupil’s assertion that the Model School was “Supervisor-ridden” since “it was the easiest thing in the world” for Department Heads, who were located in the same building, “just to walk down a corridor and turn in to a grade room, to kill a little time.” Whether it was singing a few notes on sight for Clara C. Prince, the music supervisor, improving her handwriting under the watchful eye of Charles E. Doner, a supervisor of penmanship in public schools for many years, being informed by Elizabeth F. Gordon, the physical culture supervisor, “in hushed tones that the Body was a Temple,” or trying to understand modern art as interpreted by Mrs. Flora T. Little, an Art Assistant at the Normal School, Rich even in hindsight had negative things to say.\footnote{Report of the Superintendent of Schools, Annual Town Report, 1907, p. 26; Dickinson Rich, Innocence Under the Elms, pp. 190, 195-199; A. C. Boyden, Memorial Volume, pp. 92, 156; “Little, Flora Townsend, 1875-1967--Artist, educator,” HH, pp. 270-271.}

At the other end of the educational spectrum from the kindergarten was the ninth grade, also established in 1893, and, as previously mentioned, was first taught by Adelaide Reed between 1896 and 1908 and then by Ethel P. Wheeler for the following six years. In most communities at this time, this grade was considered the first level of high school or, in some cases, the last grade in junior high school. But Bridgewater’s situation was somewhat unique since it was decided to place the ninth grade only at the Model School and not in the town’s outlying schools. For any student in Bridgewater desiring to go on to the public high school located in the Academy Building, it was necessary to spend a ninth year of schooling at the Model School. This was done in part to better prepare the students of the district schools for high school education, which, if completed, meant attending grades ten through thirteen. As Superintendent Sanderson wrote in his annual report of 1901: “The legitimate place of the ninth grade is as a preparatory department to the high school—not just adding one more grade to each outlying school.” It was hoped that the extra year of study at the Model School would “unify and complement” the work at the grammar school level and prepare all the town’s students planning to continue schooling after the age of fourteen “for
intelligent work in the freshmen class (tenth grade) in the high school.”

The enrollment figures for the ninth grade hovered around the fifty mark, although toward the end of the decade the class was larger, evidently requiring Principal Hunt to share some of the teaching load with the regular teachers. Students from the village, most of whom had attended the Model School from the beginning of their education, comprised the largest part of the enrollment in the class, but numbers from the outlying areas were not negligible. In 1901, for example, out of a class of forty-eight, eighteen had attended one of the town’s district schools. Most likely, it was not always easy for some of these students to fit into a new academic or social setting. But a degree of esprit de corps certainly must have developed among the ninth graders as they attended social gatherings such as the one on the evening of February 19, 1903, at which their friends and parents were entertained in the Kindergarten rooms. Most likely, many ninth graders, whatever their educational background, cheered the victory of their newly-formed football team on November 16, 1907, over the Sprague School team of Brockton. In the months before graduation, the choosing of a design for their class pin or having their graduation picture taken at King’s studio in Central Square made these young teenagers realize that most of them would soon be attending high school in the Academy Building, located just a short walk from the Model School, hoping that they were prepared for this higher level of education.

The graduation exercises of the ninth grade were usually held on a Monday afternoon during the same week in June when those of the Normal School and high school were also eliciting considerable interest in Bridgewater. Capturing the spirit of the 1904 Model School graduation, the Independent wrote: “Mothers and Fathers, brothers and sisters, had a proud day … at the graduation exercises of the ninth grade of the Model School, which took place in Assembly Hall in the Normal building. Most of the young girls were in white, and the scene was a charming one.” The reporter failed to mention the attire of the young men, but it is worth noting that during this decade the graduating classes of the Model School were fairly balanced between the sexes, unlike those of the Normal. If names can be relied on, most of the fifty or so

students receiving diplomas each year came from English-Yankee or Irish backgrounds, reflecting in part Bridgewater’s population makeup. Toward the end of the decade, however, such names such as Costa and Balboni on the graduation roster gave an early sign of demographic changes that had begun in the town. 187

