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2010

### A History of the Parker-Gates House and its First Four Residents to 1925, Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Benjamin A. Spence

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**Bridgewater, Massachusetts  
A Town in Transition**

**A History of the Parker-Gates House  
And  
Its First Four Residents  
To 1925  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts  
(Bridgewater State University)**

**Dr. Benjamin A. Spence  
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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 the use of the computer. 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. Mabel 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. My research has also been enriched by the many conversations with Robert Wood, a member of Bridgewater's Historical Commission and the town's leading authority on the history of property deeds. He has been most generous in sharing his findings with me. 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. I appreciate 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 advise me on putting my essays into more permanent forms.

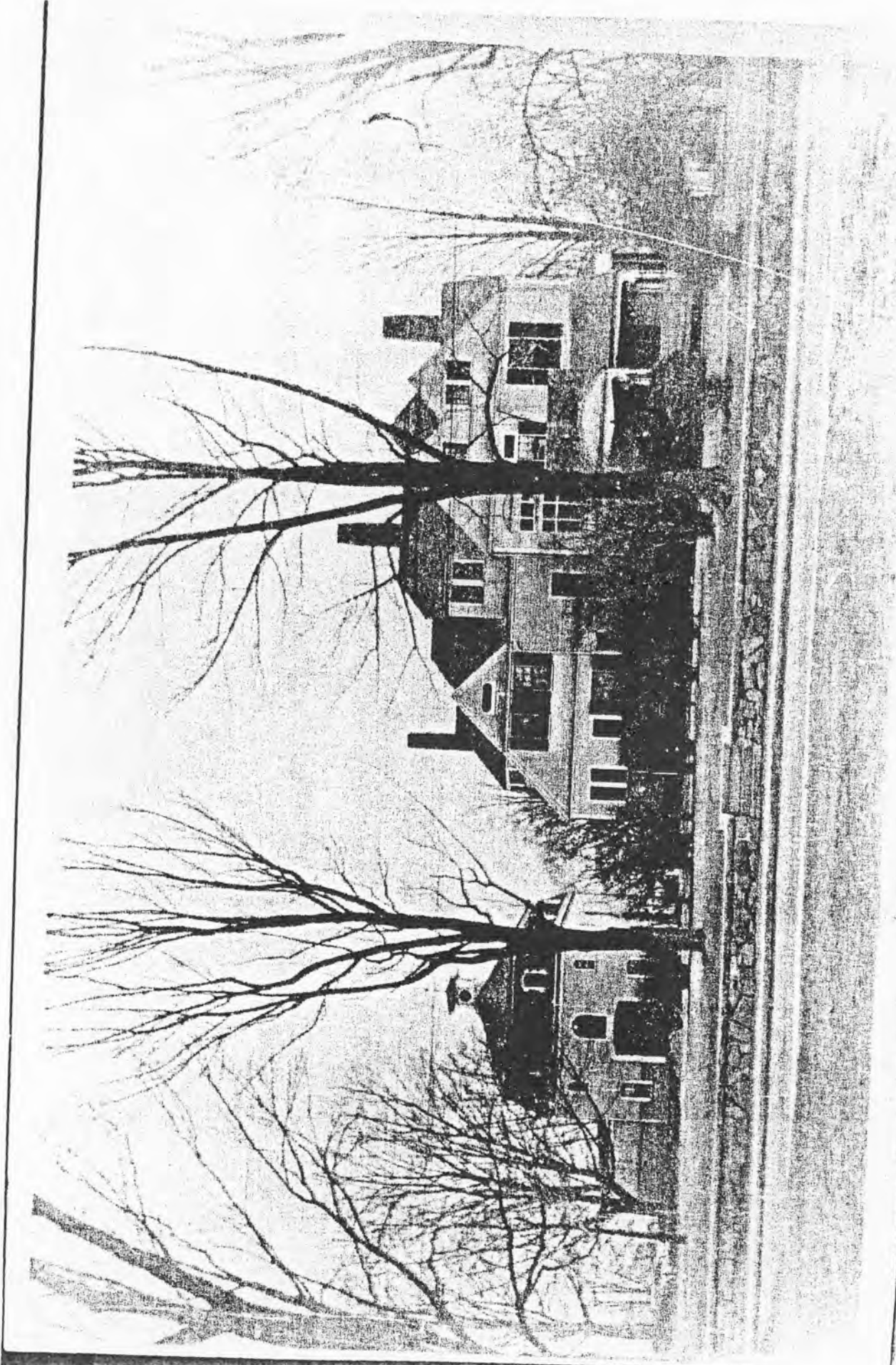
In preparing this essay on the Parker-Gates-Shaw House, I owe a special debt of gratitude to James Mike Bois, George B. Rizer and David R. Moore, all citizens of Bridgewater who contributed in different ways to a collection of historical pictures of the town. Bois, one of the Bridgewater Historical Collectors, diligently collected

over 450 scenes of Bridgewater, many of which were included in the two pictorial histories, 1987 and 1994, prepared by the Collectors. Equally important was the contribution of Rizer, a professional photographer for the Boston Globe, whose artistic skill reproduced all the pictures in these two works, “bringing to life some that were faded or in some way defective.” Thanks to the skillful and time-consuming work of David R. Moore, Chairman of Bridgewater’s Historical Commission, over 500 historical pictures, including many found in the two earlier works, have now been digitized and placed on one computer disc, labeled the Rizer Collection, creating an historical treasure easily accessible to those interested in the town’s rich heritage. I will continue to include pictures from this collection in future essays.

In addition to making use of the Rizer Collection, readers will note that three other features are more prominent in this essay, my seventh, so far, in my ongoing study: Bridgewater, Massachusetts: A Town in Transition.\* Footnotes frequently cite one of my first six studies, allowing readers and, indeed, myself to cross reference relevant material. I have also included more subject matter references, perhaps violating at times the dictum that if historical facts are not important enough to include in the text, they should not be in a footnote. Since I have done a great deal of research on a variety of topics dealing with Bridgewater’s history, I have on occasion informed my readers of my intentions to write about some of them in the future. Only time will tell if my ambitions outreach my grasp.

One final note concerning bibliography: 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 of Bridgewater.

\* My works on education, churches, stores and services, manufacturing, transportation, fire service and the Parker-Gates-Shaw House in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, concentrate on the years between 1900 and 1910, but also, when appropriate, include extensive historical background. Copies of these studies can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library, the Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State University, the Memorial Building of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society in West Bridgewater, and the library of the Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton, Massachusetts.



Parker-Gates House  
Rizer Collection

**A History of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House  
and  
Its First Four Residents  
To 1925  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts  
(Bridgewater State University)**

The Samuel P. Gates House, located on the southeastern corner of Cedar and Grove Streets, in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, is the oldest and only pre-1900 structure on the campus of Bridgewater State University. Unlike its nearest rival for this distinction, the Albert Gardner Boyden Gymnasium, which was dedicated on June 24, 1905, the Gates House was erected as a private residence in the middle of the 1880's, rather than as a building for the institution, which between 1840 and 1933 was one of the state Normal Schools for the training of teachers. After this "homestead" was acquired by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in late March of 1925, with the expectation that it would become part of Bridgewater Normal, it was moved from its original site facing School Street to its present on-campus location. Given this re-location and forty five years of private ownership, it is understandable that little has been written previously about the origins and early history of what has been described as an "appealing Queen Anne house." In his 1933 historical account of Bridgewater Normal, Arthur C. Boyden, principal between 1906 and 1932, makes almost no mention of the building, other than implying it was part of a "gift of a lot of two acres" willed to the school by Gates who had studied there in the middle 1850's and that it was "made over into a cottage dormitory" after becoming part of the campus. A comprehensive survey of Bridgewater's historical architecture, conducted in the 1980's by the Townscape Institute, mistakenly has the house having been being built for Gates. This treasure trove of information, however, was not far off the mark in placing its construction in "the late 1880's." Serving at one time or another as a dormitory, a home for the president of the college, and, at present, its Office of Admissions, a fuller and more accurate account of the early history of the Gates House and its first four residents is in order. Hopefully the following essay will contribute to this quest. <sup>1</sup>

The lot of two and three-eighths acres on which the Gates House and Boyden Hall, Bridgewater University's main administrative center, now stand was well-defined by the middle of the nineteenth century. Known as the Pump or Windmill Lot, it was part of extensive land holdings of Abram Washburn (1795-1881), a member of a family associated with Bridgewater from its beginnings. Four streets, all officially accepted by the town by the early 1850's, served as boundaries for this plot of land:

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<sup>1</sup> Bridgewater Independent, Jan. 30, 1914, June 12, 1925; this local newspaper began to be published in 1876-1877 and will be cited hereafter as BI; Arthur C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School (Bridgewater, Massachusetts: Bridgewater Normal Alumni Association, 1933), p. 147; Townscape Institute, Form 127, pp. 127-128; copies of this survey, done under the direction of Edward W. Gordon in the 1980's, can be found in the Bridgewater Public Library; Zenos Edmund Scott was the first president of the college to reside in the Gates House, beginning in April 1933.

to the north School, 1845; west Cedar, 1849; east Maple Street, 1851; and south Grove, 1851. On June 1, 1849, Washburn, who a few years earlier had donated land immediately to the east of what would become Maple Street for the building of the first State Normal School in America, conveyed the lot, bounded by these four streets, to William J. Cutter. It was from him in 1860 that Joseph A. Hyde, who already owned parcels of land on the south side of School Street and between Bedford and Cedar Streets, acquired the lot for \$2,000.<sup>2</sup>

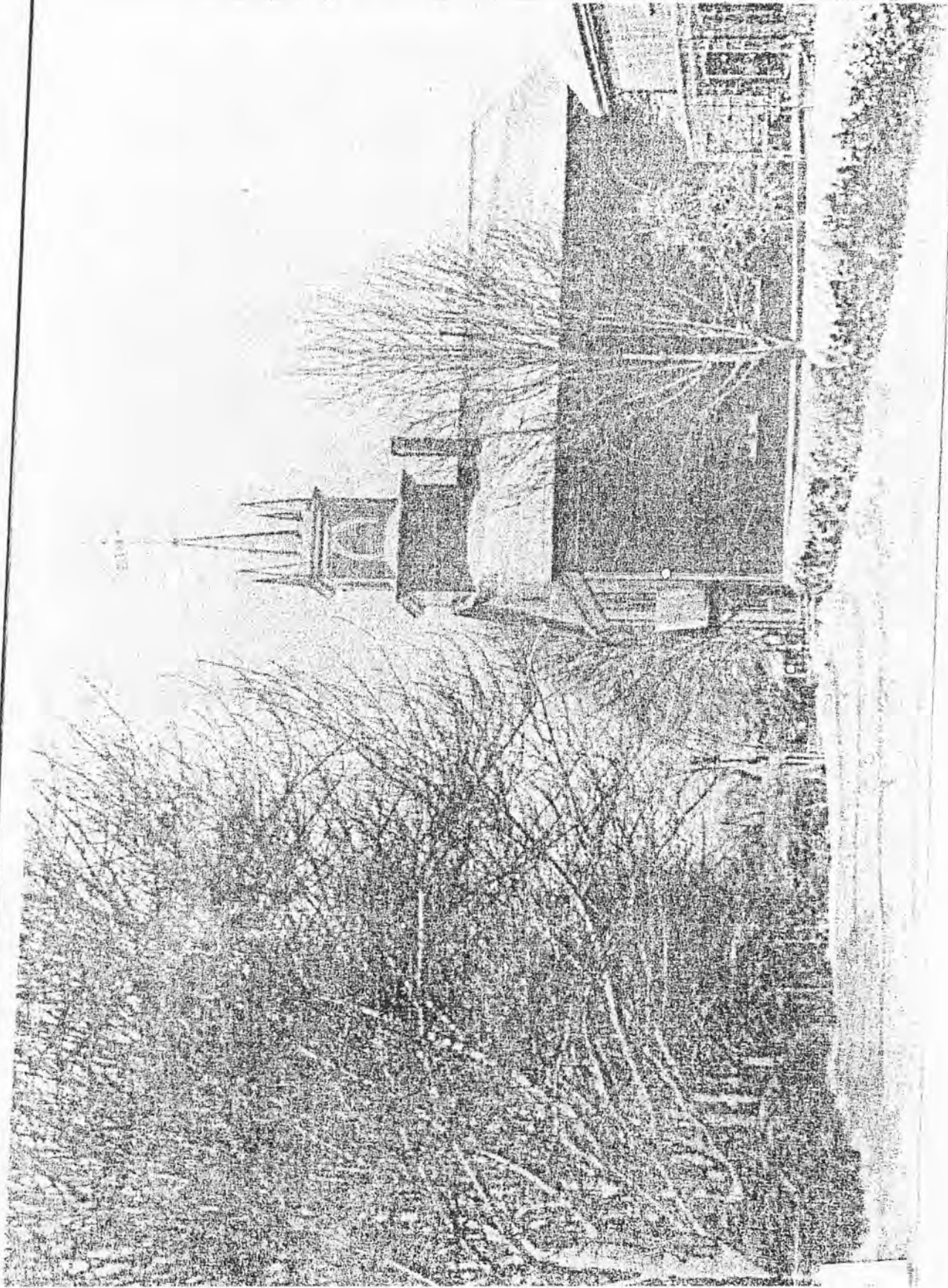
By the time Hyde came into possession of this property, he was already well-known in Bridgewater as “the managing agent and the leading proprietor” of Bates, Hyde, & Co., an enterprise specializing in the manufacturing of cotton gins. This business was started in 1833 in a small shop on Bedford Street and, then, taking advantage of the railroad’s arrival to this small town of less than 3,000, moved its operations to larger quarters on Pearl Street in the late 1840’s. During the last seventeen years of his life, Hyde’s energy and time were not exclusively devoted to his manufacturing firm, however. Among other important contributions to the broader life of the town were his leading roles in establishing the Bridgewater Savings Bank in 1872, serving as its first president until his death on September 22, 1877, and in the building of a new sanctuary in 1871 for the New Jerusalem Church on the corner of Bedford and School Streets by donating the land for this endeavor. Two extant houses in Bridgewater were identified by the Townscape Institute in the 1980’s as having been built for Hyde in the middle of the nineteenth century, one on Cedar Street, the other on Bedford Street, next to the New Jerusalem Church. The “Schedule of Real Estate” in Hyde’s will seems to suggest that at the time of his death, the family “Homestead” was located at the Bedford Street address.<sup>3</sup>

While more research might definitively reveal which of these homes was Hyde’s residence, several points about the lot east of Cedar Street that he acquired in 1860 and owned until his death in 1877 are worth making since they are part of the historical background of the house later acquired by

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<sup>2</sup> Many thanks to Robert Wood, a member of the Bridgewater Historical Commission and the town’s leading authority on the history of property deeds, for giving me full access to his extensive research on the matters discussed in the above paragraph; “Report of the Selectmen and Overseers of the Poor of the Town of Bridgewater,” Annual Town Report 1854, pp. 15, 18, 20; BI, Feb. 15, 1890, April 3, 1925; “Col. Abram Washburn,” Representative Men and Old Families of South-Eastern Massachusetts (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1912), Vol. II, pp. 883-884; “Washburn, Abram (Col.), 1795 to 1881,” History Highlights: Bridgewater, Massachusetts-A Commemorative Journal, ed. by Katherine M. Doherty (Taunton, Massachusetts: Published For the Bicentennial Commission By William S. Sullwold, Publishing, 1976), pp. 279-280; “Accepted Streets,” Town of Bridgewater, pp. 3, 7, 9, 12; Maple Street, not to be confused with Maple Avenue, was discontinued as a town street on April 30, 1925, when the Normal School came in possession of the Gates estate; my appreciation to Bob Wood for making me aware of this street list and to Ronald R. Adams, Bridgewater’s Town Clerk, for making me a copy of it.

<sup>3</sup> BI, July 20, 1889, Sept. 25, 1896, Feb. 4, 1910, Oct. 30, 1914; Census of Massachusetts, 1905, Vol. I, p. 819; “Schedule of Real Estate,” Will of Joseph Hyde, No. 11131, entered Oct. 4, 1877; this last source, which I found in the Massachusetts Archives in Boston, was not as legible as I would have wished; Joshua E. Crane, “History of Bridgewater,” Hurd’s History of Plymouth County (Philadelphia: The J. W. Lewis & Co., 1884), pp. 785-786; I often use a reprint of the Crane’s history edited by James William Buckley and Katherine Pratt Jordan and printed in 1986 by Lion Print in Bridgewater for The Bridgewater Historical Collectors; Townscape Institute, Form 15, pp. 87-88, Form 31, pp. 125-126; “The Bridgewater Savings Bank,” The Bridgewater Book-Illustrated (Taunton, Massachusetts: William S. Sullwold Publishing, Inc., 1985), no consistent pagination; this latter work was published by the Old Bridgewater Historical Society-West Bridgewater, Massachusetts; for more about Joseph A. Hyde see pages 6-8, 14, in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater (Charleston, S. C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), pp. 12-13.



Methodist Episcopal Church  
1874-1914  
(Rizer Collection)

New Jerusalem Church  
1834-1871



Bridgewater Normal. Whatever structures, if any, were located on this piece of land during these years, it was certainly not what would become known many years later as the Gates House. No such grand dwelling of the Queen Anne style of architecture obstructed the view of passersby, including Hyde, as they looked eastward from Cedar Street at the physical expansion of this school, which included the 1861 and 1871 additions to the original 1846 building and the first residence hall in 1869, situated on the corner of School and Summer Streets. When Hyde looked westward across Cedar Street from his lot in the early 1870's, he would have seen the first meetinghouse of the Bridgewater Society of the New Jerusalem, which was erected in 1834 and where he had worshipped until 1871, before he and his fellow parishioners moved into their new church on the corner of School and Bedford Streets, a structure that still graces the southeastern part of Bridgewater's Central Square.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Parker House-1884-1885 to 1899**

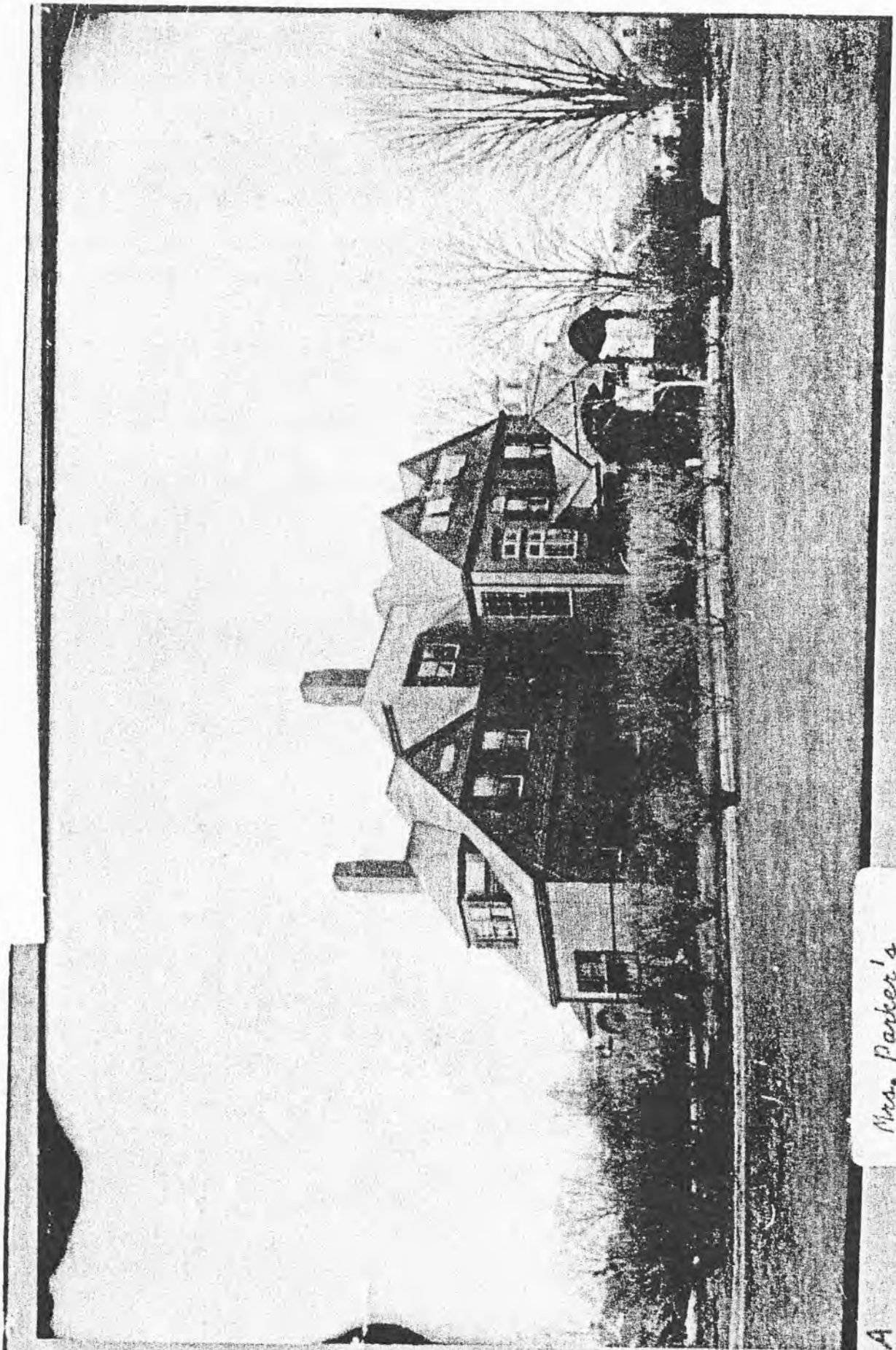
The most important and direct connection with the construction of what would be known as the Gates House and the seventeen years, 1860-1877, however, was the marriage in 1864 of Edgar Parker, who was born in Framingham, Massachusetts, on June 7, 1840, to Hyde's twenty-two year old daughter Frances Ames Hyde. Parker attended the public schools in his hometown, Norwich University in Vermont, and the Bridgewater Academy, a private school established in 1799 to provide education beyond the grammar school level. Most likely, it was while attending this school, situated in the town's Central Square, that he met his future wife, a Bridgewater native. In the year prior to their marriage, Parker had "received his degree of M. D. from Harvard University" and served for a short time as an "assistant surgeon" in the Civil War. After "being wounded at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863," leading to his discharge "by reason of disability" he spent some time in the hospital, but never completely recovered from his "severe wound." Resuming his medical career, he practiced in "Saxonville and Western Massachusetts," and then in 1867 accepted an "appointment as surgeon on the *Ontario* of the American Steamship Line." Having shown special talent in painting earlier in his life, Parker decided to leave this position to take up the profession of portrait painting. Whether this move was in part made possible by the wherewithal of his wife is a matter on which I can only speculate, but beginning, most likely in the 1870's, the couple made their home in Bridgewater, where, on the death of her father, Mrs. Parker evidently inherited the lot which he had purchased from Cutter in 1860.<sup>5</sup>