The format of the graduating exercises was similar throughout the decade and was not unlike that of the high and Normal schools. Under the direction of Clara C. Price, the class rendered a song to open the program, after which Principal Hunt introduced the main speaker for the day, who often was one of the town’s Protestant ministers. Somewhat of a break in this tradition came in 1909, when Reverend J. J. Farrelly, one of the Catholic priests at St. Thomas Aquinas and a popular and respected figure in the town, was asked to be the graduation speaker. Among other pieces of advice, he urged “his young hearers...if possible, to continue their studies at a High school.” The Superintendent of Schools or the chairman of the town’s school board usually gave a short address and then presented the graduates with their diplomas. Many of them would go on to study at the high school, but not all would complete the four-year requirement. 188

188 BI, June 20, 27, 1902, June 19, 1903, June 24, 1904, June 30, 1905, June 28, 1907, June 19, 1908, June 25, 1909, June 24, 1910.
History of Bridgewater Normal, 1820’s-1933
A Chronology
Benjamin A. Spence

(Since this is hardly a definitive chronology of Bridgewater State College when it was a Normal School, I have purposely left spaces to add other important dates to the list, as we proceed with this first symposium sponsored by the Friends of Bridgewater State College History.)

1820’s  In the first call for the establishment of Normal Schools in Massachusetts, James G. Carter of Lancaster pointed to the need for the “scientific” training of teachers for the free public schools.

1835-1837  The Reverend Charles Brooks of Hingham, after studying the French and Prussian normal schools during a trip to Europe, worked to arouse “public sentiment to the necessity of special training for teachers.”

1837  The General Court of Massachusetts passed an act establishing the Board of Education. Horace Mann was chosen its first Secretary.

1838  Based upon the recommendation of this board, the state legislature agreed to the establishment normal schools.

1840  Thanks in good measure to Artemas Hale, the Board of Education voted on May 20 to established one of the three experimental schools for the training of teachers in Bridgewater.

With Nicholas Tillinghast as its first principal, the Bridgewater Normal School began its first session on September 9 in the “old” Town Hall. Since 1871, the New Jerusalem Church has occupied this site.

1842  The alumni of Bridgewater Normal organized The Normal Association.

1844  The leadership of “The Bridgewater Young Men’s Lyceum” passed into the hands of the Normal students. This organization, the pre-runner of the Normal Club of the late 1890’s, was responsible for many of the cultural activities of the school.

1846  On August 19, the first normal school building in the United States was dedicated in Bridgewater. It was built on a site of an acre and a quarter off of Summer Street given by Colonel Abram Washburn, one of the town’s leading’s citizens. The following words spoken by Horace Mann on this occasion continue to be quoted: “Coiled up in this institution, as in a spring, there is vigor whose uncoiling may wheel the spheres.” A small stone marker now reminds us of this historic event.”

Railway service was established in Bridgewater.

1850  Principal Tillinghast decided to discontinue the Model or Training School.

1853  In July, Tillinghast, due to ill health, resigned.

Marshall Conant was appointed the second principal of Bridgewater Normal.

1856  The practice of semi-annual examinations began.

1857  Eliza B. Woodward began her thirty-year tenure as a teacher at the school.
At the age of thirty-three, Albert Gardner Boyden became Bridgewater Normal’s third principal, a position he would hold for the next forty-six years.

The enrollment of the school reached sixty-seven.

Twelve men of Bridgewater Normal gave their lives in the Civil War.

The original building was enlarged by the addition of wings.

In September, George Henry Martin became an instructor at the school.

Beginning in March, an attendance of two years at the school was required for a diploma.

Between June 18 and Nov. 20, Normal Hall was erected on the corner of School and Summer Streets. It was Bridgewater Normal’s first dormitory, providing a home for fifty-two students and Principal Boyden and his family.

A four-year course of study became an option in the four Normal Schools in Massachusetts.

Francis H. Kirmayer began almost a half-century of service to Bridgewater Normal as an instructor in Latin and Modern Languages.

A third floor was added to the main Normal building.

Normal Hall was enlarged to accommodate one-hundred and forty-eight students.

Isabelle S. Horne joined the Normal faculty as an instructor in reading and vocal culture.

The first “Alumni Record” was prepared in conjunction with the nation’s centennial celebration.

Arthur C. Boyden and Clara C. Prince joined the Normal faculty.

The Town of Bridgewater agreed to make its Centre School, not far from the corner of Grove and Summer Streets, a School of Observation, where Normal students could “put to the test, under the direction of skilled teachers, the principles they have learned ….”

Reflecting the greater interest in the teaching of science following the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, which helped celebrate the nation’s one-hundredth birthday, an annex to house scientific laboratories was erected immediately south of the Normal’s main building between June and September.

The addition of six acres of land on Summer Street across from Normal Hall resulted in the creation of Boyden Park, a source of delight for the town and the school for many years to come.

William D. Jackson began his long career at Bridgewater Normal as an instructor in science and mathematics.

While individuals from several foreign nations had graduated from Bridgewater Normal by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the principalship of Albert Gardner Boyden, it was in this year that Chile became the first country to send a group of students under official governmental arrangements.

The enrollment of the school reached 205.
The construction of the new Normal building to accommodate 250 students was begun by the Darling Bros. of Worcester, Massachusetts. Unlike the earlier Normal buildings, it was built of brick.

1891
On September 3, 1891, this new building was dedicated before an audience of 800, two-thirds of whom were women. All the speakers, however, were of the opposite sex!

The scientific annex was moved closer to the corner of Summer and Grove Street and was converted into Bridgewater Normal’s second student residence, although several women on the Normal faculty would have living quarters in this facility before it was destroyed in the fire of 1924.

The old Centre school was bought by Albert J. Elwell at public auction. He had it dismantled and moved to the eastern side of Bridgewater’s Central Square, where it was used in the “rebuilding” of his newly acquired property.

The new Model or Training School was started in September with classes being held in the new Normal building. Lillian A. Hicks was its first principal.

1893
Citing the words of Arthur Clarke Boyden: “The most important single event of the year 1893 was the establishment of a kindergarten under the direction of Miss Anne M. Wells.”

A ninth grade was added to the Model School.

1894
The General Court appropriated $75,000 for an enlargement of the 1891 Normal building, to be used mainly as the Model School, which now included grades one through nine and a kindergarten.

1895
The “first” Tillinghast Hall, the school’s third residence hall, was built. Unlike the first two dormitories, which were wooden buildings, it was made of brick.

The Normal School acquired a piece of land on Grove Street, across from the Model School. It became known as South Field. It was used as a playground by the Model School and, very importantly, became the premier playing field for Normal’s baseball and football teams and those of the town’s high school and other organizations.

Isabella Whitten Clarke Boyden, the first wife of Principal Boyden, passed away on October 1. Her son, Arthur Clarke, later wrote: “For thirty-five years the Normal School at Bridgewater was under the united guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Boyden.”

1896
Arthur Clarke Boyden became the vice-principal of Bridgewater Normal.

1897
Trolley service came to Bridgewater.

1898
With Arthur C. Boyden as its first president, the Normal Club was formed to promote “musical, literary, and social” activities.

1899
The Normal Offering began to be published as a yearbook.

1900
By this time, 4,107 students had enrolled at Bridgewater Normal, including 606 from 23 other states and 45 from 11 foreign countries.

By the turn of the century the Normal Campus had grown to sixteen acres,

1901
The custom of “planting the ivy” on the afternoon of graduation day began.
1904 With Arthur Clarke Boyden as the chief organizer, the Model School’s nature study exhibit won a Gold Medal Award at the World Fair in St. Louis, Missouri.

1905 On June 24, a new gymnasium was dedicated at Bridgewater Normal. Later officially called the Albert Gardner Gymnasium, this state-of-the-art facility was the last building to be erected in the long tenure of the school’s third principal. Now the home of the institution’s Art Department, it is the oldest structure on the campus of Bridgewater State College.

1906 On August 1, Albert Gardner Boyden resigned, and his son Arthur Clarke Boyden began his principalship.

1907 Thanks to the gift of nearly two acres of land on Park Avenue by Principal Emeritus Boyden, a natural science garden was created.

1909 Normal students began to be allowed to do their apprentice teaching in the other schools and communities besides the Model School connected to Bridgewater Normal.

1910 Enrollment at Bridgewater Normal was just over 300.

1911 “The new greenhouses at the Natural Science Gardens of the Normal School.” reported the Bridgewater Independent, “are completed and ready for occupancy, and are models of construction and adaptability.” Elizabeth R. Stevens from Swansea, Massachusetts, and an 1876 graduate of Bridgewater Normal was the donor of this important addition to the school. Florence I. Davis, a biology teacher, and Louis C. Stearn, who served the school from 1911 to 1944, were instrumental in using this facility for courses in “practical botany and horticulture.”