Parker's professional career was pursued in Boston and spanned a period of about twenty years. Most likely it was in the 1870's that he established a studio in "a beautiful building at the corner of Winter

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<sup>4</sup> For more about the New Jerusalem Church through the 1870's see pages 11-12 in my essay on the churches in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>5</sup> BI, April 16, 1892, Oct. 23, 1896, Dec. 22, 1899; Boston Daily Globe, April 12, 1892; Boston Evening Transcript, April 12, 1892; Crane, pp. 787-788, 804, 809; Harry George Woodworth, Vital Statistics of Bridgewater, Massachusetts 1855 to 1898: Births Marriages Deaths -Extracted from Bridgewater Annual Reports (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc.-Willow Bend Books, 2005), pp. 77, 150; while Parker's obituary in the Boston Daily Globe has him graduating from Bridgewater Normal School, my research failed to find his name listed among the



Mrs. Parker's house,  
on site of Warren

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Parker House  
(Rizer Collection)

A

and Washington Streets,” where he was “soon receiving,” in the words of Joshua E. Crane, Bridgewater’s pre-eminent local historian and proprietor of a general store on the corner of Broad and Summer Streets, “the patronage of many distinguished persons as a portrait painter and his work has given him a high position among the profession.” One of Parker’s best portraits was that of John Greenleaf Whittier, a New England poet, 1807-1892, perhaps remembered most for “Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl,” who gave the artist sittings in 1875. It was around this time that Parker began his long association with the Boston Art Club, an organization dating back to 1854-1855, but not on a sure footing until it was “incorporated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on March 3, 1871.” With “the purpose of advancing the fine arts by the establishment of a Gallery and Library,” the club between 1871 and 1882 rented “a bow-front brick townhouse on Boylston Street,” adding “a spacious picture gallery” behind this building. In 1873, 1874 and 1876, Parker contributed several oil portraits to the club’s exhibitions. He also enjoyed, I suspect, the camaraderie of fellow artists as they gathered in the club’s dining facilities and readings rooms, most likely not paying much attention to the organization’s initial policy of excluding women from its membership; they were, nevertheless, allowed to show their works at the club’s exhibitions. Throughout the 1880’s, Parker’s commitment to the club grew, serving on its executive committee in 1881 and holding the office of one of the organization’s two vice- presidents between 1883 and 1885. He continued to contribute his works to the club’s exhibitions, which beginning in 1882 were held in “a permanent clubhouse” built on Newberry Street, a thoroughfare created as part of the city’s project to fill in Boston’s Back Bay. Parker’s last portrait, exhibited in early 1889, was of Col. Arnold A. Rand, a member of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, an organization to which the artist himself had been elected a member in 1881.<sup>6</sup>

Despite spending much of his professional time in Boston in the 1880’s, Parker, hopefully in consultation with his wife Frances, found time to plan the building of a house in Bridgewater on the lot she inherited in 1877 from her father Joseph A. Hyde. Two short references in the Bridgewater Independent make it clear that the construction of this new residence, later so closely identified with Samuel Pearly Gates, began in 1884 as a new home for the Parkers. The first, on March 21, 1884, simply read: “Mr. Edgar Parker is contemplating building a residence on School Street, the coming season.” A second reference on April 11, making it clear that the contemplative stage had given way to a plan of action, stated: “Edgar Parker, the artist, will next week commence the erection of a fine residence on

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graduates of this institution.

<sup>6</sup> BI, Dec. 24, 1887; Boston Evening Transcript, April 12, 1892; Boston Daily Globe, April 12, 1892; Crane, pp.787-788; The Boston Art Club: Exhibition Record 1873-1909, Compiled and Edited by Janice H. Chadbourne, Karl Gabosh, and Charles O. Vogel ( Madison, Ct.: Sound View Press, 1991), pp. 298-299; Vogel’s “History of the Boston Art Club, 1854-1950,” found in the preceding source, was very helpful to me; Mantle Fielding, Dictionary of American Painters, Engravers, and Sculptors (Stratford, Conn.: John Edwards Publisher, 1971), p. 269; Encyclopedia of American Art before 1914, Edited by Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Reference Limited, 2000), p. 58; website [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston\\_Art\\_Club](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_Art_Club); my thanks to Art Historian Nancy Jarzombek who contributed heavily to the account on this website; I also received valuable information via telephone from one of the librarians of the Fine Arts Department of the Boston Public Library and the archivist of the Boston Art Club; I found it surprising that a “programme” prepared by the teachers of Bridgewater High School for December 17, 1887, in honor of Whittier’s birthday makes no mention of Parker’s portrait of this leading New England poet.

School Street, between Maple and Cedar. William Bassett and Mr. Witham have the contract for the cellar and George Hayward [one of the three builders cited by Crane's in his 1884 town history] will do the carpenter work." Assuming the Bridgewater Independent included items about the various stages in the building of what would prove to be the town's "finest example of Queen Anne style" architecture and that the completion of the imposing structure might well have elicited glowing comments, I am sorry to report that copies of this newspaper for the year following the start of construction are missing from the microfilm project done in the 1980's.<sup>7</sup>

As strollers, including townsfolk and students and teachers at Bridgewater Normal, made their way on School Street between Summer Street and the southern end of Central Square what were their reactions and comments about this new addition to the town's list of fine homes? How many could have predicted that its size and Queen Anne architectural style would lead the Townscape Institute a century later to conclude: "Indeed, it is an unusually full blown example of this style in southeastern Massachusetts." Adding flesh to its conclusion, this survey of Bridgewater's historical homes went on to offer the following description of the house: "It is characterized by an irregular plan, interesting volume and complex roof configuration. Clad with alternating passages of clapboards and wood shingles, this house features a variety of window sizes, including a tall oriel window...which presumably reflects a stair hall. Windows contain 8/2 wood sash in the Queen Anne manner and exhibit colorful, well crafted stained glass." These expert architectural comments, it should be kept in mind, were written many years after this house had been moved to a less engaging location on the corner of Grove and Cedar Streets (a change of which the Townscape study was aware) and do not capture the more expansive setting and grandeur of the Parker estate, apparent to all but the most unobservant passersby in the late nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Fortunately, the so-called Rizer Collection, an extremely helpful compilation of over 500 historical photographs of Bridgewater, includes, if my perusal is correct, three pictures of the "Parker-Gates-Shaw" House" before it was moved to make room for the present Administration Building (Boyden Hall) of Bridgewater State University. One of them (numbered 23) particularly caught my attention for three reasons: the imposing nature of the structure and its expansive setting; my immediate realization that it was what we have all referred to as the Gates House, but in this case located on its original site facing School Street (my readers might notice that on the left side of the photograph can be

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<sup>7</sup> BI, March 21, April 11, May 16, 30, 1884, April 16, 1892, Oct. 5, 1895; Townscape Institute, Form 32, pp. 127-128; by way of contrast, we are able to read in the April 8, 1893, edition of the Bridgewater Independent a very interesting description of the new house built by Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Boyden on the corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue; known as "Groveside," this structure, unlike the Gates House, was torn down in the 1950's to make way for Pope Hall, a women's dormitory at Bridgewater State College; around the same time that the Parkers' house was started, two residences between the couple's future home and the New Jerusalem changed hands. The Misses Helen R. and Marcia P. Bates purchased the house on the west corner of School and Cedar Streets, and the next house to the west was sold by Reverend Wright to Joseph A. Bowman, who ran an express business with headquarters next to Cole's apothecary on the northeastern part of Central Square.

<sup>8</sup> Townscape Institute, Form 32, pp. 127-128; I omitted a small portion of the Townscape description because it applied only to the house after it was moved in 1925 to its present location; since this study looked at Bridgewater houses still extant in the 1980's, it was natural that the photograph included in this study was of the Gates House in its

seen parts of the meeting house on Cedar Street which was built for the parishioners of the New Jerusalem Church in 1834 and used as a place of worship by the town's Methodists between 1874 and 1914); and, most important of all, the writing superimposed on the photograph reading: "Mrs. Parker's House on site of Horace [Mann Auditorium]." Prior to seeing this picture and reading the two newspaper items cited above, nothing in my research on Bridgewater had suggested to me that the so-called Gates House had been built for the Parkers in 1884-1885.<sup>9</sup>

The Parkers, who did not have children, were in their early forties, when they moved into their new home on School Street. During the middle 1880's, Edgar continued painting portraits, including those of Dr. Abraham T. Lowe and Albert Gardner Boyden. At the time of his portrait, Lowe, a former citizen of Bridgewater and president of the First National Bank of Boston for more than twenty years, was approaching his ninetieth birthday. The fine house that he had had built around 1845 on the corner of South and Pleasant Streets, now the Bridgewater Nursing Home, was occupied in the 1880's by his son, Dr. Lewis G. Lowe, who in the early 1870's established what soon became the town's most important insurance business. More germane to the history of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House was the portrait of Albert Gardner Boyden, commemorating of his twenty-fifth anniversary as principal of Bridgewater Normal School. Chosen by a committee of the Normal Alumni Association, Parker, "giving his best efforts" to the project, produced "a large life-size, two-thirds length portrait in oil," which, in the words of the Bridgewater Independent, "will be a valued remembrance of a noble and worthy teacher of hundreds of workers in education." At this point in my research, I don't know if Boyden sat for the portrait in Parker's home or in his Boston studio, but on arrival at the Normal School the painting was "placed in Mr. Boyden's library." Neither can I say if the two men, one living in a new and grand dwelling on School Street, the other since 1869 in Normal Hall on the corner of School and Summer Streets, became good friends as the portrait was being done. One thing is sure, however. Neither of them could have imagined that forty years later the house built for the Parkers would become part of Bridgewater Normal headed by Boyden's son Arthur Clarke Boyden.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to pursuing his profession of portrait painting, Parker enjoyed visiting Europe, having, in Crane's words, "the advantages afforded by such observations as was congenial to his taste."

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present location on the corner of Cedar and Grove Streets.

<sup>9</sup> I owe a special debt of gratitude to James Mike Bois, George B. Rizer, and David R. Moore, all citizens of Bridgewater, who have contributed in different ways to this collection of historical pictures of the town; Bois, one of the Bridgewater Historical Collectors, diligently collected over 450 scenes of Bridgewater, many of which were included in two pictorial histories, 1987 and 1994, prepared by the Collectors; equally important was the contribution of Rizer, a professional photographer for the Boston Globe, whose artistic skill reproduced all the pictures in these two works, "bringing to life some that were faded or in some way defective;" owing to the skillful and time-consuming work of David R. Moore, chairman of Bridgewater's Historical Commission and authority on the history of manufacturing in Bridgewater, over 500 historical photographs, including many found in the two earlier works, have now been digitized and placed on one computer disc, labeled the Rizer collection, creating an historical treasure easily accessible to those interested in the town's rich heritage; the Collector's two pictorial histories and Moore's Images of America: Bridgewater do not include any photographs of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House when it stood facing School Street.

<sup>10</sup> BI, March 21, 1884, May 1, Aug. 21, 1886; Arthur Clarke Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden and the Bridgewater State Normal School: A Memorial Volume (Bridgewater, Mass: Arthur H. Willis, Printer, 1919), pp. 54-55; Townscape Institute, Form 158, pp. 385-386.

On returning from a six-week trip in June of 1885 (hopefully to the new house on School Street), he related “that his steamer encountered large numbers of icebergs off the banks,” numbering by his own count “sixty-three at one time.” During the fall of the following year, Parker spent six weeks in England, in what might have been his last trip abroad. Despite Parker’s “high position” among those in his profession, most folks in Bridgewater likely knew little about him, except that he and his wife Frances lived in the impressive house on School Street, a short walk from the campus of Bridgewater Normal. Even some citizens who relied on the town clock were surprised to read in the Independent on September 14, 1889, “that it was put in running order at the expense of Dr. Edgar Parker...” How many heeded the paper’s admonition that he “ought not to be left to bear alone the expense of keeping it wound” I cannot say.<sup>11</sup>

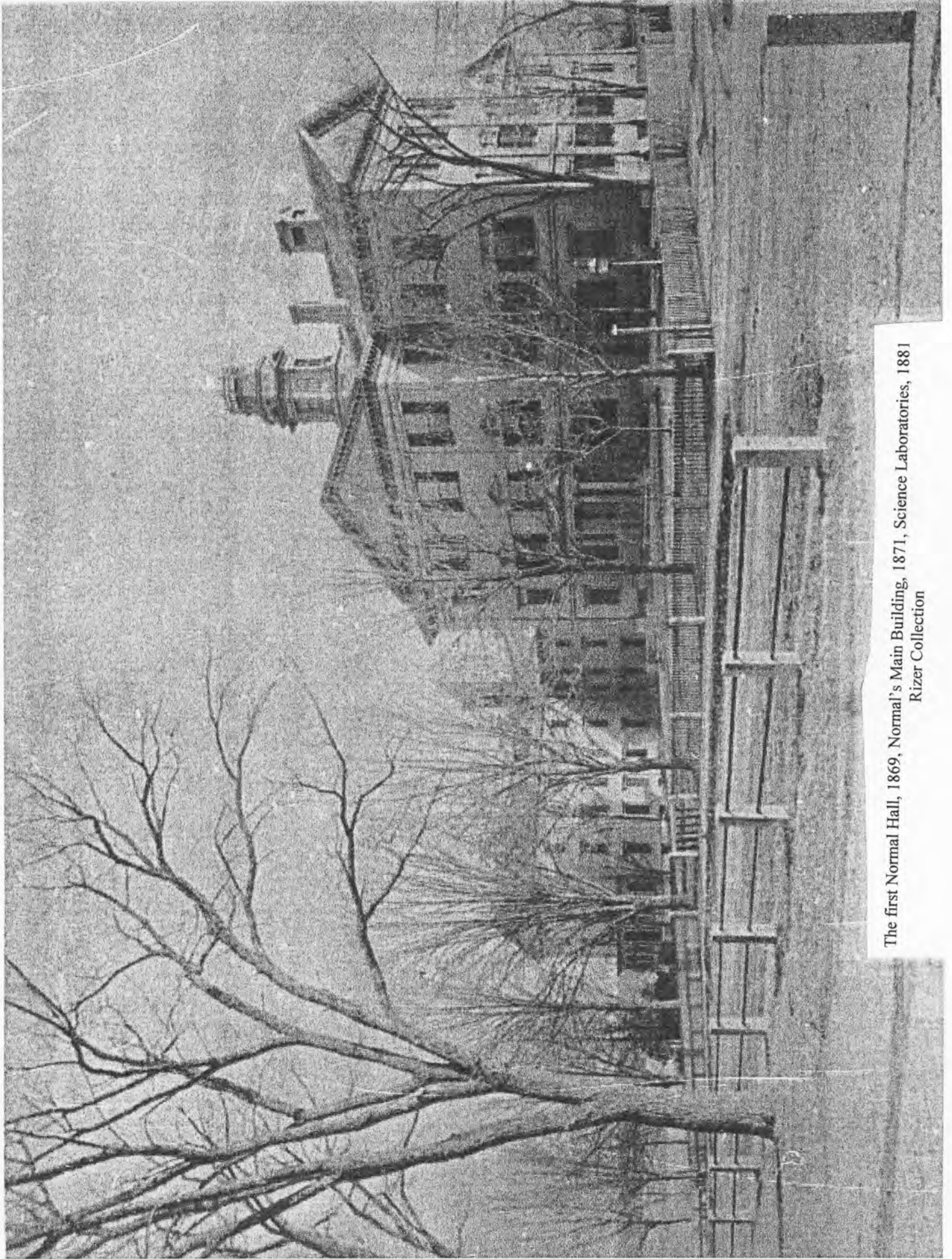
Neither am I privy to Parker’s thoughts about the expansion of the Normal School, situated so close to the couple’s house and the more than two-acre lot on which it was erected. Perhaps Parker was aware that three years before the house was built, the school, reflecting the greater interest in the teaching of science following the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876, which helped celebrate the nation’s one-hundredth birthday, had added an annex for scientific laboratories, immediately south of the Normal’s main building. It would be pleasant to picture the Parkers taking short walks to view the development of Boyden Park, across from Normal Hall on Summer Street, started at Principal Boyden’s own expense and continuing after this six-acre piece of land was purchased by the state from him in 1886. As the institution’s enrollment approached 200 in the late 1880’s, the Parkers most likely took note of the increasing number of “Normals” (an appellation often used by townsfolk to describe students attending the school), who passed to and fro in front of their School Street home. Most important of all, it would be interesting to know what they thought of all the talk about replacing the original Normal building and its additions by an edifice of considerable proportions and constructed of stone and brick. More specifically, what was their reaction to the following short item printed by the Bridgewater Independent on March 16, 1889: “The report that the state had bought the estate of Dr. Parker on School Street, and would erect a costly hall for the Normal School gained extensive circulation this week. Investigation proves it to be without the slightest foundation.” (One can only speculate on how such a development would have changed the subsequent history of Bridgewater State University, particularly its campus.)<sup>12</sup>

Parker devoted himself to his profession of portrait painting until he was “stricken with paralysis” in December of 1890. Perhaps from the windows of his splendid house he was able, at least, to look across Maple Street and take note of the great physical changes taking place on the Bridgewater Normal campus at the start of the new decade, including the erection of an impressive main building of

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<sup>11</sup> BI, April 18, May 2, June 20, 1885, Dec. 4, 1886, Sept. 14, 1889; Crane, p. 788.

<sup>12</sup> BI, Feb. 13, 1886, June 11, 1887, March 16, June 29, 1889, Feb. 15, 1890; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, pp. 50-51; for more about the expansion of Bridgewater Normal in the 1880’s see pages 19-21 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; Jordan D. Fiore, writer, David K. Wilson, photographer and book designer, Ralph Wilsak 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. 23-26, 35; the combination of text and pictures makes this work a “must” for understanding the evolution of



The first Normal Hall, 1869, Normal's Main Building, 1871, Science Laboratories, 1881  
Rizer Collection

stone and brick to replace the wooden one built in 1846 and added to in 1861 and 1871. He might also have witnessed the removal of the annex housing scientific laboratories to a site closer to Summer Street, where it was converted into a small dormitory by George Hayward, who, interestingly enough, had been the carpenter in charge of building the Parker House seven years earlier. The dismantling of the town's Number One schoolhouse near the corner of Summer and Grove Streets, a facility no longer needed since a Model School, accommodating a high proportion of Bridgewater's school children and financed in good measure by the state, was to occupy a good portion of new Normal building.<sup>13</sup>

On April 9, 1892, about seven months after the dedication of this structure, Edgar Parker passed away at his School Street home in Bridgewater. Indicative of his strong ties to the state capital, the Boston Evening Transcript started its announcement of the artist's death as follows: "Boston's artistic, military and club circles have sustained a loss in the death of Edgar Parker..." Echoing this evaluation, the Bridgewater Independent began its account with the headline: "A Well Known Portrait Painter Dead-A Bostonian." Considered "a genial companionable man, deeply fond of music and art," Parker had only lived in his "Queen Anne" house for seven years." Attended by many "relatives and friends," along "with delegations from the Loyal Legion of Boston and the 13<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment Association also of Boston," the funeral services were held in the spacious first floor of the Parker home, rather than in the nearby New Jerusalem Church, where Frances Parker, following in the footsteps of her father, Joseph A. Hyde, was a prominent member. The services, however, were very "appropriately...rendered by the officiating clergymen," Reverend George S. Wheeler, the minister of the "New" church, as it was frequently called, and Theodore F. Wright, its pastor between 1870 and 1889. Pastor Wright, along with Frances's father, had been especially instrumental in the building of a new edifice for the parishioners of New Jerusalem Church on the corner of School and Bedford Streets which had been dedicated on September 30, 1871. Given the fact that both Parkers shared a love for good music, it is not surprising that a "quartette rendered some fine musical selections during the service." Although Edgar Parker had long and strong professional ties in Boston, he was buried in Bridgewater's Mt. Prospect Cemetery, a burial ground laid out in 1842 and soon became a final resting place for many town inhabitants, especially for those with Protestant backgrounds. Charles W., the deceased's brother, and Frances A., Edgar's wife of twenty-eight years, were the only relatives listed in the newspaper account of the death and funeral of one of Bridgewater's most artistic and culturally-oriented citizens.<sup>14</sup>

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Bridgewater State University from its earliest days to 1976.