The second Woodward Hall, located on Grove Street as it merges into Summer Street, was the first major addition to Bridgewater Normal under Arthur Clarke Boyden. First known as the New Dormitory for Women and built at a cost of $175,000, this brick building in 1917 was named in honor of Eliza B. Woodward, an 1857 graduate of the school who went on to serve on its faculty for thirty years.

1914 S. Elizabeth Pope began her career at Bridgewater Normal by teaching Grade IX at its the Model School.

1915 On May 30, 1915, Albert Gardner Boyden died in his 88th year, after being associated with Bridgewater Normal for sixty-seven years, forty-six of them as its principal.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of Bridgewater Normal was celebrated by an historical pageant written by Mrs. Flora T. Little.

1916 Beginning in late December, the old wooden Normal Hall, by this time considered to be a fire menace to the entire Normal campus, was torn down.

1917 The “second” Tillinghast Hall, the last major addition to the Normal campus before the great fire of 1924, was built on the site formerly occupied by Normal Hall. Built at a cost of $237,000, it included a kitchen, dining hall, dormitory, reference library, and administrative offices. This new facility became Tillinghast Hall after the 1924 conflagration destroyed the first dormitory by the same name.

Doctor George H. Martin, among the most honored graduates of Bridgewater Normal, died on March 28. After being a faculty member of Bridgewater Normal between 1864 and 1882, he served the state’s Board of Education for ten years and for twelve years was the Supervisor of the Boston Schools. He was then selected as the state’s Secretary of the Board of Education, a position first held by Horace Mann in 1837.
The four years’ course was dropped and replaced by a threes’ course to train students for teaching at the junior high school level, a part of the configuration of public school education that became increasingly popular in the early twentieth century. The Town of Bridgewater got its first junior high school in 1918-1919.

Student government began with the formation of the Woodward Hall Association. By the early 1920’s, a Student Government Association had been organized.

1918 In January, the Normal students, as one of their contributions to America’s effort in the Great War, formed the Normal School Section of the Bridgewater Auxiliary of the Taunton Red Cross Chapter.

In September, the faculty of all the Normal Schools met at Bridgewater Normal. Plans were made to hold this type of conference every year at the school.

1919 The enrollment at Bridgewater Normal reached 415.

1924 On December 10, a disastrous fire destroyed the 1891-1894 main Normal building, the 1895 Tillinghast Hall, and the Cottage (the first Woodward dormitory), which had been converted into a student residence in 1891.

1925 The so-called Gates House was built for Edgar and Frances A. Parker in 1884-1885 and owned by Samuel Pearly Gates between 1899 and 1914. He willed the property to his sister, Mrs. Mary E. Shaw, but with the stipulation that it would go to the Normal School after her death. It was acquired by school in 1925 and was moved to the corner of Cedar and Grove Streets.

1926 On October 22, Boyden Hall was dedicated with impressive ceremonies. It became the center of the “new” campus, after the 1924 fire had destroyed much of the Normal School dating back to the 1890’s. Referring to Albert Gardner and Arthur Clarke Boyden, an inscription on a tablet inside the main door reads: “They gave their hearts, their minds, and their lives to this school.” Despite the tremendous expansion of Bridgewater State College in the last several decades, Boyden Hall, often called the Administration Building, remained an important centerpiece of the campus.

A new Model or Training School, built on the site of the old South Field on Grove Street, was also dedicated on October 22. Martha Burnell, who came from Gorham, Maine, started teaching in the Model School in 1895 and became its principal in 1919, a position she continued to hold in the new school. When she retired in 1938, the Training School was named in her honor.

1932-33 Arthur Clarke Boyden served as the first president of Bridgewater State Teachers College.

1933 President Boyden died in this year, after serving the school for fifty-four years.

Even this relatively short chronology of Bridgewater Normal would not have been possible without the research and writings of Dr. Jordan D. Fiore, Dr. Ralph S. Bates, David K. Wilson, and Albert Gardner and Arthur Clarke Boyden. I am also much in debt to the Bridgewater Independent, which included much news about the Normal School from the late 1870’s to 1933.
1. The First Normal School Building--The first session of the State Normal School at Bridgewater began on September 9, 1840, meeting in temporary quarters in the old Town Hall. In 1845, the state legislature decided to erect buildings for the Normal schools at Westfield and Bridgewater, an important step in establishing a permanent system for the training of teachers. The first state Normal school building in the United States was erected in Bridgewater in 1846, near the corner of Summer and School Streets on land donated by Abram Washburn, one of the town’s leading citizens. This plain, two-story wooden building, which was added to in 1861 and 1871, was not a magnificent structure, but it was promising start to a string of buildings that would grace an expanding campus in the years to come. While this structure is no longer extant, a small stone marker reminds passersby of the historic significance of this site.