<sup>13</sup> BI, May 19, 1888, Feb. 15, 1890, July 4, 18, 25, Nov. 28, 1891, April 16, 1892; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, pp. 61-63, 64-67; D. R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 121; Fiore and Wilson, Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are, 1840-1976, pp. 24-27; for more on the Normal building projects of the early 1890's see pages 21-22 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; the Center School, or the Number One Schoolhouse, was bought at public auction for one hundred dollars by Albert J. Elwell, who since moving to Bridgewater in 1888 had become one of the town's leading business and financial leaders; he used much of the material from this schoolhouse to build (or rebuild) the northern section of his commercial property occupying most of the eastern side of Bridgewater's Central Square; for more about this latter matter see page 9 in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>14</sup> BI, April 16, Oct. 29, 1892, July 14, 1894; Boston Evening Transcript, April 12, 1892; Boston Daily Globe, April 12, 1892; for more about Bridgewater's New Jerusalem Church, including its ministers Wright and Wheeler, see



Equally involved, if not more so, in the origins and early history of what it now called the Gates House was Frances A. Parker. The daughter of Harriet (nee Keith) and Joseph A. Hyde, the prominent cotton gin manufacturer, she was a native of Bridgewater and spent most of her life here. It was on land bequeathed to her by her father that she and her husband built the imposing School Street house in 1884-1885. Furthermore, she was listed as the taxpayer of that property from that time until her death in 1896, paying an annual assessment that placed her among the homeowners contributing most to the town coffer. (I wonder if she showed some irritation when her name was more often spelled Francis rather than Frances on the tax roll.) While the Parkers had a close relationship, particularly sharing a mutual interest in music and art, Frances appears not to have joined her husband on his long trips abroad. Thanks in part to an inheritance from her father, she was a woman of considerable means, allowing her to play an important role in the building of the “beautiful house,” a stone’s throw from the Normal School. Had she been Hyde’s son, Mrs. Parker might have taken over her father’s cotton gin business following his death in 1877. Even had she been inclined to get involved in the business world, however, it was hardly an era in American life that encouraged women to display their entrepreneurial abilities. As it turned out, Samuel P. Gates, whom she had known since he had accepted a clerkship in the office Bates, Hyde & Co. in 1858, after spending a year and a half at the State Normal School in Bridgewater, became the treasurer and dominant shareholder in 1877 of the Eagle Cotton Gin Co., the successor to the Bates and Hyde enterprise which dated back to early 1830’s.<sup>15</sup>

With limited opportunities to pursue a business or professional career in the late 1800’s, a woman from what we might label the middle-upper class in small towns similar to Bridgewater generally married, took “care” of her husband, supported him in his life’s work, helped raise a family, supervised the running of the household, and, when time permitted, used her talents to better the cultural and religious life of the community. Frances A. Parker’s life during the eleven years spent in her School Street house mirrored this image, but not completely. Happily married for twenty years by 1884, she continued to be supportive of her husband’s career in portrait painting, understanding his need for traveling to Europe and maintaining his studio in Boston. Six months after Edgar passed away in April of 1892, at the rather young age of not quite fifty-two, she generously “presented to the Bostonian Society portraits of John Adams and Fisher Ames,” copied by her husband from Gilbert Stuart and previously on loan to this organization. One would like to think that more than one Bridgewater friend at this same time accompanied the widow as she went to the state capital on the Old Colony railroad to view an “exhibition in the window of the Old Corner bookstore,” featuring “a portrait of John G. [Greenleaf] Whittier by Dr. Parker, with an autographed letter from the poet, stating that he regards Dr. Parker’s

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pages 11-14 in my essay on the town’s churches through 1910.

<sup>15</sup> BI, April 25, May 2, 1885, Sept. 4, 1886, Sept 1, 1888, Oct. 1, 1892, Dec. 2, 1893, Nov. 3, 1894, Oct. 30, 1914; The Brockton Times, Oct. 19, 1896; “Samuel Pearly Gates,” Representative Men, Vol. I, pp. 369-370; “Gates, Samuel Pearly, 1837 to 1914--Manufacturer,” HH, pp. 264-265; Woodworth, Vital Statistics of Bridgewater..., p. 152; Frances’s mother Harriet had preceded her husband Joseph in death, and less than two years after he had passed way in 1877, Frances’s only sibling, Anne C, who was married to Nathaniel Keay, died at the age of thirty.

portrait of himself the best that has ever been painted.”<sup>16</sup>

Edgar’s commitment to his chosen profession, general inclination “toward an artistic life,” physical incapacitation for the last two years of his life, and death in 1892 meant that Frances generally ran the Parker household from 1885 to her own death in 1896. If the absence of children made this an easier task and mitigated the wear and tear on this new and large house, it might have, may I suggest, also lessened some of the joyful hustle and bustle often accompanying a family’s occupancy of a new home. Although my research tells me nothing directly about this, we can safely assume that Mrs. Parker, similar to other women of her class and economic means, had domestic help in running her School Street household; perhaps made even more imperative by “heart disease,” a malady from which she had suffered for “several years” before her death. A caretaker was also required to maintain the barn and tend the two or so acres of grounds that stretched from School Street to Grove Street.<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Parker’s active involvement in a small number of civic organizations, some of which occasionally held meetings in the spacious quarters of her beautiful home, allowed her to emerge as “one of the most prominent society leaders.” Described as a “woman of culture and of a most kindly disposition,” she “was ever ready to promote the material prosperity of her native town,” and, although few knew this, did much to relieve “the wants of those in distress.” Well-known in “musical circles,” she served on a nine-member executive committee of the Chorale Society, along with Clara S. Prince, a teacher of music and mathematics at the Normal School since 1879, and Dr. Edward Sawyer, a neighbor of the Parkers, who in 1860 had started his medical career on School Street, occupying a house previously the home and office of Dr. Calvin B. Pratt. Formed in the spring of 1886, this choral group held its meetings and rehearsals in the Unitarian chapel off School Street, a most convenient location for Mrs. Parker. Like the earlier “Bridgewater Singing Society,” which dated back to “about 1830,” this new organization was interested not only in performing but also in promoting the art or, some would say, the “science” of good singing. To this end, Mrs. Parker was appointed to a committee of six to investigate the possibility of creating a “singing class under the leadership of a competent instructor.”<sup>18</sup>

Mrs. Parker was a member of the Half-Hour Club, described in the Bridgewater Independent as “an organization which includes a majority of the leading ladies of the town, who have formed themselves into a club for mutual improvement.” Meeting monthly in the winter of 1889 at the homes of its members, this group soon broadened its interests to include projects of public concern, such as “the sprinkling of the village streets.” Most likely, the illness of her husband Edgar temporarily curtailed

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<sup>16</sup> BI, Oct. 15, 1892; had Edgar Parker lived another ten years or so he might have enjoyed talking to Reverend Charles E. Stowe, the youngest son of Harriet Beecher Stowe, famed author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and the pastor of Bridgewater’s Central Square Church between 1902 and 1908, since both men admired Whittier and had a personal acquaintance with this New England poet of “Snowbound;” for more about Stowe see pages 66-72 in my essay on the Bridgewater churches through 1910.

<sup>17</sup> BI, April 16, 1892, Oct. 23, 1896; Crane, p. 788; the barn can be clearly seen in Picture 412 of the Rizer Collection

<sup>18</sup> BI, March 20, April 10, May 8, 15, Oct. 16, 1886, Dec. 26, 1891, Oct. 23, 1896, June 23, 1916; Boston Daily Globe, Oct. 18, 1896; The Brockton Times, Oct. 19, 1896; Crane, p. 819; “Pratt, Calvin Barton, (M. D.), 1806 to 1875--Physician,” HH, pp. 274-275; Townscape Institute, Form 198, pp. 476-468; most people in Bridgewater now refer to the Pratt- Sawyer house on School Street as the Hunt House since Dr. Albert F. Hunt occupied this residence for about fifty years before his death in 1963.

Frances's participation in this organization. But in the fall of 1892, six months after his death, she hosted the club's annual meeting at her house. Some members could have easily walked there, while others arrived by carriage, using the semi-circular drive in front of the house and thankful, especially in inclement weather, of being able to alight at its impressive portico ( this feature of the house was evidently removed when it was moved in 1925 to the corner of Cedar and Grove Streets). Mrs. Parker played active in the local Chautauqua Circle, part of a national movement providing opportunities for thousands of Americans of both sex seeking intellectual improvement. On a Wednesday evening early in April, 1890, the Bridgewater circle, described as being in "flourishing condition," met at the house of Mrs. Parker to hear a lecture on Roman history, "fully illustrated by carefully selected lantern slides," given by Reverend Theodore F. Wright, her close friend and former pastor of Bridgewater's New Jerusalem Church. Also interested in local history, Mrs. Parker was one of the early members of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society founded in 1894. Even more important for the civic well-being of the community was her willingness to be a trustee of the Bridgewater public library, the only elective town position, other than school committee member, open to women in the late nineteenth century. By the time Mrs. Parker was elected to the board, the trustees of the library, established in 1879, due in good measure to the "pioneer work" of her longtime friend and former pastor Theodore F. Wright, had held their meetings for several years in what officially was known as the Bridgewater Memorial Library. Dedicated on Memorial Day, 1882, this unique and beautiful brick building, still standing on South Street, served for century as a public library, museum, and Civil War memorial. While not holding an executive position on the board, which at the time was headed by Arthur C. Boyden of Bridgewater Normal, Frances A. Parker was later remembered for her "long and useful service...in the discharge of the various duties" of this important town committee.<sup>19</sup>

Following in the footsteps of her parents, Frances was an active member of the New Jerusalem Church for almost her entire life. In her youth, she had joined her family and other parishioners as they attended Sunday morning services in a small and unpretentious meetinghouse on Cedar Street. Dating to 1834, this structure holds the distinction of being the first church built by the Society of the New Jerusalem Church in New England and the oldest extant house of worship in the center of Bridgewater. In 1871, seven years after Frances married Edgar Parker, the congregation, whose "founding members were zealous believers in the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg, an eighteenth century Swedish philosopher and religious writer," began worshipping in its new church on the corner of School and Bedford Streets, allowing the town's Methodists to rent and then purchase the Cedar Street property. Mrs. Parker must have had mixed emotions as she gazed westward from her much admired Queen Anne house, nostalgia in

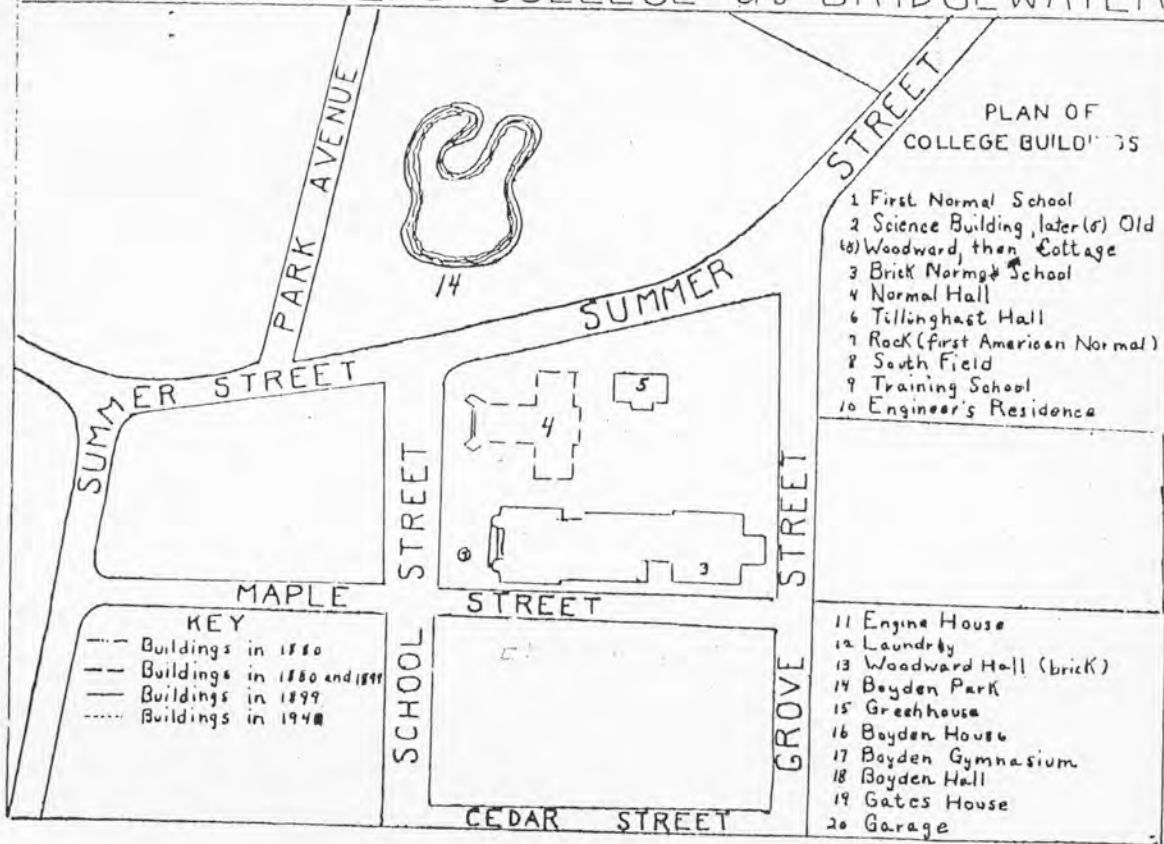
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<sup>19</sup> BI, May 25, 1889, April 5, 1890, April 15, 1892, April 16, 1895, Oct. 24, Dec. 4, 25, 1896, April 1, 1910; anyone interested in the founding and early years of Bridgewater's public library might wish to start with the last of the newspaper entries cited above; The Brockton Times, Oct. 19, 1896; "Wright, Theodore Francis, 1845 to 1907--Minister," HH, p. 280; Marjorie W. Paulson, "History of the Bridgewater Public Library," HH, pp. 123-127; the portico and drive in front of the Parker House can be seen in Pictures 23 and 238 of the Rizer Collection; what made Wright's lecture so worthwhile was the firsthand information he had garnered by his travels abroad in the late 1880's.



New Jerusalem Church  
1871  
(Rizer Collection)

# STATE TEACHERS' COLLEGE at BRIDGEWATER



This map, dating from the 1940's, depicts the plan of campus buildings, old and new. Note the location of Boyden Hall (18) which will serve as a reference point for modern day students. Building 4 in the diagram above is the Normal Hall seen in photograph on preceding page, and building 5 is Old Woodward Dormitory, which had originally been building 2, the science annex of 1881, before being moved across the campus.



seeing the old meetinghouse across Cedar Street, pride in viewing the beautiful spire of the “New Church,” as it was often called, which had been built on land donated by her father, Joseph A. Hyde.<sup>20</sup>

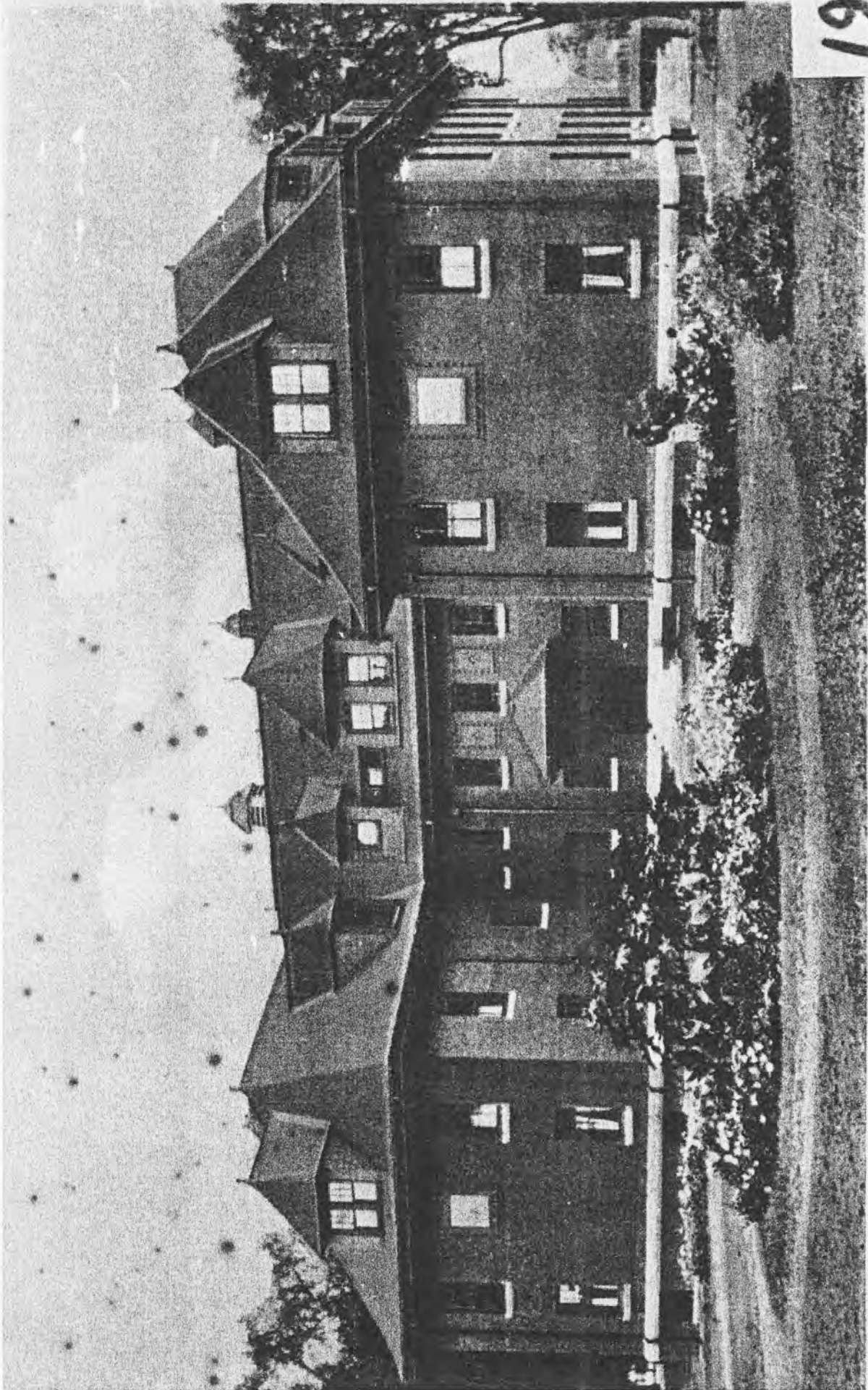
Between the death of her husband in 1892 and 1896, Mrs. Parker was especially committed to the well-being of her church. In June of 1895, two years before the advent of the trolley system made it easy for Bridgewater churches to hold outside events at such places as Lake Nippenicket in the southwestern part of the town and Highland Park in Brockton, the annual picnic of the New Church Sunday school was held on the nearby and well-kept grounds of the Parker estate. From this vantage point, attendees of the affair could have seen the new campus of the Normal School, including the Model School housed in the 1894 addition to the 1891 building. Perhaps there was talk about the state legislature’s decisions earlier in the year to erect a new dormitory close to the corner of Summer and Grove Streets and to develop a “field of two acres for athletic sports across Grove Street from the Model School and the southern end of the Parker estate. Mrs. Parker also showed her commitment to the New Church by serving in 1895-1896 as president of its Ladies’ Sewing Circle. Founded in 1856, when Frances was a young teenager, this women’s organization, the first of its kind among the churches of Bridgewater, was committed “to assist those in dire need.” One of the last church events she attended was a “gentlemen’s tea party.” Held in the church’s vestry on a Wednesday evening in early April of 1896, it proved to be “an exceedingly pleasant affair”...at which about “130 sat down to a supper that did credit to the skill and taste of the gentlemen.” Mrs. Parker, as president of the sewing circle, “read some verses from the ladies, expressing their appreciation of the feast.”<sup>21</sup>

In what was characterized as a “Sudden Death,” Mrs. Frances A. Parker passed away on October 17, 1896, while “riding a tandem bicycle” with one of her young friend, Harry K. Aldrich. (In 1899 he would marry the daughter of Dr. Calvin Pratt, whose office and home was at 77 South Street.) The untimely passing of this “woman of culture and of a most kindly disposition” saddened and shocked the Bridgewater community, where she was “so well and favorably known.” At the time of her death, Frances was only in her early fifties, but “had suffered from heart disease for several years....” During their bicycle ride of about two miles, she and Aldrich stopped a number of times, the last place being at his home on Main Street. After resting here “some little time,” they continued on their way to the Parker house. As they turned the corner from Union Street to Church Street, Aldrich, aware of how riding could adversely affect his companion, asked Mrs. Parker “if she wished to rest again....” Although not

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<sup>20</sup> BI, July 10, 1886, June 15, Nov. 16, 1895, April 4, Oct. 23, 1896; for more about the New Jerusalem Church during the nineteenth century see pages 11-14 in my essay on the churches in Bridgewater through 1910.

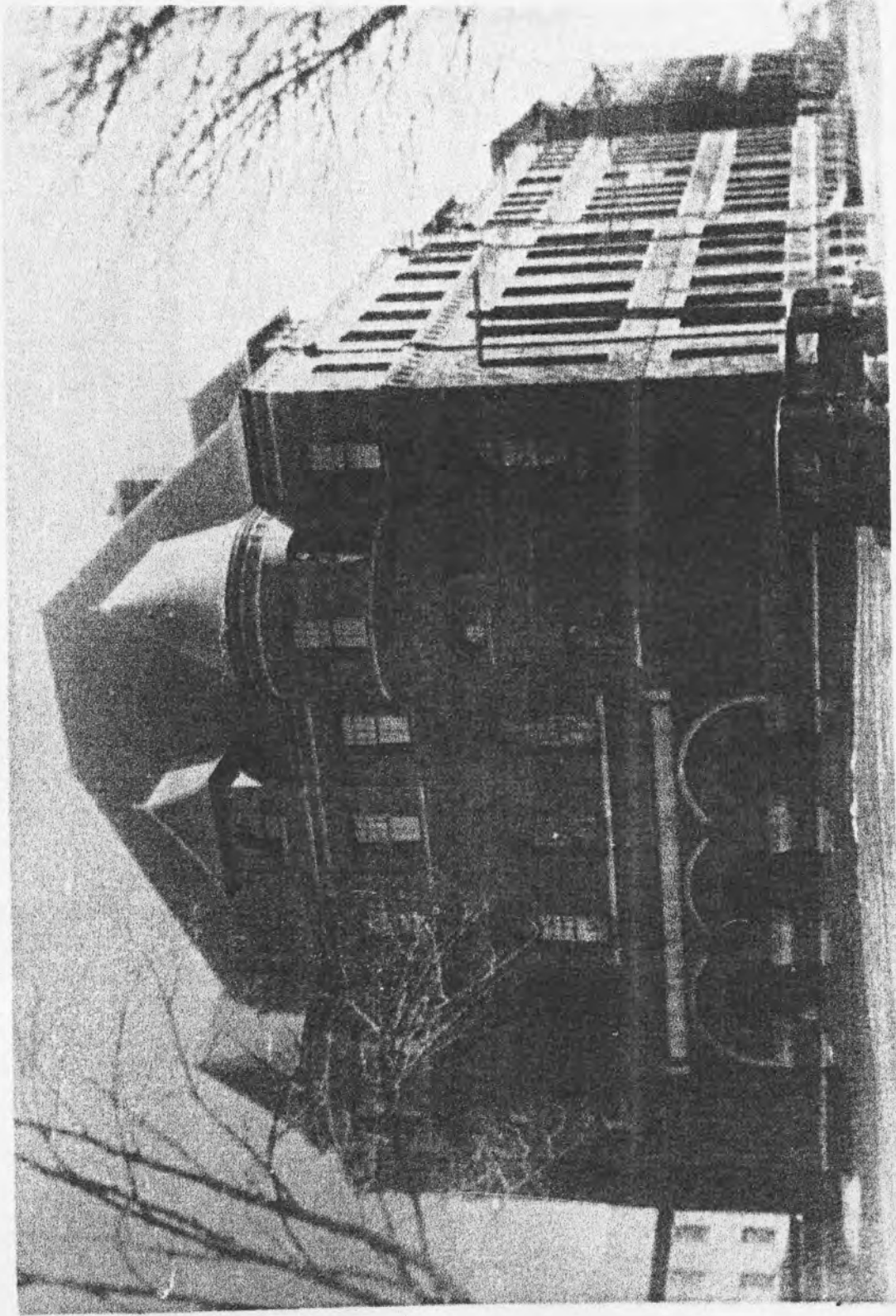
<sup>21</sup> BI, Aug. 21, 1886, Sept. 19, 1891, Aug. 18, Oct. 6, 1894, Jan. 19, March 2, 30, June 15, Nov. 16, 1895, April 4, Sept. 4, 1896; A. G. Boyden, “The State Normal School,” Bridgewater Book, pp. 31-32; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, p. 76; A. C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School, p. 76; Carolyn Morwick and Carole Wright, “The Social Life of the Community,” HH, p. 203; for more about the beginnings of the trolley system that served Bridgewater see pages 36 to 81 in my essay on transportation in this town through 1910; called “Tillinghast Hall,” this new dormitory was just south of the first Woodward dormitory, sometimes called “The Cottage;” the athletic grounds on Grove Street, called the “South Field,” became the premier arena for playing baseball and football, not only for Normal teams but also for those of the town’s high school and others sponsored by numerous organizations in Bridgewater; Harrington Hall now occupies most of this site; I cannot refrain from mentioning that Frances Parker’s name does not appear on the extensive list of those who were invited to the



TILLINGHAST HALL, STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

61

The first Tillinghast Hall, 1895  
Rizer Collection



5

Normal's Main Building, 1894, Including the Model School  
Rizer Collection



thinking it necessary, she agreed to make this last stop before bicycling to the southern end of the Common and, then, continuing the short distance eastward to her home on School Street. After “alighting on Church Street, near the residence” of Paul O. Clark, who, along with Avery F. Hooper, had been a proprietor of Bridgewater’s oldest store, located on the northwest corner of Central Square, Mrs. Parker “remarked how foolish it was to stop so near home.” Scarcely having said this, she began to sway and would have fallen had not Aldrich dropped his bicycle and come to her assistance. After Mrs. Parker was taken into Clark’s house, Dr. George L. Watson was “summoned;” either by telephone, since his office had been connected with this new form of communication as far back as 1885, or by a messenger sent to his office in the Kingman building, located on the northeastern corner of Central Square. By the time Watson arrived, however, she had “passed all help,” leading him to speculate that Parker had died before reaching the house.<sup>22</sup>

Conducted by Reverends Wheeler and Wright, impressive funeral services were held at the New Jerusalem Church, which was filled with Mrs. Parker’s relatives and “many friends.” “The beautiful casket was completely hidden beneath” a profusion of “floral contributions.” Adding to the solemnity of the service, were “appropriate” music selections rendered by a quartette. Included in Wright’s “touching tribute” to his friend of almost thirty years was a list of twelve “Rules of Life,” found in her desk and written in her own handwriting. Since they tell us a great deal about the type of person Frances A. Parker strove to be, I have included these “rules” as a separate part of my text. The internment was at Mt. Prospect cemetery, where four years earlier her husband Edgar had been laid to rest. I was somewhat surprised that Samuel P. Gates, a longtime friend of Frances, was not among the four pallbearers at the funeral. In any case, the death of Frances A. Parker, nee Frances Ames Hyde, marked a turning point in the history of the Gates House; or, should we say, the Parker-Gates House?<sup>23</sup>

### **The Gates House-1899 to 1914**

The public bequests in Mrs. Parker’s will were not surprising: “Bridgewater public library, \$1,000; Bridgewater New Jerusalem Society, \$1,000; Mt. Prospect cemetery, \$200; St. Vincent Memorial hospital, Boston, \$5,000, to maintain a free bed in memory of the late Edgar Parker. Her niece Frances Anne Keay of Clifton Heights, Pennsylvania, received \$3,000 and was also “made residuary legatee.” If the Parkers had had children, perhaps the beautiful house and grounds, stretching from School Street to Grove Street, would have remained in their family. (We can only speculate on what this might have

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Boydens’ “house warming” for their new home on corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue in early April of 1893.  
<sup>22</sup> BI, June 6, 1885, Oct. 23, 1886, Jan. 28, 1888, Nov. 9, 1889, March 30, Oct. 24, 1896; April 6, 1900, March 6, 1914, March 21, 1924; Boston Daily Globe, Oct. 18, 1896; The Brockton Times, Oct. 19, 1896; Crane, p. 209; Townscape Institute, Form 216, pp. 507-508; readers might find it interesting to read about the history of bicycles on pages 88 to 92 in my essay on transportation in Bridgewater through 1910; there were only 17 telephones in Bridgewater in 1888; the so-called Kingman block, once serving as an office for the Carver-Washburn cotton gin enterprise, was purchased by Hosea Kingman in the early 1870’s; a native of Bridgewater, he was one of the town’s leading lawyers and, indeed, of Plymouth County, until his untimely death in 1900; for a bit more about Kingman see pages 37-38 in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater through 1910.

The following are the rules found in Mrs. Parker's desk, and referred to above;

Never charge a bad motive if a good one is conceivable.

Learn to govern yourself, and to be gentle and patient.

Guard your temper, especially in seasons of ill health, and trouble, and soften it by a sense of your own short-comings and errors.

Never speak or act in anger.

Remember that valuable as is the gift of speech, silence is often more valuable.

Do not expect too much from others, but forbear and forgive.

Never retort a sharp or angry word. It is the second word that makes the quarrel.

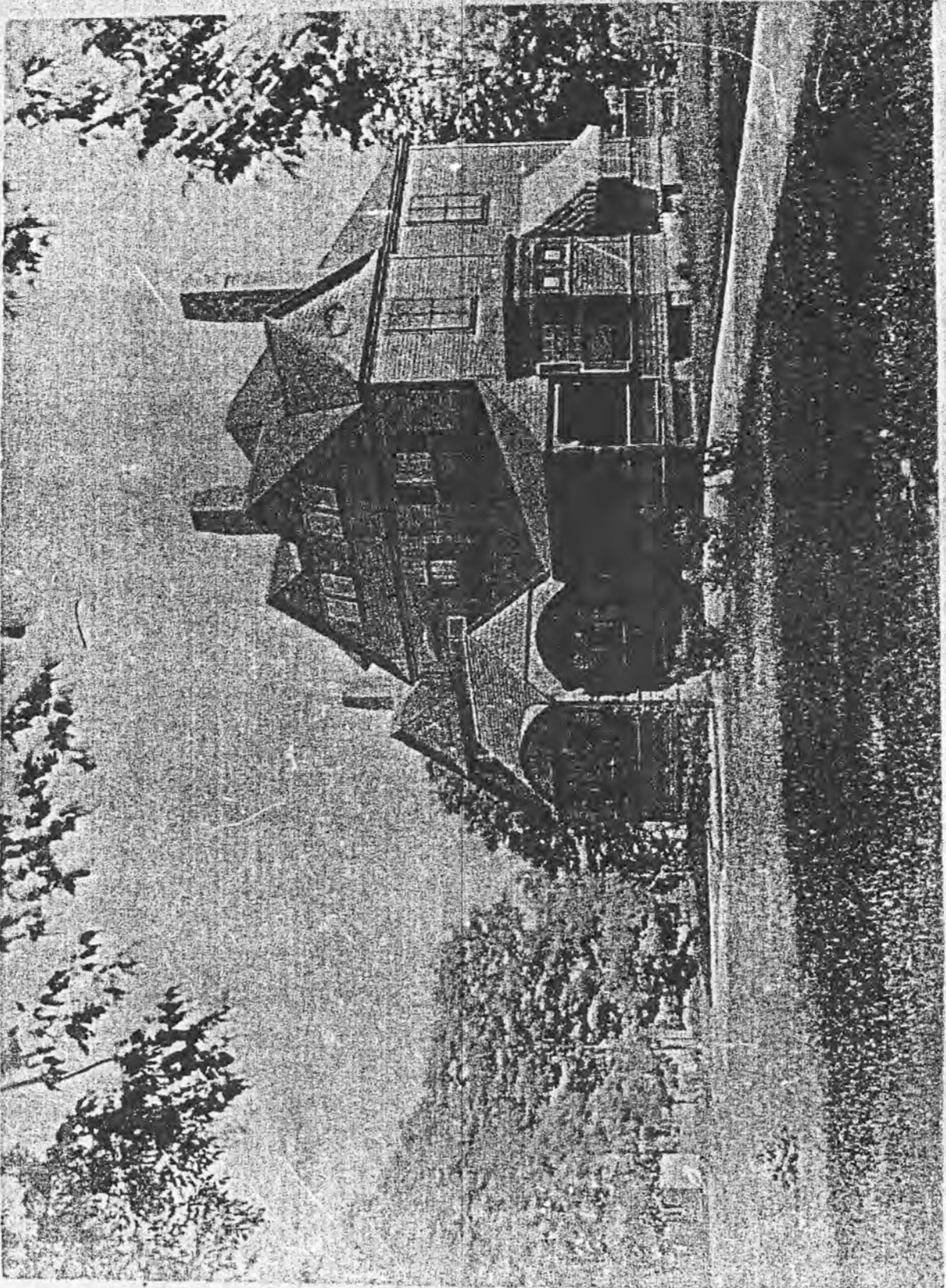
Learn to speak in a gentle tone of voice.

Learn to say kind and pleasant things where opportunity offers.

Do not neglect little things if they can affect the comfort of others in the smallest degree.

Avoid moods and sulkiness. Learn to deny yourself and forget others.

Beware of meddlers and tale-bearers.



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Parker-Gates House  
(Rizer Collection)



SAMUEL P. GATES.

John C. Rand, comp., One of a Thousand : a Series of Biographical Sketches of One Thousand Representative Men of Massachusetts (Boston: First National Publishing Co., 1890), p. 246.

# THE BRIDGEWATER SAVINGS BANK.

The Oldest Financial Institution in the Town, Solid as a Rock and Having Nearly Half Century Record of Unbroken Success.

The Bridgewater Savings Bank was organized March 19th, 1872, and immediately there after opened its doors for business, and ever since has faithfully and wisely invested, and conserved the funds of its many customers. The original members of the corporation who signed the by-laws in 1872 were J. A. Hyde, L. Parsons, Lafayette Keith, Mitchell Hooper, Joshua E. Crane, Samuel P. Gates, Charles K. Pratt, Hosea Kingman, Josiah L. Bassett, Lewis S. Hopkins, Phillip E. Hill, Isaac Damon and Spencer Leonard. All of whom are deceased, except Isaac Damon, now a resident of Wollaston, Mass. The first officers were, J. A. Hyde, President; L. S. Hopkins and Mitchell Hooper, Vice-Presidents; S. P. Gates, Treasurer. The first Trustees were: Phillip E. Hill, Lloyd Parsons, Joshua E. Crane, Lafayette Keith, Josiah L. Bassett, Charles K. Pratt, Hosea Kingman, Isaac Damon, Spencer Leonard. Mr. Gates served continually as Treasurer until his death, January 12, 1914. He was succeeded by S. Lorin Keith who died suddenly, March 5th, 1916, when Harry W. Bragdon was elected, the present incumbent, who for more than 30 years had been identified with the bank as special accountant, and was therefore most highly fitted for the place. The Bank has enjoyed a marked success, and now has a large and rapidly growing list of patrons. Its policy is liberal, yet safe, and it has been a potent contributor to the up-building of Bridgewater

and vicinity. The deposits have reached nearly a million and quarter of dollars, and the annual dividends have averaged 4 per cent. per annum. The Bank's assets are in railroad and municipal bonds, first mortgages on real estate of proved value, and loans to towns, or counties, so that the depositor is assured of securities, not only ample, but of unquestioned solidity.

The present officers of the Bank are: President, William D. Jackson; Vice-Presidents, Paul O. Clark, J. H. Fairbanks; Treasurer, Harry W. Bragdon; Trustees, John H. Fairbanks, Paul O. Clark, Walter S. Little, Charles R. Fitch, Frank E. Sweet, Harry W. Bragdon, Edward A. Hewett, Gustavus J. Lowe, Hollis M. Blackstone, Orrin B. Cole, William D. Jackson, Edward A. MacMaster, Gustavus Pratt; Board of Investment, Paul O. Clark, Edward A. Hewett, John H. Fairbanks, Edward A. MacMaster, Walter S. Little; Auditing Committee, Paul O. Clark, Orrin B. Cole, Gustavus Pratt; Clerk of Corporation, Frank E. Sweet. All representative business and professional men of the community, whose success in life attest their commercial acumen, and who stand sponsors for the Bank and its policies. They point with pride to the record of the institution and ask further consideration of our people who believe in thrift and that wise investment of funds which secures both safety and remuneration. Call at the Bank any time and have the Cashier tell you of thrift.



The late Treasurer, Samuel P. Gates.

Samuel Pearly Gates  
(The Bridgewater Book)

meant for the subsequent history of Bridgewater Normal and State College.) How Samuel Pearly Gates, a long-time friend of Frances A. Parker, came to possess the property by 1899 is not completely clear in my mind. From what I can gather, he, as the executor of her estate, first sold it to the highest bidder, Hosea Kingman, Mrs. Parker's lawyer, for \$8,000, who in turn put the property up for sale to the highest bidder. The most concrete information I found was in the June 23, 1899, edition of the Bridgewater Independent. This piece reads as follows: "The Parker estate on School Street was sold at auction on the premises last Saturday morning to Mr. Bertram Newton of Boston. [Newton was married to Kingman's daughter, Agnes]. It is generally understood that Mr. Samuel P. Gates has purchased the estate from Mr. Newton, but the deed has not yet been transferred." I assume the proceeds from the sale of this impressive Queen Anne found their way into the hands of Frances Anne Keay, cited above. Whatever the circuitous path followed in the transfer of this property, the annual lists of "large tax payers," soon indicated Gates's ownership of this School Street house and grounds of over two acres. In contrast to a tax bill of \$60.79 in September of 1896, Gates paid in August of 1901, \$227.94, about thirty dollars less than Frances Parker's contribution to the town coffer in the last year of her life. Far more difficult, if not impossible, than citing these statistics, is the question of what motivated Samuel Pearly Gates, one of the richest men in Bridgewater at the turn of the century, to purchase this spacious home, where he would live alone for almost fifteen years.<sup>24</sup>

By the time Gates moved into his new residence on School Street, the house built by the Parkers in 1884-1885, he had been associated with the Town of Bridgewater for over forty years. Born on June 8, 1837, in Ashby, a small community in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, located northwest of Boston, Samuel was the son of Pearly and Mary Burr Gates. At the age of nineteen, after receiving a public school education, he entered Bridgewater State Normal School, established in 1840 for the preparation of public school teachers. One might speculate that on occasion he traveled from nearby Fitchburg to Boston and then to Bridgewater on the railroad, a form of transportation that had come to this small town in Southeastern Massachusetts ten years earlier. With an enrollment of less than sixty and a campus of about an acre and a half, including a single building erected in 1846, Bridgewater Normal was hardly an impressive educational institution in the late 1850's. Still, as a marker now reminds passersby, the small wooden structure facing School Street was the first State Normal building erected in America. During his year and a half at the school, the young Gates would have had to room in a private home, hopefully near the campus, since it would be another ten years before the state legislature began voting funds for the building of dormitories at its Normal schools. Given the small size of Bridgewater Normal, Gates and

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<sup>23</sup> BI, Oct. 24, 1896; The Brockton Times, Oct. 21, 1896.

<sup>24</sup> BI, Sept. 1, 1888, Sept. 25, Nov. 27, 1896, Jan. 29, May 21, Aug. 27, 1897, June 9, 23, 1899, March 30, 1900, Aug. 6, 1901; again, I am much in the debt of Bob Wood for the use of his research materials in helping me understand matters relating to the transfers of property, in this case from the Parker estate to Gates; at this point, I do not know where in Bridgewater Gates lived before moving into his new home at the turn of the century; Kingman on June 21, 1866, married Carrie, daughter of Hezekiah and Deborah Freeman Cole and sister of Orrin Bradford Cole, who in the early 1880's established what soon became Bridgewater's leading drugstore, occupying part of the building on the northeast section of Central Square owned by Kingman and where he practiced law until his unexpected death on March 29, 1900; Gates served as one of the pallbearers at Kingman's funeral service held at

his fellow students came to know Marshall Conant, who in 1853 had succeeded Nicholas Tillinghast, the school's first principal, and Albert Gardner Boyden, an 1849 Normal graduate, who in 1857 was "called back" to his alma mater "to act" as Conant's "first assistant." The young Gates could not have anticipated, however, that he and Boyden would become in the course of the next half century two of Bridgewater's leading citizens, each contributing in their own unique ways to the well-being of their adopted community. Equally remote from Gates's mind was the thought that during the last fifteen years of his life, 1899 to 1914, he would live in a beautiful Queen Anne house on School Street, located a short distance from Bridgewater Normal of which Albert G. Boyden would serve as principal from 1860 to 1906.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Boyden, Gates chose not to enter the teaching profession. Rather, beginning what would prove to be a business and financial career of over fifty years, he accepted a position as clerk for Bates, Hyde & Co., a relatively small business specializing in the manufacturing of cotton gins. Located near the railroad on Pearl Street since the late 1840's, this enterprise, with its work force of forty and capital investment of \$30,000, though hardly as central to the town's economy as the Bridgewater Iron Company, was prospering under the leadership of Joseph A. Hyde. Perhaps more research would reveal something about Gates's securing of this position, early relationship with Hyde, and the beginning of a long friendship with Hyde's daughter Frances A., whose house he was to purchase five decades later. It would be interesting to know, for instance, if Gates was a member of the New Jerusalem Church prior to the opening of its new house of worship in 1871, and, if so, had this fostered ties with the Hydes. As was the case with many other young men, Gates's budding career was temporarily interrupted by the American Civil War, a deadly conflict fought over the moral issue of black slavery in the Southern states. In 1863, responding to President's Lincoln's call for volunteers, Gates enlisted in the United States regular army for five years, serving as a clerk in the War Department "for about a year" before being retired "by a special permit of the secretary of war [Edwin M. Stanton]." After the war, Gates returned to Bates and Hyde and continued advancing in that firm. On October 26, 1871, at the age of thirty-four, he married Marcia E. Jackson, daughter of Jacob and Joan Jackson of Plymouth, with the couple undoubtedly looking forward to happy life together. But a little more than a year later, a double tragedy struck their household when Gates's wife passed away on January 20, 1873, followed by the death of the couple's six months old daughter, Marcia J., six months later. Both were buried in Bridgewater's Mount Prospect Cemetery.

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Bridgewater's Unitarian Church.

<sup>25</sup> BI, Nov. 12, 1887, April 8, 1893, Jan. 16, 1914; the obituary in the latter issue of the Independent was especially helpful in summarizing the events of Samuel Pearly Gates's life; "Samuel Pearly Gates," Representative Men..., Vol. I, pp. 369-370; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden..., pp. 12-18, 35-36; "Gates, Samuel Pearly, 1837-1914--Manufacturer," HH, pp. 264-265; Fiore and Wilson, Bridgewater State College--As we were...as we are, 1840-1976, pp. 12-14, 21-22; for more about Bridgewater Normal to 1860 see pages 16 to 20 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; for an extensive treatment of railroad transportation in Bridgewater through 1910 see pages 16 to 36 in my essay on transportation in this town through 1910; it is interesting to note that Gates was a classmate of Eliza B. Woodward, who went on to teach for thirty years at Bridgewater Normal; when she died in November of 1887, he was one of the pall-bearers at her funeral held at the Central Square Congregational Church; I might also add that Gates was on the guest list of those invited to a reception to celebrate the opening of Boyden's new house on the corner of Summer Street and Park Avenue in April of 1893.