2. Normal Hall--During its first twenty-nine years, 1840 to 1869, Bridgewater Normal School had no facility to house its students. In the absence of a residence hall, those attending the newly-founded institution sought accommodations in private homes in the town, at an average cost, by 1866, of $4.25 a week, which did not include such amenities as fuel, lighting, and facilities for washing clothes. In 1869, responding to the urgent need for student housing, a problem that the state could no longer avoid, Bridgewater’s Normal’s first dormitory was started on June 18th and completed on the 20th of November. In his report about the school in 1869, Principal Albert Gardner Boyden put it aptly: “The most important event in the history of the school for many years past has been the erection during the last year of a boarding hall for the use of the pupils.” Located on the corner of School and Summer Streets, Normal Hall was immediately filled to capacity, accommodating fifty-two students and Boyden’s family. Four years later, this facility was enlarged to take care of one-hundred and forty-eight students. From 1869 to 1892, the Boydens, before moving to their beautiful home, Groveside, on the corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue, lived with the students at the Normal boarding hall, with the first Mrs. Boyden, nee Isabella Whitten Clarke, supervising the household duties and assisting her husband in keeping the accounts of the school. This dormitory, one of the two remaining wooden structures to remain after the building of the
new campus in the 1890’s, served the school in several ways until 1916, when it was torn down to make room for a facility that included administrative offices, a dining hall, a reference library, and dormitory rooms. This new Normal Hall became known as the (second) Tillinghast Hall in the 1920’s, after the fire of 1924 destroyed the first Tillinghast dormitory of 1895.

3. **Normal laboratory building**, 1881--After the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876 helped celebrate the nation’s one-hundredth birthday, there was greater interest in the teaching of science. This educational trend found expression at Bridgewater Normal in the erection in 1881 of an annex to the school’s main classroom building to house chemical, industrial, and physical laboratories. Built between June and September of 1881, this two story building stood on the south side of the school’s main building, which, as we have seen, was enlarged itself in 1861 and 1871. Perhaps the best description of this new facility can be found in the words of Principal Albert G. Boyden, quoted in Arthur Clarke Boyden’s memorial volume of 1919. The older Boyden, who played a major role in the planning of this science annex, wrote that it “greatly increased the efficiency of the teaching and training,” in the sciences, “and the students are enthusiastic” over the new addition to the school. Interestingly enough, however, this annex was to be used for its initial purpose for only ten years.

4. **Boyden Park**--During the 1880’s, the acquisition of more space became one of the priorities of the Normal school, best illustrated by the addition of six acres of land on Summer Street across from the boarding hall. Initially the state refused to purchase the land, prompting Principal Boyden to buy it in a private transaction. Shortly thereafter, the legislature did agree to buy it from Boyden, adding greatly to the size of the campus. This new area became known as Boyden Park and, over the years, became a great source of delight for the school and town with its excavated pond, icehouse, tennis courts, croquet grounds, spaces for other sports and as well as a beautiful setting for some of the graduation exercises. Much of this land is now taken up by the college’s student union and a men’s dormitory.

5. **Old Woodward Hall (The Cottage)**-- The second dormitory of Bridgewater Normal has an interesting history. In 1891, after the decision had been made to build a new main building for the school, the old
wooden structure facing Summer Street was sold to and torn down by Albert J. Elwell, one of Bridgewater’s leading business and financial leaders. It was decided, however, to keep the science annex, but to move it more toward the corner of Grove and Summer Streets. Since the new brick structure would contain laboratory facilities for the sciences, the annex was turned into a sixteen-room dormitory, which became known as the “Cottage” or the Old Woodward Dormitory in honor of Eliza B. Woodward, a teacher at school between 1857 and 1887. When it was ready for occupancy, this wooden structure accommodated thirty-two students. Before it was destroyed in the great fire of December 1924, however, it was apparently used mostly as a residence for faculty members.