Gates never remarried and began to spend more and more of his time on his professional work and a myriad of civic activities contributing to the well-being of the town.<sup>26</sup>

While Edgar Parker pursued his artistic career in Boston, showing little interest in the civic and economic life of Bridgewater, Samuel Pearly Gates emerged in the four decades following the deaths of his wife and daughter as one of the leading citizens of the town, devoting his time and energy to private and public undertakings aimed at promoting its industrial and financial expansion. Only a few highlights of this story will concern us here. May I suggest, however, that some future writer may wish to take up the challenge of writing a full biography of Gates (with a warning that a cache of his private papers may not exist or, at least, be easy to find), who was lauded by the Bridgewater Independent at the time of his death in January of 1914 as “the most honored and best known of Bridgewater citizens....” Among a host of activities throughout the last four decades or so of Gates’s career, two interrelated constants stand out, namely his financial work for the town’s cotton gin industry and banking enterprises. He served for over forty years as treasurer of Bates, Hyde & Co. and its two successors, the Eagle Cotton Gin Company, 1877, and the Continental Cotton Gin Co., 1899. Much of Gates’s fortune came from his involvement with the manufacturing of cotton gins in a manufacturing complex near the railroad on Pearl Street, used by these succeeding companies. The second constant was his position as treasurer of the Bridgewater Savings Bank, the town’s first financial institution, from its founding in 1872 until his death in 1914. From the start, there was a close connection between this bank and Hyde and Bates’s, with some men holding the similar positions in both enterprises, including Joseph A. Hyde and Gates, as president and treasurer, respectively. Despite the name changes in the cotton gin factory on Pearl Street, its symbiotic relationship with the savings bank continued for many years, best illustrated by the fact that each of the two business endeavors occupied half of the second floor of the Bank Building in Central Square and shared the same safe, an arrangement most convenient for Treasurer Gates.<sup>27</sup>

While the associations with the Eagle Company and the Savings Bank remained paramount in Gates’s professional life, other business matters began to absorb some of his time and energy. Taking note of the declining role played by the Bridgewater Iron Company in the town’s economy beginning in the 1880’s, Gates, along with other concerned citizens, realized the importance of attracting new industries to their small community of less than 4,000. In April of 1888, he agreed to be one of the six directors of the newly-formed Bridgewater Electric Light and Power Company, a private organization that

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<sup>26</sup> BI, Jan. 16, 1914; Woodworth, Vital Statistics of Bridgewater, p.143; Bridgewater Book; “Samuel Pearly Gates,” Representative Men... , pp. 369-370; “Gates, Samuel Pearly...” HH, pp. 264-265; for more about Gates and Bates, Hyde & Co. see pages 7-8 in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>27</sup> BI, April 4, 1884, July 18, Nov. 14, 1885, April 7, 1888, Sept. 4, 1910, Jan. 16, Oct. 30, 1914, June 30, 1916, March 27, 1925; Crane, pp. 794, 807; Bridgewater Book; Townscape Institute, Form 32, pp. 127-128, Form 42, pp. 147-148; “Samuel Pearly Gates,” Representative Men... , Vol. I, pp. pp. 369-370; “Gates, Samuel Pearly...” HH, pp. 264-265; for more about Gates and the cotton gin industry in Bridgewater see pages 7-8, 14, 54-58, in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910; D. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 12, 63; Pictorial History of Bridgewater, Massachusetts (Bridgewater: Dorr’s Print Shop, Whitman: Harry B. Harding and Sons Printers, 1987), p. 21; Ruth Hooper Bishop, James ‘Mike’ Bois, James W. Buckley, Martha Dorr Cossaboom, Katherine Pratt Jordan, Arthur C. Lord, Dorothy Lord Mann, and James K. Moore were the Historical Collectors who prepared this book and three other publications; two and a half years after Gates’s death, the Continental Cotton Gin



played an early role in the long drive to provide the town with this form of energy. Gates also joined other business-minded men in establishing the Bridgewater Improvement Association (not to be confused with the current B. I. A.) in 1885, strongly supporting its promotion of a town-wide water system as another way of luring manufacturing firms to Bridgewater. He was among the almost twenty incorporators and, then, one of the directors of the Bridgewater Water Company, a private outfit which began supplying water to Bridgewater and East Bridgewater in the late 1880's. (It was not until 1925 that the Town of Bridgewater purchased this private company.) Taking a more direct approach in securing a new enterprise, the improvement society, in one of its "most interesting meetings," appointed a committee in 1887 to look into the possibility of acquiring an appropriate location for a shoe firm in Bridgewater. In what would prove to be the start of a twenty-year role in using his business and financial acumen to promote the mass production of shoes in Bridgewater, Gates, at the age of 50, agreed to be on the committee, along with Dr. Edward Sawyer, Lewis G. Lowe, William Prophett, and John A. Fairbanks, all well-known and respected for supporting the economic growth of their adopted town.<sup>28</sup>

Despite high hopes, the committee did not achieve any concrete results. This, however, did not deter Gates and others in their push to get Bridgewater involved in the lucrative business of manufacturing shoes. Hardly had he, Lowe, E. B. Gammons, and Henry O. Little formed the Bridgewater Box Company in 1890 on the corner of Spring and Plymouth Streets, when a decision was made by their new enterprise to finance the building of a shoe factory off Plymouth Street, between the eastern side of the railroad tracks and the newly constructed box factory. After a three-year attempt, beset by periodic closings, R. W. Crone & Co., the first renter of the new shoe factory, decided not to continue operations. Fortunately for Gates and other investors, indeed the whole town, William H. McElwain leased the vacated building in 1894. Such was his immediate success that in 1896 he asked the box company to finance an addition to the shoe factory. Although not opposed to the request, Gates and Lowe chose not to invest any more money in this shoe enterprise. Other investors, however, agreed to finance the expansion and McElwain's was soon hiring more workers and producing more shoes. Then, in February of 1898, a disastrous fire, most likely caused by spontaneous combustion, destroyed the recently added-to shoe factory. At this point, Gates agreed to head a drive by the newly formed Bridgewater Shoe Factory Co. to raise \$20,000 through public subscription for the building of a new home for McElwain's enterprise. Enough shares were soon sold, including the thirty bought by Gates, and within several months McElwain's was mass producing shoes in a multistoried wooden building, situated between the railroad tracks and what officially became Perkins Street on March 6, 1899. (This building still exists, but is in a rather dilapidated state.) Until his death in 1914, Gates continued to be a director of this shoe company that owned the building which the McElwain Company occupied until

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Company "removed its office from the Bridgewater Savings Bank building to its plant on Pearl Street."

<sup>28</sup> BI, March 21, April 4, 1884, July 18, Nov. 14, 1885, May 8, 1886, Feb. 26, April 30, 1887, March 24, April 7, 21, 1888, Jan. 24, 1891; Census of Massachusetts Census, 1905, Vol., I, p. 819; D. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 12-13; Bridgewater Book; it might be noted that the savings bank building was sold by R. W. Wilbar to the Bridgewater Savings Bank in November of 1885 for \$5,500.

1915.<sup>29</sup>

When the Independent for its 1897 New Year edition queried some of the town's leading citizens how their community could be improved, Gates, unlike some respondents who suggested specific projects, replied: "The citizens of Bridgewater can do most for the town by being loyal to it, helping in every way that presents itself, and always saying a good word for it." Following his own advice, Gates, especially during the last thirty years of his life, became increasingly devoted to the civic advancement and well-being of Bridgewater, bringing to the many causes and organizations for which he labored the same attributes, including integrity, loyalty, diligence, modesty, caring, and practicality, which were so evident in his professional work. Most indicative of his loyalty was his steadfast love and support of the New Jerusalem Church, not because he thought it had a monopoly on righteousness, but rather, along with Bridgewater's seven other churches, it endeavored to "embrace all men in a spirit of sympathetic appreciation and love." Almost without fail, Gates was to be found sitting in his "accustomed pew" on Sunday morning and, after the service, taking his seat in the Bible class conducted by the pastor. His participation in the church activities, however, was hardly limited, as it might have been for some parishioners, to attending church on the Sabbath. The New Church's weekly list of activities, diligently reported in the Independent, show how active Gates was in the work of the parish, which by the start of the twenty century served a congregation of about 160 members. At the church's annual meetings, he was invariably elected to some committee, including the all-important Church Committee, the music committee, and, not surprisingly, the one dealing with finances. More than once, Gates was also chosen as one of several delegates to represent the Bridgewater church at the gatherings of the New Church Association in Boston. One of the most respected, indeed venerable, members of the New church in Bridgewater by the early 1900's, he was asked more than once to serve as a pallbearer at the funeral of a parishioner long associated the church and the town. In July of 1904, for instance, he performed this service at the funeral of Helen Ray Bates, one of two sisters who had purchased in early May of 1884 the residence on the corner of School and Cedar Streets, across from the lot on which the Parker house was in the early stages of construction.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> History of the Old Colony Railroad (Boston, Mass: Hager and Handy Publishers, 1893), pp. 372-373; BI, June 20, 1885, Feb. 22, March 22, May 3, Oct. 18, 25, Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 1890, Jan. 10, 17, 1891, Sept. 8, 1894, Dec. 21, 1895, Feb. 29, 1896, Feb. 25, March 4, 25, 1898, March 2, 1900, Aug. 14, 1914; "Twenty Years Ago," BI, Feb. 15, 1907; for more about the rise of the shoe industry in Bridgewater during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the role of Gates, see pages 10, 22-27, 30-31, 33-43, and 44-47 in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910; for more about the Bridgewater Box Company see pages 27-28 in the same source; "Accepted Streets," Town of Bridgewater, p. 11; D. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 14-18; the Bridgewater Box Company was dissolved in 1900, following a disastrous fire on Sept. 7, 1898; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 54; D. Moore, "William H. McElwain Company," HH, p. 84; Townscape Institute, Form 155, pp. 379-380; although shoes were made in Bridgewater during much of the nineteenth century, as late as 1885 this town was not among the top twelve towns in Plymouth County cited for shoe production.

<sup>30</sup> BI, May 30, 1884, Jan. 1, 1897, May 24, 1901, April 4, 1902, April 22, July 22, 29, 1904, May 12, 26, 1905, April 9, 1907, April 17, 1908, April 15, 22, June 10, Oct. 14, 1910, March 17, April 14, 1911, April 12, 1912, March 20, April 11, 18, 1913, Jan. 23, 1914; the Memorial Sermon preached by Rev. W. B. Murray and printed in the Bridgewater Independent on January 23, 1914, in memory of Samuel Pearly Gates was extremely helpful to me in understanding the many attributes of this highly honored Bridgewater citizen; my readers may find it helpful to read about the history of the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater during Gates's time found on pages 11-14 and 50-61

High on his list of ways to enrich the life of the town was his active support of the public library, an institution formed in 1879, thanks in good measure to Reverend Theodore F. Wright, the pastor of the New Jerusalem Church. Not surprisingly, Gates was asked to serve as the treasurer of the citizens' committee which helped raise funds toward the erection of the Memorial Building on South Street. Dedicated on Memorial Day of 1882, this handsome brick edifice, "with free stone trimmings," not only served as the town's public library for the next ninety years, but also as an historical museum and a memorial to Bridgewater men who had died in the Civil War. From 1893 to his death in 1914, Gates was elected at town meetings as one of the trustees of the library. He rarely missed the board's meetings, regularly served on its finance committee, and held the office of vice-president from 1909 to 1914. Even in death Gates remembered the needs of Bridgewater's public library, bequeathing it the "sum \$3,000, in trust, for general purposes."<sup>31</sup>

Not a native of Bridgewater, Gates, nonetheless, was interested in the history of his adopted community, not only when it was the South Parish of the original Bridgewater, but also after it became in the 1820's the smaller town of which we speak today. Within a few years after the founding of The Old Bridgewater Historical Society on April 19 of 1894, and its incorporation a year later, he became an active member of this organization, whose original object was the "collection, preservation and publication of material which shall contribute to the history of the colonial township of Bridgewater." (A quick scan of the talks presented at the society's meetings in the early twentieth showed a broadening of historical interest in the four separate towns created out of the Old Bridgewater in the 1820's.) While not given to public speaking, Gates in 1899 joined several society members, including Arthur C. Boyden, vice-principal of Bridgewater Normal, known for his interests and knowledge of history, in praising two speakers at a public meeting of the organization, one of whom commented on the "pleasure and profit...derived from the study of history." At the annual meeting in January of 1900, Gates was one of six vice-presidents elected by the society to support its president Benjamin W. Harris of East Bridgewater. Four months later, he agreed to be member of a large committee to solicit subscriptions for building a new home for the society. In September of the same year, the cornerstone of the present-day Old Bridgewater Historical Society building, located on Howard Street in West Bridgewater, was set in place. On June 13, 1901, the completed structure was dedicated with "appropriate exercises." During the next thirteen years, Gates continued to do his part in promoting the work of the society, serving on the board of trustees, building and finance committee, and a special committee that helped plan the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original Bridgewater. In recognition of his steadfast commitment to the society, a resolution was

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in my essay on churches in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>31</sup> BI, April 16, 1895, Jan. 1, 1897, April 4, 1904, March 10, 1911, April 1, 1910, Jan. 16, 23, 30, March 13, 1914; Crane, pp. 812-813; Theodore F. Wright, "The Memorial Library," Bridgewater Book, pp. 29-30; "Report of the Trustees of the Public Library," Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 72-73, 1901, pp. 103-107, 1909, pp. 73-74, 1913, pp. 91, 1914, p. 104; "Condensed Report of Town Meeting of Bridgewater, March 2," Annual Town Report, 1914, p. 9; Marjorie W. Paulson, "History of the Bridgewater Public Library," HH, 123-126; "Samuel Pearly Gates," Representative Men..., Vol. I, p. 370; "Gates, Samuel Pearly, 1837 to 1914--Manufacturer," HH, pp. 264-265; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 12; D. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, pp. 88; the description under the picture in this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence.

read and adopted at the adjourned annual meeting in June of 1914, a copy of which was sent to his family and “spread upon the records of the society.”<sup>32</sup>

Gates also contributed to the civic life of Bridgewater by playing a role for thirty years or so in the Bridgewater Cemetery Corporation, an organization created in the early 1840’s to establish and run Mt. Prospect Cemetery. Gladys V. Moore, its secretary in 1985, aptly described a stroll through this burial ground as a “walk through the history of Bridgewater from 1841 to the present day.” Realizing the town’s need for a new and larger cemetery, an association, headed by Artemus Hale, one of Bridgewater’s leading citizens until his death in 1882 at the age of ninety-eight, had proceeded to purchase a slightly elevated site of ten acres, located a short distance west of the village center. Mt. Prospect Cemetery, consecrated in solemn ceremonies on October 26, 1842, was subsequently enlarged, and by the time Gates became the treasurer of the corporation in the 1880’s was employing an officially appointed caretaker. This step helped mute the criticism of at least one cemetery subscriber of the previous decade that the grounds of “what should be one of the most honored spots in the town” had been outrageously neglected. While Gates was treasurer only a short time, he continued to be one of the corporation’s trustees (sometimes called the proprietors) for over twenty-five years, serving alongside, at one time or another, well-known Bridgewater citizens, including Sumner Keith, a leading coal dealer, John M. Stetson, an entrepreneur in the iron industry, John H. Fairbanks, proprietor of a Central Square hardware store, Albert G. Boyden, principal of Bridgewater Normal, George M. Hooper, a manufacturer of bricks, and John Mayo, town tax collector and head of Bridgewater’s Water Company, to cite a few of the men who gave their time and energy to improve the Mt. Prospect burial ground. Thanks to the trustees, who met annually, usually in the Town Hall, and the superintendents hired to take care of this cemetery, Bridgewater’s largest graveyard was receiving praise by the 1890’s as “one of the prettiest in Plymouth County.” In May of 1913, in what proved to be the last corporation meeting he attended, Gates must have been pleased to hear that the organization was in “excellent financial condition” and that “more work than usual” had “been done in the past year in beautifying the grounds and in the care of lots.” On January 30, 1914, his will, a good part of which was printed on the front page of the Bridgewater Independent, bequeathed \$1,000 to the trustees of Mt. Prospect cemetery for the “perpetual care of the testator’s therein, the excess, if any, to be applied to general purposes.”<sup>33</sup>

Without the joys and tribulations of family life, it would have been easy for Gates, especially

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<sup>32</sup> BI, Aug. 13, 1894, July 13, 1895, Dec. 4, 1896, Feb. 17, March 3, 31, April 28, May 19, 1899, Jan. 19, April 27, Sept. 28, 1900, June 14, 1901, March 22, 1907, May 6, 1910, Jan. 16, June 12, 1914; Bridgewater Book, p. 40; “Gates, . . .,” HH, p. 265.

<sup>33</sup> “Every Saturday,” April 1, 1876; this weekly newspaper would change its name to the Bridgewater Independent at the end of 1876; Crane, p. 808; BI, May 8, 1886, Oct. 29, 1892, May 12, July 14, 1894, May 4, 1895, April 30, 1897, April 20, 27, 1900, April 19, 1901, April 25, 1902, May 1, 1903, April 21, 1905, April 19, May 3, Aug. 16, 1907, April 24, May 1, 1908, June 3, 1910, April 28, May 12, 1911, April 19, 26, 1912, May 30, 1913, April 26, 1918; “Twenty Years Ago,” BI, May 1, 1908; Gladys V. Moore, “History can be seen walking through Mt. Prospect,” Bridgewater Townsman, April 3, 1985; a copy of this latter source was found in the files of the historical room of the Bridgewater Public Library; Townscape Institute, Form 807, pp. 681-682; see my piece on Mt. Prospect Cemetery which is one of almost seventy places I described in a report to the Bridgewater Historical Commission, headed by David T. Moore; some of these descriptions were used in Moore’s Images of America: Bridgewater, published in

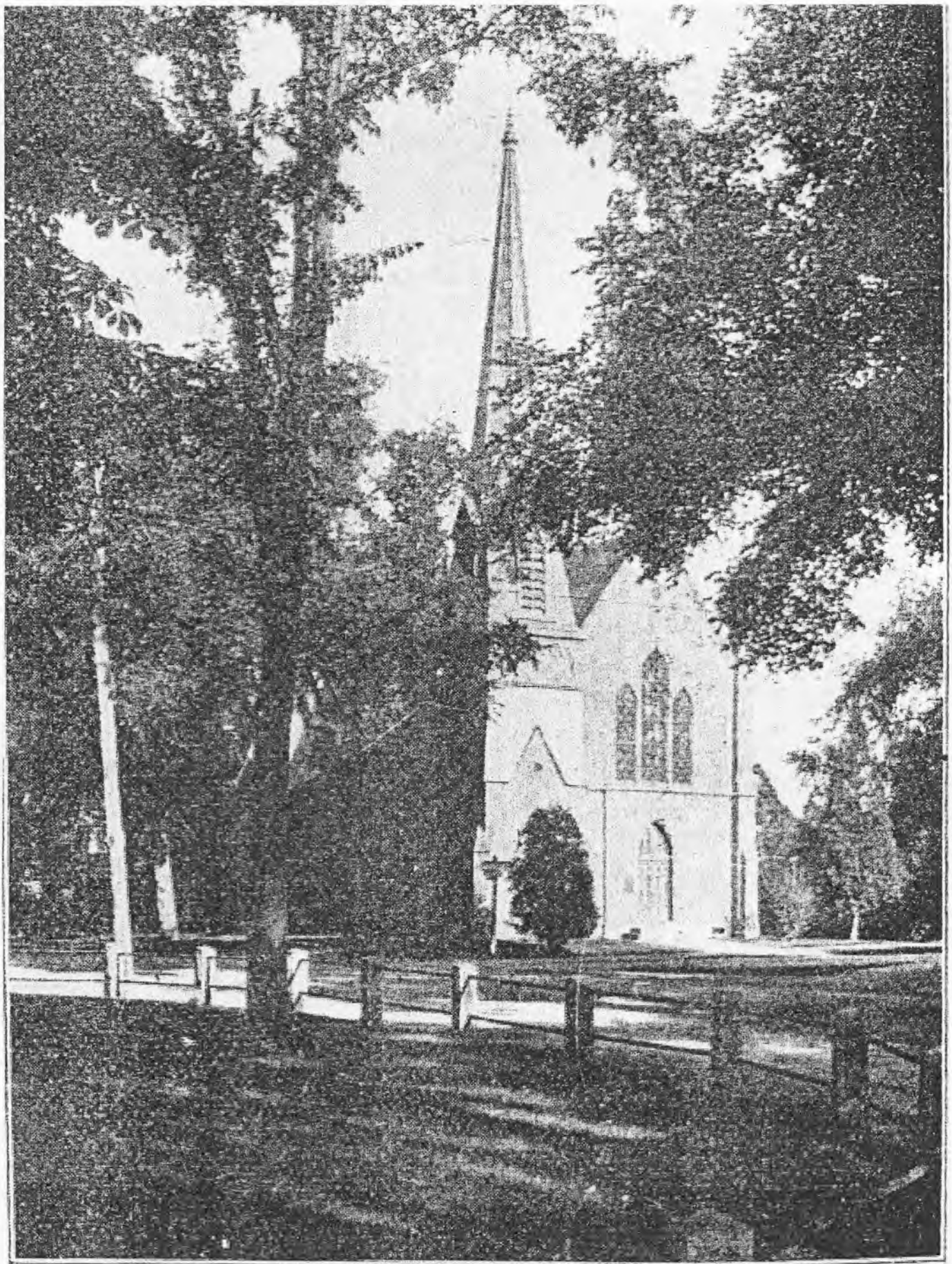
during his middle years, to be completely absorbed in his professional work and civic activities. Indeed, it was well known that for years he worked in his office in the Bank building “until late, often until midnight, almost every night for years;” although not everyone knew how much of his time was “occupied ...in working for others, in settling estates for widows and orphans, for which he would receive no monetary compensation.” Hardly given to sudden emotional outbursts, Gates was known for his “courteous” and “very dignified” manner, a trait resulting in good measure from innate modesty, kindness, and even shyness. With his circle of friends, colleagues, and Ashby relatives (Gates’s father Pearly and mother Mary both passed away in Ashby in 1888), Gates, nevertheless, enjoyed a number of social activities, preventing the possibility of a life totally devoted to work. Beginning in the late 1880’s, he was part of a formally-organized whist club. Although being alone since the death of his wife in 1873, Gates perhaps was at ease playing cards with a mixed group composed of married couples, including Mr. and Mrs. Hollis M. Blackstone of Bridgewater State Farm, unmarried people, including Helen and Marcia Bates of School Street, who would become his across-the street neighbors in 1899, and married women, including Frances Parker and Mrs. Hosea Kingman. Usually meeting at a club member’s house, the gathering in October of 1895 proved an exception. Along with twenty-seven other whist players, Gates accepted the invitation of his banking colleague S. Lorin Keith, an accountant for the Bridgewater Savings Bank and the Eagle Cotton Gin Company, for an evening of whist at the Bridgewater Inn, where he lived in one of its rooms, an occupancy that would last twenty-seven years. After an evening of playing cards, consuming an “excellent” chicken dinner, the men at the get-together “retired to the smoking room,” while the women proceeded to elect a slate of officers for the coming year, which included Mr. Keith as president and Mrs. Parker as secretary. A year later, as we know, Gates would lose his friend of so many years and not long after would move into the house that she and her husband Edgar had built in 1884-1885.”<sup>34</sup>

Over and above providing Gates with spiritual nourishment, Bridgewater’s New Jerusalem Church also afforded him the social benefits of belonging to a small, tightly-knit church in an equally small town, creating for him a sense of community, a feeling that could have alluded him given the solitary nature of his home after the death of his wife and baby daughter, both named Marcia, at the very time he was starting his long and successful professional career in his adopted community. While all of his church activities, including attendance at Sunday services and work on committees, were social occasions in part, a few events, not to be missed, were especially highlighted in the church’s yearly calendar. In July of 1886, after describing in glowing terms the annual lawn party and picnic of the New Church held on the beautiful grounds surrounding the home of Dr. Lewis G. Lowe, on the southwest corner of South and Pleasant Streets, the article in the Independent concluded: “This annual out-door party is but one of a series of social events, systematically arranged for the good and pleasure of the

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2003.