6. **New Normal Building.** 1891, Addition, 1894--By the late 1880’s, Principal Albert G. Boyden, always looking more ahead than backward, called for an enlargement of the school to serve up to two-hundred and fifty students. Supported by many friends, including those in the General Court, this goal was promoted in the 1890’s, when a massive brick edifice, stretching from School Street to Grove Street, replaced the old wooden classroom building. Speaking at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of Bridgewater Normal on August 28, 1890, Boyden’s words captured the delicate balance between nostalgia and present and future hopes when he eloquently told his audience that “the school has outgrown this temple, around which cluster the fondest recollections of its past-life, and a new home for our Alma Mater is going up, deeper, broader, higher than the old, substantial and beautiful.” Built by the Darling Bros. of Worcester, Massachusetts, this new structure was dedicated on September 3, 1891, before an audience of eight hundred, including many of the educators of the Bay State. Reflecting the times, all the remarks at the ceremony were made by men, although two-thirds of those in attendance were women! With a major addition to this new building in 1894 to house the Model or Training School and the construction of first Tillinghast Dormitory in 1895, the Normal campus was no longer dominated by wooden buildings. This new campus, however, would itself disappear when engulfed by a major fire on December 10, 1924.

7. **The first “Tillinghast Hall.”**--With the creation of the “new” and expanded Normal campus in the 1890’s and Principal Boyden’s aim of creating a student body of 250, it is not surprising that a third dormitory was erected in 1895. Known as Tillinghast Hall, this student residence stood on what is now
the southeastern corner of the quadrangle in front of Boyden Hall. It was a brick building and provided for
the housing of seventy-two students, although some women faculty also had quarters in this dormitory.
This structure, sharing the same fate as the first Woodward dormitory, was destroyed in the conflagration
of 1924.

8. **South Field**--In 1895, the Normal School acquired a piece of land on Grove Street, across from the
Model or Training School, which the previous year had occupied an extension of the school’s main
building, itself only three years old. Known as the South Field, this area initially served two purposes. It
was used by the Model School children as a playground and as a playing field for the baseball and
football teams of Bridgewater Normal. But thanks to the generosity of the two Boyden principals, this
field soon became the premiere arena for the playing of these two spectator sports by many other teams,
including those of the town’s high school and those sponsored by numerous other organizations in
Bridgewater. By the early 1920’s, there was some talk that the Normal School was thinking of changing
its generous policy on the use of the South Field. The building of the new training school (later named
after Martha M. Burnell) on a considerable portion of the South Field in 1926 to replace the Model School
destroyed in the 1924 fire ended this speculation. When passersby walk by Harrington Hall on Grove
Street today, perhaps a good number will remember that before it became the home of Bridgewater State
College’s School of Management and Aviation Science in 2003 it had been used as an elementary training
school and, for a much shorter time, a classroom building. Few, if any, would recall, however, the sound
of cheers when the Normal School football and baseball teams proved their prowess on the field that once
occupied this part of the campus.

9. **The Albert Gardner Boyden Memorial Gymnasium**--This was the last building erected at Bridgewater
Normal during the long principalship, 1860-1906, of Albert G. Boyden. Seeing the need for a new facility
to accommodate the needs of a growing school, he began to advocate a new gymnasium in 1901, and in
the following year the state agreed to buy from The First Parish (Unitarian Church) part of the land which
had been given to the South Parish in 1717 by John and Rebecca Washburn. Despite some initial
opposition in the town, parish, and legislature, the project was started in November 1903, on this beautiful
piece of land that sloped gently down to Summer Street and Boyden Park beyond. Built at a cost of sixty thousand dollars, this brick structure, with features associated with Queen Anne architecture, was dedicated on June 24, 1905, and was considered to be one of the finest gymnasiums in the state. It served the institution for over fifty years in this capacity, before being converted into a library and, then, a building for the Art Department.