<sup>34</sup> BI, May 30, 1884, May 19, 1888, Oct. 19, 1895, Jan. 22, March 5, April 30, May 7, 1897; June 14, 1901, Jan. 16, 23, March 13, April 13, 1914, March 10, 1916; Bridgewater Book; Louise Dickinson Rich, Innocence under the Elms (Orleans, Massachusetts: Parnassus Imprints Edition, 1983), pp. 115-116.



New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) Church.

school and society.” It is safe to assume that Gates, a friend of Lowe with whom he shared a sense of civic pride for Bridgewater, was among the 150 attendees who partook of a “substantial supper.” Nine years later Gates undoubtedly attended the church’s annual picnic held on the grounds of the School Street home of Mrs. Frances A. Parker, his longtime friend, who, it will be recalled, had lost her husband Edgar, an accomplished portrait painter, three years earlier. (Gates would host this gathering for a number of years on the same expansive estate after he acquired it in 1899.) Equally anticipated by the parishioners and, indeed, by many other townsfolk was the annual Christmas sale and supper sponsored by the New Church Ladies Sewing Circle and held in the church parlor and vestry. Among the “most successful” of this Yule event was the gathering in 1897, by which time some attendees could have used the new trolley transportation to reach Central Square. They might have noticed the new Odd Fellows Building and the almost completed expansion of the Academy Building, which housed the town’s high school, as signs of Bridgewater’s economic revival following the national depression earlier in the decade. In any case, Gates was surely among the almost 150 church members and friends of the parish who paid twenty-five cents for a supper, thought by one commentator to be the best meal for the price ever served in Bridgewater. Being on the church’s finance committee, Gates’s enjoyment of the repast might have been enhanced by the netting of \$300.00, which went toward paying the church’s annual expenses, including aid to those in need.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike many of the town’s leading civic and business leaders, Gates did not seek fraternal camaraderie that membership in such Bridgewater organizations as the Fellowship Lodge of Masons, founded in 1797, or the Odd Fellow Lodge, established eighty years later, might have afforded him. He was, however, a member of the Society of the Army of the Potomac, the Sons of the American Revolution, and, most important, the Grand Army of the Republic. Founded on April 6, 1866, in Decatur, Illinois, by Benjamin F. Stephenson, the G. A. R. was the largest organization of Civil War veterans and was made up of local posts created at different times, with the one in Bridgewater not established until the late 1880’s. Like the great majority of northern veterans, Gates was evidently proud of his service, albeit of short duration, in the conflict that ended the scourge of slavery and saved the Union. He could readily ascribe to the G. A. R.’s founding principles of fraternity, charity, and loyalty and given his adherence to the Republican Party could readily support this veteran organization’s allegiance to the Grand Old Party in the years following the Civil War. While not one of the “leaders” of Bridgewater Post, No. 205, G.A. R., he proudly wore the insignia of the national association during his “many years of active connection” with this local post. In 1912, at the age of seventy-five, he was chosen to represent it at the organization’s state convention and in 1913, one year before his death, was installed as Junior vice-commander of the Bridgewater post. Had Gates lived another seven years, he would have seen his local group surrender its charter and cease to “officially” exist, an inevitable

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<sup>35</sup> BI, July 10, 1886, June 15, 1895, Oct. 22, Dec. 17, 1897, March 3, Oct. 20, 1899; Townscape Institute, Form 158, pp. 385-386; for more information on the social activities of the New Jerusalem Church see pages 13-14, 58-61, in my essay on churches in Bridgewater through 1910; Gates was one of the executors of Lowe’s will in October of 1899.

development considering that only nine members remained on the roster, with “some of them no longer residents of Bridgewater, and others too infirm to keep up the activities of the post.” He would have been proud to see his insignia among the mementos, which included “several swords and cutlasses,” placed in a “special cabinet” in the town’s public library, an institution which he had loyally served for so many years. (It appears that many of the “historical treasures,” once housed in the museum portion of the old Memorial Library, have disappeared.).<sup>36</sup>

While the rhythm of Gates’s professional, civic, and social activities was well-established by the late 1800’s, and would remain pretty much in tact during the last fourteen years of his life, the early years of the new century brought him changes, most notably the occupation of one of Bridgewater’s grandest residences. About a year after moving into the Queen Anne house, built by the Parkers some fifteen years earlier, it is probable that Gates attended the Union Watch Service at the New Jerusalem Church, a three minute walk from his newly acquired house. On this occasion, parishioners from various Protestant churches in a town now approaching a population of 6,000 assembled to give “grateful thanks for the blessings of the dying century” and to “await the in coming of a new 100 years.” Looking back over the forty-six years since arriving in Bridgewater in the mid-1850’s, a decade when the nation was inexorably, or so it seems with the benefit of hindsight, moving toward a bloody civil war, a modest Gates, if he were sitting in his usual pew that New Years Eve of December 31, 1900, can be forgiven if he mused about his part in bringing about many changes to his adopted community, as it sought to maintain the values associated with small-town America and yet reap the benefits of the new industrial age. Perhaps his mind was also engaged in more mundane matters that New Year’s Eve, such as mentally enumerating the reasons why at the age of 62 he had purchased the large and imposing dwelling on School Street. His musing list would have included the house’s reasonable price, elegance, beautifully maintained grounds of over two acres, easy access to his office at the Bank building in Central Square, nostalgic association with the Parkers, accommodations for family members and other visitors, especially from his native Ashby, and possible use as a place for New Church’s activities.<sup>37</sup>

Whatever combination of motives prompted Gates to buy the Parker house, described rather critically many years later by Louise Dickinson Rich in Innocence Under the Elms, a reminiscence of her Bridgewater childhood, as “by far the most pretentious on the street, with a porte-cochere, a turret, and all sorts of odd-shaped, windows and gables,” he took great pride in what another observer labeled a “pleasant home..., surrounded by attractive and picturesque grounds.” (Perhaps my readers can decide for themselves which view is closer to the mark by looking at the three pictures accompanying my text.)

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<sup>36</sup> BI, May 26, 1888, April 11, 1891, May 26, June 2, 1894, Jan. 19, Dec. 14, 1895, May 14, 1897, Dec. 30, 1904, Jan. 12, 1912, Jan. 24, 1913, Jan. 16, 1914, Jan. 24, June 20, 1919, April 8, May 13, 1921; Crane, pp. 804-805, 809-810, 812-813; “Samuel Pearly Gates,” Representative Men..., Vol. I, p. 370; “Gates...,” HH, pp. 264-265; “Landmarks,” Tales Around the Common, p. 37; I assume this last piece was written by J. Kenneth Moore, one of the editors of this booklet and a leading historian of Bridgewater’s past; a fuller story of Bridgewater’s local post of the G. A. R. would need to cite some of the leading lights of the organization, including Professor Franz H. Kirmayer of Bridgewater Normal and Isaac H. Phinney, who for years, along with his horse, led the town’s Memorial Day parade;

<sup>37</sup> BI, Jan. 4, 1901; Massachusetts Census, 1905, p. 819.



One thing is sure, however, Gates had the where-with-all to hire domestic help, who had living quarters in the house, and a grounds keeper, pay for small and large maintenance projects, and contribute one of the most substantial amounts in annual property taxes to the town's coffers. What little I know about the household staff comes from the account by Rich whose father James H. Dickinson moved his family to Bridgewater in 1905 to assume editorship of the Bridgewater Independent, following the four-year editorship of Pliny Jewell. Not being able to afford a house of their own, the Dickinsons rented several, including one on the corner of School and Cedar Streets, once owned by the Bates sisters. By climbing a tree on this property, Louise and her younger sister Alice "could look down over the house into Cedar Street and Sam Gates' kingdom, where his cook" hung "out dishtowels in the latticed drying enclosure." Whether or not Bridgewater's leading banker noticed the spying, he surely enjoyed walking home to dinner in the early afternoon, sometimes accompanied by a colleague from the Savings Bank.<sup>38</sup>

Having a meal around one o'clock permitted Gates to enjoy early afternoon walks on his well-kept grounds of over two acres, before returning to the bank for many more hours of work. Once my readers mentally block out the images of Boyden Hall, Bridgewater State University's current administrative center, and the attached Horace Mann auditorium, they can more readily picture Gates as he strolled the grounds leading to Grove Street. (I doubt if he had any inkling that one day his house would stand on the corner of Cedar and Grove Streets.) This routine also gave him a chance to consult with the estate's care-taker, Henry F. Worcester, who had practiced dentistry for "several years" before being employed by Gates. Some matters discussed, such as what to do about a pear tree, near the house, damaged by lightning on June 15, 1902, were not weighty ones. The decision about three months later to remove the hedge along Cedar Street was of greater import but also one of curiosity since this barrier had helped prevent intrusions into the property by neighborhood children for whom, if Rich is to be believed, Gates had little "tolerance." The biggest projects concerning the estate were those dealing with the stone walls surrounding it on the School, Maple, and Grove Streets sides. In April of 1902, the retaining wall on School Street, for example, was taken down and re-laid. (As a commuter student in the 1950's, I often parked my car along this wall, which, I now suspect, was and continues to be made up granite blocks, going back to the days when the Parkers owned the property.) In the summer of 1911, the face wall on Maple Street, which until 1925 separated the estate from the Normal School campus, was also "rebuilt and laid in cement." (Repairing and rebuilding projects since then have been necessary to maintain these walls.)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dickinson Rich, Innocence under Elms, pp. 115-117; BI, Aug. 28, 1903, Jan. 16, 1914; "Samuel Pearly Gates," Representative Men..., Vol. I, p. 370; "Gates, Samuel Pearly..." HH, pp. 264-265; for more about Pliny Jewell, the Dickinson family, and the Bridgewater Independent see pages 45-46, 103-108, in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>39</sup> BI, April 25, June 20, Sept. 5, 1902, Dec. 7, 1906, July 28, Aug. 18, 1911, Jan. 16, 1914; Dickinson Rich, Innocence..., p. 115; "Accepted Streets," Town of Bridgewater, p. 9; I wonder what Gates thought when several stones were dislodged from his School Street wall on December 6, 1906, by some element among the strikers at McElwain shoe factory, who perhaps intended to use them against fifteen law offices, including several Pinkerton guards; their job was to protect strikebreakers from McElwain's factory in Manchester, New Hampshire, (considered scabs by unionized shoe workers) in their walk from the Broad Street depot to the vacant Elwell house on Summer Street, where they were to be lodged during their stay in Bridgewater; see pages 37-42 for details on this episode in

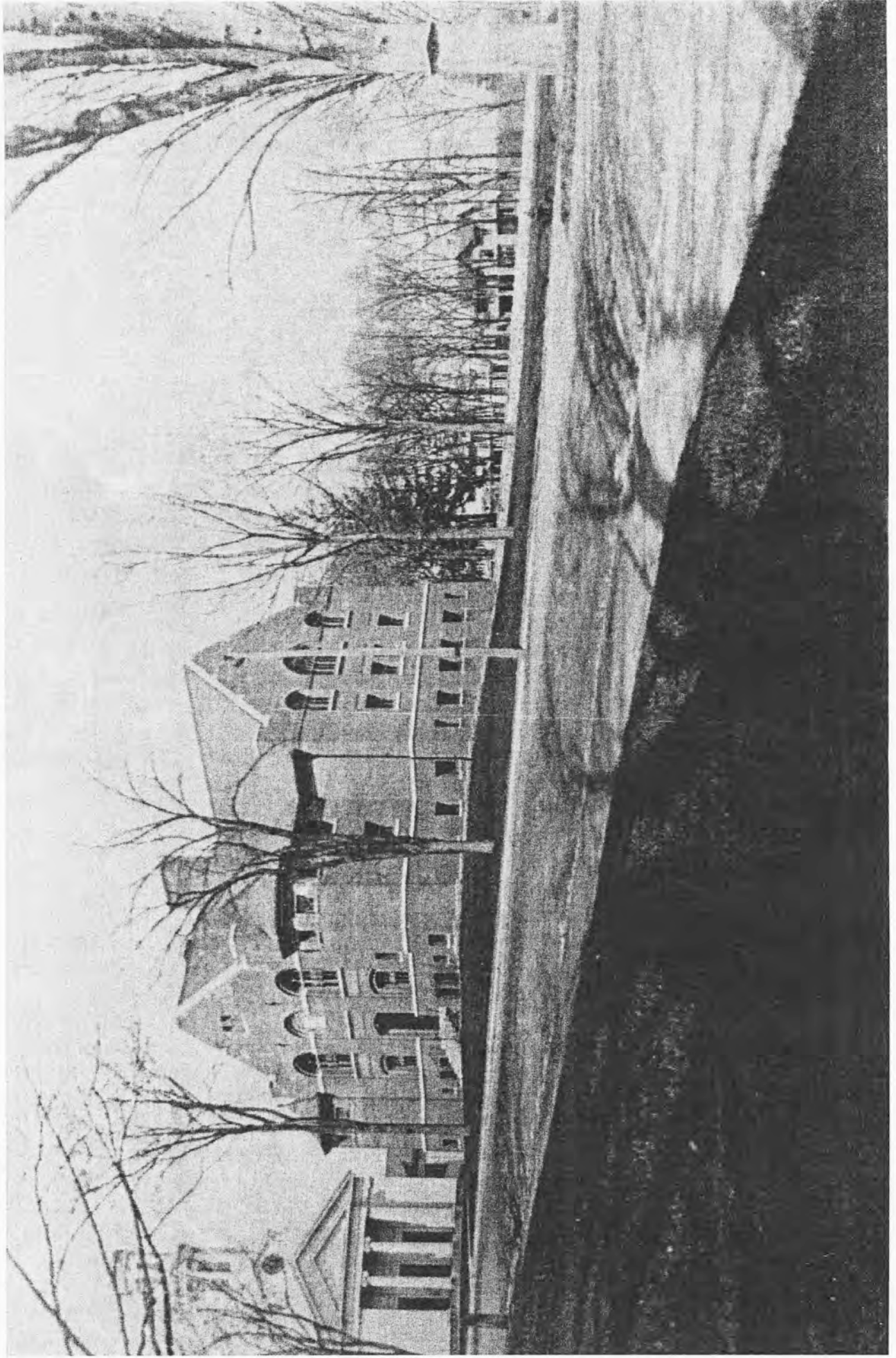
While Gates made use of the railroad, especially on business trips to the South, and, on occasion, rode the local trolley system, built between 1897 and 1900, it appears that he never owned a horse-drawn carriage or an automobile, even though the estate's barn near his house would have accommodated either. Rather, like many other townsmen, he walked the short distances to church, work, social gatherings, civic meetings, and retail establishments, most of which were in or near Central Square. Admitting the possibility that her neighbor, "Sam Gates, a banker," was not an "ogre," but rather a "shy" "dignified" and "misunderstood" man, Dickinson-Rich, as she was wont to do, could not help adding a little color to her account, by writing: "He walked along with downcast eyes...and it was said that he'd found thousands of dollars in nickels and dimes through this habit of keeping his eyes on the ground." Having a continuing commitment to the well-being and progress of Bridgewater, however, one suspects that he more than once lifted his eyes to take note of the physical changes taking place in his adopted community, particularly those near his home on School Street between 1900 and 1914. Four years after moving into the Parker house, Gates surely watched with keen interest as the Normal's new gymnasium, later named in honor of Albert Gardner Boyden, began to be constructed across the street. Perhaps he was among the many townspeople who accepted Principal Boyden's invitation to avail themselves on April 5, 1905, of the "opportunity to inspect the building," considered to be "one of the most complete" gymnasiums "in the state." As a former student and now a neighbor of the institution, as well as one of town's leading citizens, Gates also might have attended the formal dedication on June 24 of this approximately \$55,000 addition to the Normal campus.<sup>40</sup>

Between 1911 and 1913, two other changes along Gates's walking route altered the look of School Street. After almost a decade of futile pleas from the town's fire chiefs to replace the School Street "Engine House" with a modern one, Bridgewater's voters, at a special town meeting on June 13, 1911, took a half-way step by approving the sum of \$1,000 for alterations to the town's main fire station. I don't know if Gates was among those who would have preferred a new fire barn. But considering the disastrous conflagrations that had destroyed the Bridgewater Box Co. and McElwain's shoe factory in 1898, two enterprises in which Gates had invested, he most likely went along with the proposed alterations to the old School Street fire barn. It had been built in 1857 for the Bridgewater Fire District, a private entity which provided firefighting service for Bridgewater between 1844 and 1894. As he passed the station on his way to the Bank Building in Central Square during the hot months of July and August 1911, Gates's thoughts were perhaps in two places. The remodeling of the old station might have poignantly reminded him of a time fifty-five years earlier when as a young man attending the Normal School he first laid eyes on what was not only a new building, but also one of the few brick structures in Bridgewater. On the other hand, I suspect he was keenly interested in the various changes being made, particularly the "raising" of the "building 22 inches, in order that the apparatus" could "be driven from the

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my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>40</sup>BI, May 5, June 30, 1905, Jan. 16, 23, 1914; Dickinson-Rich, *Innocence*..., pp. 115-116; A. C. Boyden, *Albert Gardner Boyden*, pp. 75- 79; for more about the building of the Normal Gymnasium see pages 89-96 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; D. Moore, *Images of America: Bridgewater*, p. 128; the description under the



Albert Gardner Boyden Gymnasium, 1905  
Rizer Collection

house with safety.” One wonders if Gates could have imagined that the remodeled School Street fire station of 1911 would continue serving Bridgewater, albeit with some alterations, until the 1970’s.<sup>41</sup>

The last and most poignant change in Gates’s School Street neighborhood occurred in the last year of his life. In January of 1913, Ferdinand C. Gammons, who had been associated with Gates in the cotton gin enterprise on Pearl Street since the late 1870’s, purchased the so-called “Marcia Bates Place,” situated on the western corner School and Cedar Streets; the house was not in good condition and, at the time, was being rented by James H. Dickinson, editor of the Bridgewater Independent. It had long been the hope of Ferdinand and his wife Abbie, nee Lawrence, two of the stalwarts of Bridgewater’s Episcopal Methodist Church since its founding in 1874, to replace the wooden Swedenborgian meetinghouse on Cedar Street, which the Methodists had first rented and then bought from the New Jerusalem Church, by a more “elegant church edifice.” Rather than tearing down the old house, where the Bates sisters Marcia, Helen, and Corinna (Mrs. Nahum Washburn) had lived for many years, the decision was made to remove the dwelling to the corner of Bedford and Worcester Streets. While Gates’s eyesight was already problematic, he could have easily seen from the western side of his estate the initial steps to prepare the Bates house for its southward journey to its new site, where it remains to this day. As a man in his middle seventies and not easily given to expressing inner feelings, the physical removal of this house, nevertheless, must have evoked a variety of emotions. He had known the Bates sisters for many years; they had been friends, fellow parishioners who loved and labored diligently for the New Jerusalem Church, and neighbors across Cedar Street in the early 1900’s. Perhaps his thoughts went back to 1902 when he had been a pallbearer at the funeral of Corinna and then to 1904 when he performed the same service for her sister Helen.<sup>42</sup>