10. **Natural Science Garden**--The creation of a natural science garden at Bridgewater Normal in 1907 was the first addition to the campus during the principalship of Arthur Clarke Boyden, 1906 to 1933. The idea for this project can be traced back to the school’s long-standing interest and leading role in the emerging nature study movement and “the natural expansion of the school garden movement which had developed so rapidly over the country” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a more immediate sense, the laying out of this botanical garden, which still exists, was made possible when Principal Emeritus Boyden gave nearly two acres of land on Park Avenue to Bridgewater Normal in the spring of 1907. Many passersby soon noticed the addition of “another beautiful corner to the Normal school grounds.” Capturing the garden’s educational value, the *Bridgewater Independent* wrote: “This lot of land…will be fitted up as an out door laboratory for biological study and experimentation. It will be used in training teachers for practical work in establishing and managing school and home gardens and will be of practical assistance in teaching Nature Study and Geography.” Principal Arthur Clarke Boyden, himself a leading “enthusiast” and “exponent” of nature study for many years, also praised his father’s gift of land, commenting that it promoted “the teaching of the elements of agriculture, horticulture, and floriculture.”

11. **Woodward Hall**--(second) Built in 1911, Woodward Hall, located on Grove Street as it merges into Summer Street, is now the oldest dormitory on the campus of Bridgewater State College. It was the first major addition to the Bridgewater Normal School under Arthur Clarke Boyden, who had succeeded his father, Albert Gardner Boyden, as principal of the institution in 1906. By the early twentieth century, it was apparent that the school’s boarding accommodations were not adequate. Furthermore, the old wooden Normal Hall, dating back to 1869-73, posed a fire hazard to the entire institution. After initial attempts
failed, the friends of the school were successful in getting the state legislature to appropriate one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars for a new dormitory to be built on land adjoining South Field, which was used by many athletic teams in the school and town. This new brick building, incorporating a number of architectural styles, was opened in December 1911, and immediately one hundred and eighty-six students filled it to capacity. First known as the New Dormitory for Women, it was named Woodward Hall in 1917 in honor of Eliza B. Woodward, a graduate of the school who went on to teach at her alma mater between 1857 and 1887. Situated across Grove Street from the campus structures erected in the 1890’s, Woodward Hall escaped the devastating fire of 1924. This dormitory has seen renovations over the years, but perhaps none as extensive as the ones of the early twenty-first century.

12. The Greenhouses-- “The new greenhouses at the Natural Science Gardens of the Normal School,” wrote the Bridgewater Independent on July 28, 1911, “are completed and ready for occupancy, and are models of construction and adaptability.” This local newspaper goes on to say that a “bronze tablet over the entrance to the front section,” indicates that the donor of this gift was Elizabeth R. Stevens, Class ’76, who, it might have been added, was from Swansea, Massachusetts. For anyone interested in the details of this Normal facility, as it existed almost a century ago, this newspaper account is perhaps the most detailed description of a structure that once ranked with Woodward Hall as the second oldest building on the campus of Bridgewater State College. Principal Arthur C. Boyden, referring to the usefulness of this new facility, wrote in 1919: “Under the skilled and experienced direction of Miss Florence I. Davis and Mr. Louis C. Stearns, courses have been organized in practical botany and horticulture.” A biology teacher at Durfee High School in Fall River, Davis joined the Normal faculty in 1906. The contribution of Stearn, who served the institution between 1911 and 1944, was recognized when a memorial gate in tribute to him was placed at the entrance to the botanical garden.

13. Tillinghast Hall 1917-(the second one)--The last major addition to the Normal Campus before the great fire of 1924 came in 1917. In 1914, a Committee on Education of the General Court, after inspecting Normal Hall built in 1869, and added to in 1873, declared this wooden building “to be fire trap and a menace.” Indeed, by this time, the State Board of Education had already directed the school not to use the
third and fourth stories any longer for dormitory purposes “because of the risk in case of fire.” After a
delay of several years, the state, finally taking action, appropriated $237,000 to erect a new building,
which included a kitchen, dining hall, dormitory, a reference library and an administration office. Before
work could be started, however, the old Normal hall had to be torn down, something that was done with
dispatch, according to those who had the leisure to watch the progress of the work beginning in late
December of 1916. Using local laborers when possible, the construction of the new building was done by
J. W. Bishop Construction Co. of Worcester, Massachusetts. Ready for occupation in 1917, this
replacement of the old Normal Hall was spared, with great effort, destruction in the fire of 1924 and,
albeit with physical alterations and changes of purposes for which it had been built, remains part of the
campus of Bridgewater State University in the twenty-first century. It became known as Tillinghast Hall
when the great fire of 1924 destroyed the first dormitory by the same name.