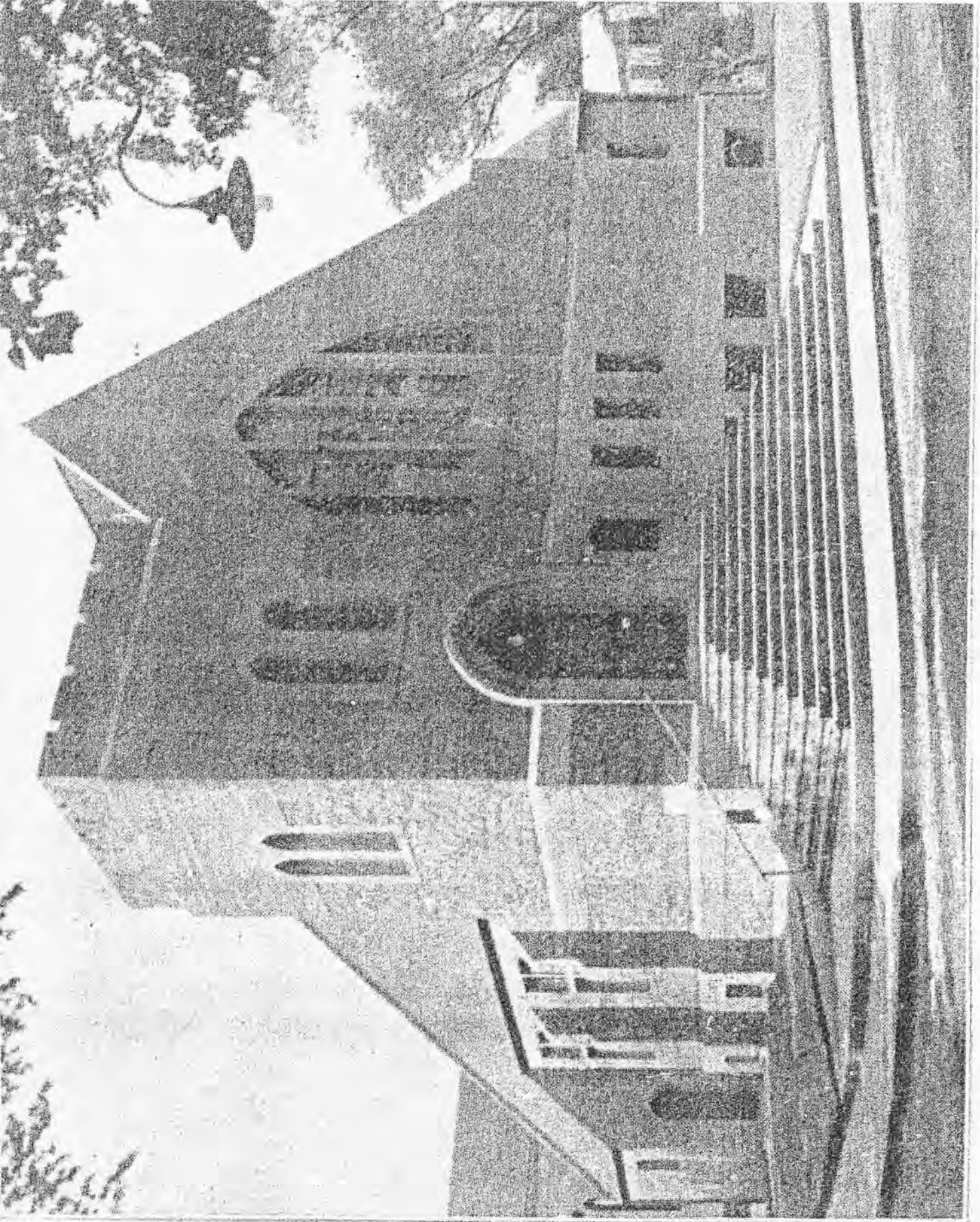
Work on the church building started on May 30, 1913, with the aim of completing this granite structure by October 1. Had this goal been met, Gates in his Sunday morning walk to the New Church might have some met some of his Methodist friends, including the Gammons, as they made their way along School Street, hopefully enjoying beautiful fall weather, to attend services and Sunday School at their “new” church. Before undergoing an operation for cataracts on his eyes during the second week of October at the “Newberry street hospital” in Boston, however, Gates was at least able to note the progress being made in the construction of a house of worship strikingly different from the simple wooden meetinghouse next door on Cedar Street, which, by the way, the Methodist parish planned to retain for “social purposes.” The laying of the foundation for the new stone church progressed rapidly, allowing the placing of the cornerstone at “impressive” ceremonies on the Monday afternoon of August 4.

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picture in this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence.

<sup>41</sup> BI, Feb. 11, Sept. 9, 1898, Feb. 22, 1907, June 9, 16, July 7, 14, Aug. 4, Sept. 1, 1911; “Condensed Reports of Town Meetings, March 4, 1907, March 1, 1909,” Annual Town Reports, 1907, 1909, pp. 11 and 12, respectively; “Treasurer’s Report,” Annual Town Report, 1911, p. 67; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 13; see my essay on firefighting in Bridgewater through 1910, in particular the short section dealing with the 1911 alterations to the School Street fire station.

<sup>42</sup> BI, May 30, 1884, June 15, Oct. 19, 1895, June 14, 1901, March 28, April 4, 1902, July 29, 1904, Jan. 17, 24, May 30, 1913; Dickinson Rich, Innocence..., p. 121; Rich mistakenly has the Bates house being left to the Methodists by its “landlady,” most likely referring to Marcia Bates; for more about the collaboration of Gates and Gammons in the



Methodist Episcopal Church.

Rizer Collection

Whether Gates was among the “fully 500 persons” attending this outdoor event or watching it from his house or grounds across Cedar Street I don’t know. But it would not be a stretch of the imagination to visualize more than one of the dedication attendees voicing admiration of Gates’s estate, including its impressive Queen Anne house and well-kept grounds. As a faithful reader of the Bridgewater Independent, he not only read on August 8 the account of the dedication ceremonies, but also viewed a sketch depicting the new church as it would “look when completed.” By the time the “stone work on the Methodist church” was “nearly completed and the roof” was “being put on,” Gates had just submitted to two operations on one of his eyes, leading to its removal. (While it was hoped that the other eye would be “benefited,” fate would intervene; Gates, as we shall see, was not to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Gammons at the Dedication Exercises of the Bridgewater’s new Methodist Episcopal Church on June 10, 1914.)<sup>43</sup>

By early November, Gates was back in Bridgewater, happy to be recuperating in his spacious School Street home and once again enjoying his estate, even if the brightly colored leaves on its trees and bushes had fallen to the ground, waiting to be raked into piles and carted away or burned on the premises if a permit from the town could be secured. What added most to Gates’s return, however, was the presence of his sister Mrs. Mary E. Shaw, who during the previous fourteen years had frequently stayed with her brother during his ownership and occupancy of what had been previously known as the Parker House. Hailing from Gates’s home town of Ashby, Massachusetts, Mary, who was the widow of Rev. George E. Shaw, minister of Ashby’s Unitarian church, was Samuel’s closest relative and friend. In their earliest conversations following Gates’s return from Boston, they probably talked about two recent events held in Bridgewater, which he had missed but were of great interest to him-- the Quarterly conventions of the G. A. R., Women’s Relief Corps, and the Sons of Veterans, with a combined attendance of over 800 delegates, and the semi-annual convention of the Massachusetts New Church, at which 400 delegates had gathered. Having sufficiently recovered from his serious eye operation, Gates was able to travel with his sister Mary to Ashby in late November, where they spent “Thanksgiving and the week-end.” Shortly after arriving back in Bridgewater, they entertained, not for the first time, Miss Mary Burr Reed of Boston, a daughter of Fannie E. Reed, the Gates’ first cousin, who was named after their mother. A less frequent visitor to Gates’s Bridgewater home was Mrs. Hattie P. McKown of New Ipswich, New Hampshire, the former wife of Gates’s brother George. The visits to Bridgewater by these relatives, who were generously remembered in Gates’s will, and a number of Ashby residents are indicative of his life-long loyalty to the town in which he was born and spent the formative years of his life. Indeed, less than a month before he lost an eye in Boston’s Newberry Street hospital, he had enjoyed “entertaining Ashby friends” at his School Street residence.” I suspect none of these visitors knew of their host’s

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cotton gin firm see page 14-15, 32, 54-58, in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>43</sup> BI, May 9, 30, July 18, Aug. 1, 8, Oct. 17, 24, 31, 1913, June 12, 1914; “Gammons Memorial United Methodist Church, 1974,” HH, pp. 75-76; “Gammons, Ferdinand C., 1845 to 1929--Manufacturer,” HH, p. 264; Pictorial History, 1987, p. 31; Bridgewater Book; interestingly, what soon became known as the Virginia Block on the corner of Main and Broad Street was completed about three weeks before construction began on the Methodist church; Gates could have easily seen this new block from the front of the Bank Building.

decision to leave their town “\$20,000, for the support of the public schools.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition to entertaining relatives and friends, Gates also was generous in allowing his home and grounds to be used by the New Church for some of its activities. During the early 1900's, one of the most anticipated social gatherings was the annual picnic held under the auspices of the Sunday School at some local recreational area such Carver Pond or Lake Nippenickett. In June of 1905, however, this event was replaced by an annual lawn party, with members of the New Church society and the Sunday School joining together to celebrate this early summer get-together. For several years, Gates, perhaps remembering early such gatherings at the estates of Lowe and Parker, permitted the lawn party to take place on his ample and well-kept grounds adjoining his residence, conveniently located a block from the church. Dutifully reported in the Bridgewater Independent, these social affairs were was much the same, albeit with some more vividly described than others. The following account of the 1907 gala was especially descriptive: “The grounds...presented a pretty sight .... Many colored lanterns were strung all about the grounds,” adding “to the brilliancy of the gathering. The afternoon was devoted entirely to the children, and they had the time of their lives, playing games, and listing to graphophones selections. In the early hours of the evening, the little ones enjoyed dancing in the large barn [note the accompanying photograph], but at 8 the floor was turned over to the older members of church and their friends. Supper was served under the trees on the lawn.” Although the account did not suggest this, one wonders if some passersby, taking note of the festivities, considered “crashing” the party. While this summer event was the most important use made by the New Jerusalem parish of Gates's estate, occasionally other church groups held meetings in the spacious first floor of his house. On July 10, 1910, for instance, about seventy members of the all-important Ladies' Sewing Circle met there to elect a slate of offices for the coming year. (I would guess that Gates spent the afternoon working in his office in the Bank Building.) His last church-related activity was an evening meeting of the so-called Church Committee at his home on January 6, 1914. Members of this small elected group, which had much to do with administering church affairs, were aware that given the compromised state of Gates's eyesight it would easier for him if they gathered at his School Street home.<sup>45</sup>

As much as Gates enjoyed visits from family members and friends, the comfort of his large Queen Anne house, and walking about his beautiful estate, he evidently had no thoughts of retiring from his professional life, especially his daily commitment to the Bridgewater Savings Bank, or giving up his civic responsibilities. During the last fourteen years of his life, in fact, he added several more tasks to an already busy schedule. When the Eagle Cotton Gin Company in Bridgewater became part of the Continental Gin Company in 1899, Gates continued to be the treasurer and to hold the controlling interest

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<sup>44</sup> BI, Jan. 19, 1895, Sept. 12, Oct. 24, 1902, Jan.29, 1904, Jan. 13, June 30, 1905, April 7, 1911, Nov. 8, 1912, Feb. 21, July 11, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, 31, Dec. 5, 1913, Jan. 23, 30, 1914, April 17, 1925; “Year's Happenings: A Record of Events of Local Interest During 1913,” BI, Jan. 2, 1914; the Bridgewater W. R. C. No. 169 was formed in 1895 and worked very closely with the local G.A.R.

<sup>45</sup> BI, June 28, 1901, June 27, July 4, 1902, June 23, 30, 1905, June 28, 1907, Feb. 4, 18, July 17, 1910, June 23, 1911, Jan. 9, 1914; for more about the social activities of the New Jerusalem Church see pages 13-14, 58-61, in my essay on churches in Bridgewater through 1910.

in the local plant of this national conglomerate of cotton gin companies, with headquarters in Birmingham, Alabama. In January of every year, he, along with Ferdinand C. Gammons, the manager and vice-president of the Bridgewater plant on Pearl Street, journeyed by train to attend the annual meeting of the corporation. Frequently, Mrs. Gammon would accompany them and, at least, in 1911 and 1913, Gates's sister Mary Shaw, much to his delight, also went on this annual trip, which proved to be a nice combination of business and pleasure.<sup>46</sup>

Gates's role in promoting the economic well-being of his community was expanded in the new century with the formation of a businessmen's organization and a co-operative bank, two developments which were interrelated and had historical roots dating back to the late 1880's. Having been among the long-time promoters of Bridgewater's industrial and commercial expansion, it is not surprising that Gates was one of thirty-eight men. (As far as I can tell, no women were included in the group.) who gathered on November 21, 1900, in the Elwell Block, located on the eastern side of Central Square, to form the Bridgewater Commercial Club. Like its predecessor of ten years earlier, also composed mostly of businessmen and frequently referred to by the same name, the new organization at its first meeting adopted a constitution and by-laws and elected officers, including John M. Stetson, associated with Bridgewater's iron industry for many years, as president. In a position Gates would hold during the ten-year existence of the club, he was chosen to serve on its Board of Trade committee, along with two other prominent citizens, William Bassett and Albert J. Elwell. Indeed, Elwell, who had become an important player in the town's economic and civic life since his arrival in Bridgewater twelve years earlier, was perhaps the leading force behind the creation of the new businessmen's organization. On December 3, the club held a meeting in the Elwell block, after which the "49 members on the books" were treated to "a fine collation...prepared by 'Mine Host' Alcott of the Bridgewater Inn, and consisted of cold meats, salads, tongue, oysters, coffee, cakes, etc., ...served by the waitresses from the hotel." Following this feast, Arthur C. Boyden, Vice-Principal of Bridgewater Normal (One wonders if Gates had already decided to will his house to this school.) was elected toastmaster. Although there is no record of his remarks, Gates was one of nine members asked to comment on how the "club might be useful to the town."<sup>47</sup>

As things worked out, Gates, now in his early sixties, was very much involved in what proved to be the most significant and lasting contribution made by the Commercial Club during its decade-long operations--the successful drive to create a co-operative bank in Bridgewater. No longer experimental by the early 1900's, co-operative banking had started in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1833, spreading to other states where names such as "building and loan association" were used. From the start, these

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<sup>46</sup> BI, Jan. 15, 1904, Jan. 27, 1905, Jan. 3, 1908, Feb. 4, 1910, Jan. 13, 20, 1911, Jan. 13, 1913; "Samuel Pearly Gates," Representative Men..., Vol. I, pp. 369-370; "Gates, Samuel Pearly...", HH, pp. 264-265; "Gammons, Ferdinand C....," HH, p. 264; for more about the roles of Gates and Gammons in the Continental Gin Co. see pages 32, 54-58, in my essay on manufacturing in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>47</sup> BI, May 19, 1888, Dec. 14, 1889, Jan., 18, Feb. 1, 1890, Jan. 10, Oct. 17, 1891, Nov. 23, Dec. 7, 21, 1900, Feb. 2, 1902, Dec. 4, 1903, Dec. 6, 1907, Dec. 18, 1908; I have found practically nothing about the Commercial Club in the secondary sources.



institutions were formed to help working people buy or build homes of modest dimensions by saving in and borrowing from these banks. Massachusetts, with its growing industrial population, passed enabling legislation in 1877, and by 1891 there were over one-hundred co-operative banks in the state, with assets of more than twenty-seven million dollars. Bridgewater, however, was hardly a pioneer in establishing this type of banking, despite attempts between 1888 and 1891 by the first commercial club and others to promote the “practicability” of creating such a bank for this town.<sup>48</sup>

By the turn of the century, the demand for housing, including small and affordable dwellings, increased in Bridgewater as its revitalized iron and, especially, its expanding shoe industries began to hire more workers. Referring to a meeting of the Commercial Club in early December of 1901, the Independent averred: “There is no doubt that the leading men of Bridgewater approve of organizing a cooperative bank.” Accompanying its long editorial favoring such a bank were interviews of several club members, all of whom favored the establishment of such a financial enterprise. Heading the list of comments were those of “Mr. Samuel P. Gates,” treasurer of the Bridgewater Savings Bank since its founding in 1872. His position was succinctly stated as follows: “I do not see a reason why persons interested in a savings bank should object to the organization of a cooperative bank. The two institutions do not conflict, for, as I understand it, the cooperative bank is essentially intended for the man of limited means who wishes to own his home.” He went on to say: “I believe that a cooperative bank would be a good thing for Bridgewater, for there is no denying the fact that there is a great demand for small houses. The shoe factory has caused this.” Gates was, of course, referring to the McElwain company, which at this time was by far the town’s largest employer and whose factory on Perkins Street was owned by the Bridgewater Shoe Company of which he remained a director until his death in 1914.<sup>49</sup>

While supportive of the Commercial Club’s drive to create a cooperative bank, Gates was not a member of the investigatory committee composed of Elwell, Frank E. Gurney, an instructor of Latin, astronomy, bookkeeping, and algebra at Bridgewater Normal, Pliny Jewel, editor of the Bridgewater Independent, and William S. Prophett, the town’s leading funeral director and first chief (1894-1899) of the public Fire Department. Returning to work at the savings bank following the Christmas holidays and beginning to plan for the annual meeting of the Continental Gin Company in Birmingham, Alabama, I doubt that Gates felt slighted when these four club members met at Elwell’s impressive residence, located on the corner of Summer Street and what would become officially Park Terrace in 1913, the day after Christmas to start the process of creating Bridgewater’s second bank. No attempt will be made here to give an account of all the steps, including state approval, leading to the actual opening of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank on June 16, 1902, although such a story could be pieced together by items found in the Bridgewater Independent. An avid reader of this newspaper and loyal member of the Commercial Club, Gates surely followed events very carefully. Whether or not he was consulted in advance, Gates, nonetheless, found himself being elected as Vice-President of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank at its

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<sup>48</sup> BI, April 14, 1888, March 2, 23, 30, 1889, Nov. 15, 1890, Jan. 10, 17, 1891, Dec. 6, 1901.

<sup>49</sup> BI, Dec. 6, 13, 1901.

organizational meeting on May 12, 1902, along with Elwell as President and Gurney as Secretary-Treasurer; initially none of officers were paid salaries. Perhaps two particular arguments convinced Gates to take on this added professional responsibility at the age of sixty-five. First, as the town's leading banker, his name would lend a certain amount of gravitas to this new banking endeavor, helping to ensure its success. Second, the nitty-gritty work of selling shares and making loans would mainly be in the hands of the secretary-treasurer, reassuring Gates of not adding to his already heavy work load as the treasurer of the Bridgewater Savings Bank.<sup>50</sup>

Gate's role in the co-operative bank changed considerably a month after Gurney began the routine of transacting business for two hours each Monday evening in Room 6 of Elwell's Block. On July 15, Elwell, described by the Independent as "the fifth wheel in the business life of the town," suffered at the age of seventy-five what was described as "a slight paralytic shock." The newspaper went on to express its "hope and trust that he may be active in town affairs for many years." Similar sentiments were echoed by the Bridgewater Commercial Club, but Elwell's attending physician was "non-committal" on Elwell's condition and his chances for a full recovery. While he seemed to have gradually returned to "comparatively good health" following his illness, the first president of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank did not resume his bank work. In 1905, Elwell sold "his magnificent residence on Summer Street and removed to Brookline;" he passed away two years later in West Somerville. Gates consented to be acting president until the bank's annual meeting in June of 1903, at which point he was elected president in his own right, a position he would hold until his death in 1914. As head of this small, but growing financial institution, one is tempted to see Gates's role as somewhat ceremonial, consisting mainly in presiding at meetings, including the annual one of the shareholder, all of which starting in late 1902 were held in Odd Fellows Block, constructed five years earlier. Throughout his tenure as president of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, Gates could count on Secretary-Treasurer Gurney, who beginning in 1905 received an annual remuneration of one hundred dollars, doing the essential and basic work of this financial enterprise, including meticulously preparing the annual reports of this second bank to be established in Bridgewater. The death of both men in early 1914 ended the first era in the history of this institution. A full account of its early years would undoubtedly wish to evaluate how well its early leaders, including Gates, fulfilled the institution's original aim which was stated as follows: "The purpose for which the Corporation is constituted is accumulating the savings of its members paid into such Corporation in fixed periodical installments, and the lending of such funds so assimilated to its members." More specifically, did it fulfill Gates's hopes, expressed in December of 1901, of helping "the man of

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<sup>50</sup> BI, Dec. 27, 1901, May 2, 16, 30, June 6, 13, 1902; "Accepted Streets," Town of Bridgewater, p. 10; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, pp. 75, 101; for more about Frank E. Gurney see pages 81-82 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; it might be noted that Gurney passed away suddenly on March 29, 1914, not quite three months after the death of Gates; for more about Albert J. Elwell see pages 9-10, 56-57, in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater through 1910; Pictorial History, 1994, p.18; Elwell's house was made of brick and was built by Solomon Washburn; at the time Elwell bought the house in late 1887 from the H. A. Ward estate, it was rundown and considered "a disgrace to the street;" after the improvements made by Elwell, it was labeled "an ornament" to this part of the town; around 1910 it was replaced by a house that George Barney and family occupied a few years after later; this house is now the home of the Political Science Department of Bridgewater State University.

limited means who wished to own his own home.”<sup>51</sup>

Indicative of Gates’s continued commitment to Bridgewater’s well-being in the first decade or so of the new century was his willingness to add two more responsibilities to an already long list of civic activities. For the last three years of his life, Gates was elected to serve on the executive committee of Bridgewater Academy, whose impressive building was located across from the southern end of the Common. Incorporated as a private institution on February 26, 1799, this school provided what we might call secondary education for girls and boys, since the town’s educational efforts did not include instruction beyond the eighth grade level until around 1870. By the time Gates became a trustee in 1910, this once venerable institution had been closed for thirty-five years, but in an arrangement that started in 1875 and lasted until the early 1950’s the Town of Bridgewater rented from the board of trustees its 1868 Italianate-style edifice for use as a public high school, with the understanding that this board would be responsible for making any repairs or structural renovations to the Academy Building. Unlike some citizens who served as trustees, Gates had not been a student at this private school. Nonetheless, one suspects that as a member of the newly founded Old Bridgewater Historical Society, Gates was at its meeting held in Bridgewater’s Town Hall on Thursday evening, December 14, 1899, about the time he moved into his School Street home, to celebrate the academy’s one-hundredth anniversary. Perhaps he took special note of an address by George Washburn, secretary of the Medfield Historical Society and a former student at the Bridgewater Academy, who proudly told the audience: “I have in my possession an excellent pencil drawing of Mr. [Frederick] Crafts [one of Washburn’s teachers and a preceptor of the academy in 1861] done by Dr. [Edgar] Parker when under his tutelage.” (Could it be that Parker met Francis A. Hyde when he attended the Bridgewater Academy before going to train as a doctor at Harvard’s medical school. Perhaps she too was a student at the academy).<sup>52</sup>

Had Gates’s tenure as a member of the Academy’s board of trustees begun in the late 1890’s rather than ten years later this civic duty would have absorbed more of his time and energy. He would have taken part, for instance, in the discussions with the town’s school committee in 1896-97 which led to the decision to add a “long, rectangular Georgian Revival wing” abutting the front of the 1868 building facing the Common. Needed to accommodate the increased enrollment of the high school, this project helped create the handsome edifice that still graces the southern end of Central Square. As he walked to

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<sup>51</sup> BI, Dec. 13, 1901, June 13, 27, July 18, 25, Aug. 1, 22, 1902, Jan. 16, April 3, May 22, June 12, 19, July 24, Aug. 8, 22, 1903, May 20, 1904, June 23, July 7, 1905, June 21, Oct. 4, 1907, Jan. 24, 1908, June 17, 1910, June 21, 1912, May 20, 1913, Jan. 13, 30, 1914; “Purpose of the Co-operative Bank,” Records of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, Vol. One (1902-1920), p. 2; I am indebted to David R. Wolohojian, head of the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank, for giving me access to the unpublished accounts of the annual meetings of this bank; when I write more extensively on the history of banking in Bridgewater, I will make greater use of this primary source.