14. The Gates House--The so-called Gates House has been situated on the corner of Grove and Cedar
Streets since 1925, but its history goes back further. It was built on a piece of land that was bordered by
School, Cedar, Grove Street, and Maple Streets, and, originally, faced School Street. This residence was
erected in 1884-1885 for Edgar Parker, an accomplished portrait painter and his wife Frances A. (nee
Hyde), daughter of Joseph A. Hyde, whose company on Pearl Street specialized in the manufacturing of
cotton gins. The Townscape Institute’s report of the 1980’s characterizes the architecture of the Gates
House as “the finest example of the Queen Anne style in Bridgewater.” Perhaps Louise Dickinson Rich,
author of Innocence Under the Elms and who as a child lived for a short time in a house on the site now
occupied by the Gammons Memorial Methodist Church, captured the popular view when she described
the Gates House as a large dwelling “of all sorts of odd-shaped windows and gables.” Between 1899 and
1914, Samuel Pearly Gates, who tragically lost both his young wife and baby daughter in 1873, owned
this house. His contributions to Bridgewater’s economic and civic development between the 1870’s and
his death in 1914 cannot be overestimated. The house was left to his sister, Mrs. Mary E. Shaw, who spent
most of her life in the Gates’s home town of Ashby, Massachusetts, with the will stipulating that the
property would go to the state after she passed away. Just before her death on March 26, 1925, however,
she decided to facilitate the transfer of the house to the state, thus setting the stage for its relocation to its
present location on the corner of Cedar and Grove Streets and the building of Boyden Hall, often called
the Administration Building, made necessary by the destruction of the Normal’s main building,
constructed in the 1890’s, in the great fire on December 10, 1924. Since its relocation, the Gates House
has been used by the school in a variety of ways--dormitory, President’s House, and, at present, Office of
Admissions.

15. Boyden Hall--Despite the tremendous expansion of Bridgewater State College in the last several
decades, Boyden Hall, often called the Administration Building, remains an important centerpiece of the
campus. Designed in the neo-Georgian tradition, this structure was erected after a disastrous fire
destroyed three buildings of the Bridgewater Normal School on December 10, 1924. The land for this
impressive building was bequeathed to the Normal School by Samuel P. Gates, a banker, businessman
and civic-minded citizen of the town. Boyden Hall was named in honor of Albert Gardner Boyden and his
son Arthur Clarke Boyden, principals of the Normal school from 1860-1906 and 1906-1933, respectively.
An inscription on a tablet inside the main door reads: “They gave their hearts, their minds, and their lives
to this school.” Over the years there have been changes made to the interior of the building with a major
renovation project taking place in the 1980’s.

16. Martha Burnell School (The Training School)--From its inception in 1840, the mission of the
Bridgewater Normal School was to prepare teachers to serve in the public schools. From the 1840’s to the
1890’s, however, the Normal School was not consistent in providing its students with hands-on
experiences in teaching. This changed in the 1890’s when a model or training school consisting of a
kindergarten and nine grades became part of the new massive building between School and Grove Streets.
In this new facility Normal students were able to observe and practice pedagogical skills. When the
disastrous fire of 1924 destroyed this building, a new training school was built on the site of the old South
Field on Grove Street. Martha Burnell, who came from Gorham, Maine, to teach in the Normal model
school in 1895 and became its principal in 1919, continued as head of the new model school, which was
dedicated on October 22, 1926. When she retired in 1938, this training school was renamed in her honor.
The Burnell School continued its work as the Normal School became a State Teachers College and, then,
a State College. When a new Burnell campus school for teacher training was opened in 1979, the Grove Street school became Harrington Hall in tribute to Lee Harrington, who had so ably served the college as its Academic Dean. After providing space for academic classrooms and offices for counseling and the Board of Trustees, a renovated Harrington Hall became the home of the School of Management and Aviation Science in January 2003.
About the Author

Benjamin A. Spence, a native of Fall River, Massachusetts, a city about twenty miles south of Bridgewater, began his education in the public schools of that community. He attended Bridgewater State College between 1955 and 1959, earning his undergraduate degree in secondary education and history. After teaching social studies at the junior-senior high school level in Somerset, Massachusetts, for two years, he went on to receive his MS, 1962, and PhD, 1971, in history from the University of Wisconsin. Almost all of Dr. Spence’s teaching career was spent at Bridgewater State. Following his retirement in 1995, he began to do historical research on the Town of Bridgewater, concentrating mainly on the first quarter of the twentieth century, a period of American history in which he specialized.