<sup>52</sup> BI, July 4, 1886, July 21, 1888, December 22, 1899; Crane, pp. 814-815; Nahum Mitchell, History of The Early Settlement of Bridgewater in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, Including an extensive Family Register (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1975), p. 51; Mitchell’s book was first printed in 1840; Bridgewater Book, pp. 21-22; Maurice K. Walsh, “Bridgewater Academy,” HH, pp. 109, 112-115; while only excerpts from Walsh’s 1938 unpublished thesis are included in the History Highlights, his full work would be a must for anyone doing research on the Bridgewater Academy; Townscape Institute, Form 52, pp. 168-169; Pictorial History, 1987, pp. 9-11; J. Kenneth Moore, “Bridgewater Academy,” Tales Around the Common, pp. 33-35; for more about the history of the Bridgewater Academy see pages 11-13 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910; unfortunately, I have not been able

the Bank Building and the New Jerusalem Church, Gates undoubtedly gazed with admiration at what was (and still is) one of the architectural treasures of Bridgewater's center. Not being on the academy's board until the end of the decade also meant that Gates was not directly involved in the issue of how much the town should pay in annual rent for the housing of its public high school in the Academy Building. But no matter involving the relations between the town and the academy's trustees would have been more demanding of Gates's civic commitment than the decade-long efforts on the part of many in the town to secure the transfer of the Academy's property to the town, the argument being that a community should own and care for its own school buildings.<sup>53</sup>

Despite efforts to the contrary, the decade ended without the town gaining control of the Academy Building and, with little public support for erecting a new high school, secondary education continued to be conducted in the facility constructed in 1868 and added to in 1897. Whatever Gates thought about this outcome, he most likely agreed with the following pragmatic assessment made by the school committee in its 1909 annual report: "For the benefit of those who may feel disappointed at such a result..., 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 from time to time." Perhaps this sentiment helped prompt Gates in July of 1910 to serve on the Academy's executive board, a decision made easier by the fact that he knew and respected the men who were elected as officers at the same meeting: "President, Dr. Calvin Pratt; Vice-president, J. Gardner Bassett; Secretary and Treasurer Frank E. Gurney [who already worked closely with Gates in the same capacity at the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank]." These three men, along with Gates and Paul O. Clark, constituted the executive board until early 1914. During the three years in which Gates served as a trustee no major architectural changes were made to the Academy Building and, in addition, the question of its ownership, so controversial in the previous decade, absorbed little of the board's attention.<sup>54</sup>

True to their charge, however, the trustees approved several projects aimed at improving the Academy's property and, thus, hopefully, the quality of education at the town's high school. Given the banking and business interests of Gates and other board members, including Gurney who, among other subjects, taught bookkeeping at Bridgewater Normal, the trustees wholeheartedly supported the remodeling of the school's commercial rooms. Noting that "commercial work is the only form of vocational training possible in most small towns" like Bridgewater, John E. DeMeyer, Superintendent of Schools, in his 1911 report, voiced appreciation to the "Trustees of the Academy for the splendid quarters provided for those taking" this course of study. More noticeable to citizens who passed by the Academy Building two years after the "addition of two or three typewriters" in a special room made separate by "a

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to find student membership records of this private academy.

<sup>53</sup> BI, Dec. 18, 1896, April 23, May 14, June 4, 11, Aug 20, Oct. 28, 1897, Feb. 27, March 6, 13, April 17, July 24, 1903, Jan 29, 1904, March 29, May 10, 1907, Jan. 17, 24, July 3, 1908; "Town Meeting-March 1, 1909," Annual Town Report, 1909, p. 13; "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Report, 1900, pp. 28-29, 31; Townscape Institute, Form 52, pp.168-169; for more about the quest to secure town ownership of the Academy Building see pages 65-70 in my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>54</sup> BI, Aug. 20, 1909, July 15, 1910, July 12, 1912; July 24, 1914.

glass partition” was the covering of the roof of the high school building with “metal shingles.” I suspect they were the so-called “Walter’s Metallic Shingles,” which the retail-service enterprise of Henry G. Prophett, brother of William S., used to cover many Bridgewater dwellings during the first twenty or so years of the twentieth century. It might be also noted that Henry’s Queen Anne style house on the corner of Bedford Street and Maple Avenue rivaled the splendor of Gates’s School Street residence, built about ten years earlier. While both dwellings had some of the same features associated with this architectural genre, Prophett’s had “Walter’s Shingles” on its roofs, Gates’s did not.<sup>55</sup>

Similar to his involvement in the Bridgewater Improvement Society of the 1880’s, Gates’s association with the Bridgewater Village Improvement Society, established in the Spring of 1901, and which changed its name to the Bridgewater Improvement Association in 1904, was limited to membership and, on occasion, service on a committee. He was among the well-over one hundred citizens whom might be labeled charter members of this new organization. Even a cursory glance at this list, printed in the Independent on May 24, 1901, indicates that in the early years of new century citizens of Yankee-English background, the largest demographic group in the town’s population, followed by the Irish, were the dominant group in this improvement society. What was also recognized from the start was the leading part played by women in the movement to create a more beautiful Bridgewater. On the same day it published the first membership list, the Independent, referring to the Ousamequin Club, an important women’s organization formed in 1898 and still a vibrant force in Bridgewater’s civic life, averred: “The club has done much for the town, and yet we feel that its usefulness is just beginning, now that it is obliged to acknowledge the parentage of the Village Improvement Society.”<sup>56</sup>

Gates’s membership on two committees of the new improvement organization illustrate his acceptance of a broader perspective than that associated with the business-oriented society of the 1880’s. In September of 1903, after considering a plan for about a month, the society, led by its president Arthur C. Boyden, decided to become involved in a drive to improve the condition of the Unitarian burial ground at the juncture of Summer and Plymouth Streets. Known as the First Parish Cemetery or, more commonly, the “old cemetery,” it was the oldest of Bridgewater’s ten or so burial grounds, having been created in 1716 on half of the two-acre plot donated by Rebecca and John Washburn for establishing a house of worship in the newly created South Parish. Hearing that a committee of the Unitarian Church, which controlled the cemetery, wished to confer with the improvement society on steps needed to enhance

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<sup>55</sup> BI, Aug., 15, 1913; “Report of the Superintendent of Schools,” Annual Town Report, 1911,” pp. 18-19; Arthur Clarke Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, p. 63; Bridgewater Book: Townscape Institute, Form 19, pp. 97-98; for more about Henry G. Prophett see pages 42,108-109, in my essay on stores and services in Bridgewater through 1910.

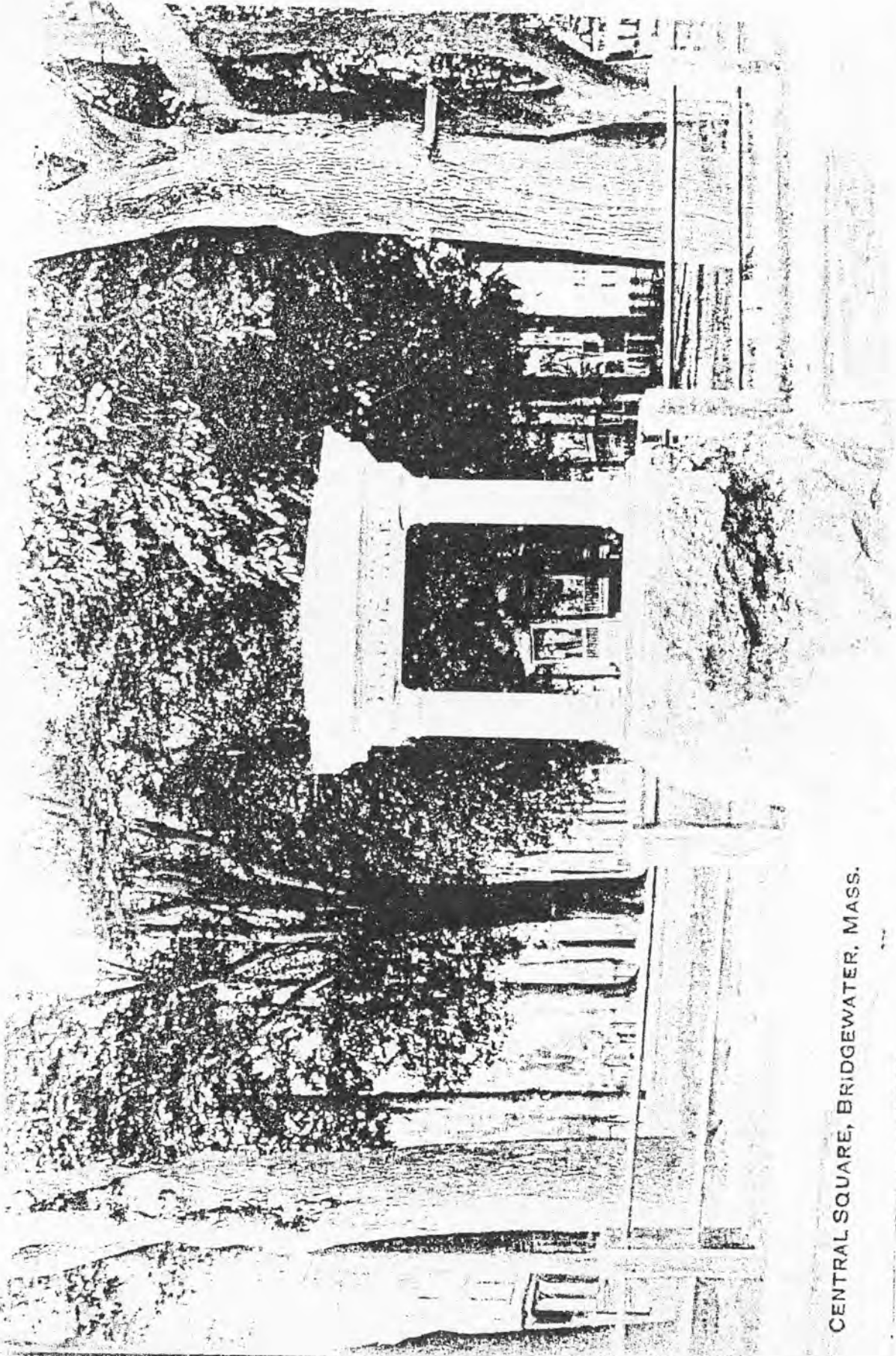
<sup>56</sup> BI, Feb. 26, 1887, March 24, 1888, May 10, 24, 1901, June 16, Nov. 24, 1905, June 22, 1906, June 14, 1907, April 17, 1908, Jan. 17, 1913; “First Meeting of the Bridgewater Village Improvement Society, April 29, 1901,” Unpublished Records, Vol. I, pp. 5-6, 11-14; “Annual Meetings of the Bridgewater Improvement Association, June 14, 1905, June 18, 1906,” Unpublished Records, Vol. I, pp. 24-25, 26-27, respectively; many thanks to Shirley Krasinski, Professor Emeritus of Bridgewater State College and current president of the Bridgewater Improvement Association, for making the organization’s records available to me; Carolyn Morwick and Carole Wright, “Social Life of the Community,” HH, p. 202; building upon my talk on the first ten years of the Bridgewater Improvement Association presented at the Bridgewater Public Library, I hope at some point to write an essay on the activities of this organization through 1925.

the graveyard's appearance, the executive board appointed a three-person committee consisting of Albert Gardner Boyden, Mrs. Walter S. Little, who would be one of Bridgewater's outstanding civic leader for many years to come, and Samuel P. Gates to work with the church committee. While I am not able to assess Gates's role in any joint meetings that were held, the two organizations, aided by the town's Superintendent of Streets, Robert J. McNeeland, soon had men working on the "needed renovation" project. By the middle of November, much had been accomplished, including moving the "wall at the junction of Summer and Plymouth streets back from the road," relaying the walls, trimming trees, laying a sidewalk on the street side, and grading and seeding parts of the yard. It was "hoped that after this the cemetery" would "be kept in order during the year." This wish was partly fulfilled when the town meeting in March of the following year supported the following resolution: "That the care of the Old Cemeteries be left with the Superintendent of Streets."<sup>57</sup>

In the spring of 1912, with the association's membership reaching 170, Gates agreed to be on a finance committee, which also included Gurney and Artemus H. Hobart, who had succeeded Boyden at the B. I. A. in 1906, charged with soliciting funds for a new fountain to be placed at the northern end of the Common. While Gurney was the driving force behind the project, his older colleague at the Bridgewater Co-operative Bank and on the executive board of Bridgewater Academy, "kindly consented to receive subscriptions at his office in the savings bank," making it easier for "men, women, and children" to contribute to a fund of \$500.00 required for this new addition to Central Square. The campaign to raise the necessary money went well, and by the middle of June the fountain, made of pink granite mined in Westerly, Rhode Island, was shipped by railroad to Bridgewater. On July 1, the new fountain "was set in place by an employee of the company which built it." Whether or not Gates witnessed the placement of the fountain on the Common across from the Bank Building I don't know, but as an avid reader of the Independent he would have likely read the following description on July 5: "The base is finished in the rough, with a drinking trough for horses cut out, and a drinking place for dogs and other small animals at one end near the ground. On the side toward the common is a bubbler of nickeled brass. The base is surmounted by two polished columns, and on top of them is a column. On the front of the canopy is the word "Bridgewater," and on the other side is the inscription, "Erected by Popular Subscription, 1912." Long supportive of Bridgewater's civic and economic advancement, Gates could note with pride that this public enterprise was accompanied in 1912 by two other visible signs of the town's progress-- the laying of "the spur track from Broad Street to the new freight station on Perkins Street" and the creation of a Children's Room in the public library, which he had long served as an elected trustee. (While Bridgewater has seen many changes in the last century, the 1912 fountain continues to stand like a sentry on the northern end of the Common. I doubt, however, if horses or even other small

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<sup>57</sup> BI, April 8, May 20, 1904, Sept. 11, Nov. 6, 13, 1911; "Town Meeting, March 7, 1904," Annual Town Report, 1904, p. 14; Crane, pp. 808-809; for more about the First Parish Cemetery, see pages 3-4, 34-35 in my essay on churches in Bridgewater through 1910; Townscape Institute, Form 811, pp. 689-690; David R. Moore, Images of America: Bridgewater, p. 24; the description under the picture of the First Parish Cemetery in this last source was written by Benjamin A. Spence



CENTRAL SQUARE, BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

(Rizer Collection)

Drinking Fountain  
1913

Central Square in Bridgewater

animals any longer quench their thirsts from its cooling waters on hot summer days.)<sup>58</sup>

Through the summer of 1913, Gates, despite failing eyesight, continued to maintain a busy routine, combining professional and civic duties with relaxing activities involving family and friends. As noted earlier, however, his usual schedule was interrupted in October by two operations on his eyes, resulting in the loss of one of them and in his general health being “somewhat impaired.” Nonetheless, he enjoyed his Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, thanks in good measure to his sister Mary who had made his School Street home almost her permanent residence, all the while maintaining close ties with the Gates’ hometown of Ashby. On Sunday, January 11, 1914, Gates attended church, and in the later words of Rev. Walter B. Murray, who had replaced Reverend Wheeler as the pastor of the New Jerusalem Church in early 1913, “sat in his accustomed pew in this church, and later sat in my Bible Class in the Sunday School room.” The following morning, Gates, belying the fact that he had turned seventy-six on June 8th, started another workweek at the Bridgewater Savings Bank in Central Square. Around one o’clock, “apparently in his usual health,” he returned to his School Street home with Harry W. Bragdon, who had been serving the bank for almost thirty years as a “special accountant.” While “sitting at the dinner table,” Gates “died suddenly” at one-thirty. The obituary in the Bridgewater Independent of Friday January 16 did not cite the immediate cause of his death.<sup>59</sup>

Evidently, word about Samuel Pearly Gates’s passing spread quickly among Bridgewater’s more than 8,000 inhabitants, even though his obituary was not carried by the Independent until January 16, the day after the funeral service at the New Jerusalem Church. After crediting him as Bridgewater’s “most honored and best known” citizen, citing his many contributions to his adopted town, the local newspaper, which Gates had faithfully read since it began to be published in 1876-1877, poignantly concluded:

Not in recent years has there been such a manifestation of mourning as attended the funeral yesterday afternoon. The places of business were closed, and the factories suspended work during the hours of the service. The Normal and public schools closed and all classes of citizens joined in paying homage to the deceased. The employees of the various concerns and organizations with which Mr. Gates was connected, attended in a body. The front of the altar of the church was a bank of flowers. Many people were unable to gain admission to the building.

The service was held at the church of the New Jerusalem and was simple and impressive, consisting of reading of the scripture, and prayer, by Rev. W. B. Murray, pastor of the church, and a short address by Rev. G. S. Wheeler, a former pastor, who touched upon the traits of character that had made the deceased a moral force in the

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<sup>58</sup> BI, June 22, 1906, July 24, 1911, Jan. 12, Feb. 23, March, 1, 8, 22, April 10, May 3, 10, June 21, July 5, Aug. 23, 1912; “Annual Meeting of the B. I. A. , June 11, 1907,” Unpublished Records, Vol. I, pp. 28-30; for more about the freight issue see pages 78-81 in my essay on transportation in Bridgewater through 1910.

<sup>59</sup> BI, Jan. 31, 1913, Jan. 16, 23, 1914, March 10, 1916; Bridgewater Book; S. Loin Keith succeeded Gates as the



community for a half century.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Shaw House-1914 to 1925**

Indicative of Gates's longtime prominence in the Bridgewater community, the Independent, through "the courtesy of the office of the Registry of Probate at Plymouth," took the unique step of printing most of his lengthy will on the first page of its January 30<sup>th</sup> edition. The will's twenty-two items clearly show Gates's considerable wealth and generosity, remembering especially public institutions, people with whom he worked, and family members. "As would naturally be expected," opined the Independent, "Mary E. Shaw, Mr. Gates's sister, is the principal legatee." She was bequeathed "the sum of \$20,000, all furniture, wearing apparel, books, pictures, watches, jewelry, and all household effects, absolutely." Since it would help shape the future of the School Street house and, indeed, Bridgewater Normal and its evolution into a state university, item three of the will in particular deserves highlighting. Combining paraphrasing and verbatim wording of the will, the newspaper's account read: "Third, to his sister, Mary E. Shaw, he bequeaths, for and during her life, the homestead place on School street in Bridgewater (which is fully described in the will) 'and at the decease of my said sister, I give and devise the same real estate unto the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, absolutely, presuming, without imposing any legal obligations, that the same will be used by the State in connection with the Normal school, adjacent, from which institution I am a graduate, and am much interested therein.'" I don't know if Albert Gardner Boyden, who had retired in 1906 as Normal's principal or his son Arthur Clarke Boyden, who took over the reins of the school after his father's forty-one year tenure, had any previous knowledge of this part of Gates's will, which had been "drawn December 21, 1911." Perhaps they did, however, since the relations between the Boydens and their School Street neighbor had been cordial, their paths crossing many times as they labored to make Bridgewater a better place in which to live. It was only fitting that the elder Boyden was asked to write a town tribute in memory of the late Samuel P. Gates, embodied in a resolution "adopted by a unanimous vote at the annual town meeting early in March." Could it be that the Principal Emeritus was thinking about his own institution when he wrote of Bridgewater's "gratitude" to Gates "for the gifts through which his public spirit will continue to find material expression in all the coming years."<sup>61</sup>

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Shaw, born on July 5, 1846, nine years after her brother Samuel Pearly Gates, was the fourth owner and occupant of the Queen Anne style house on School Street in Bridgewater. Hailing from Ashby, a small rural community in North Central Massachusetts, on the border with New Hampshire, she, along with her parents, Pearly and Mary, and brothers, Samuel and George,

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treasurer of the bank.

<sup>60</sup> BI, Jan. 16, 23, Dec. 25, 1914, July 23, 1915; Massachusetts Decennial Census, 1915, p. 49; when the Bridgewater Independent was microfilmed in the 1980's, many of the copies bore Gates's signature; for those readers who wish a longer analysis of Gates's personal attributes, I recommend reading the Memorial Sermon preached by Rev. Murray on January 18, 1914, in the New Jerusalem Church and printed five days later in the Independent.

<sup>61</sup> BI, Jan. 23, 30, March 6, 13, 1914.

## Mr. Gates' Will.

Jan 30, 1914  
Made Numerous Public and Private  
Bequests in Disposing of His Estate.

Through the courtesy of the office of the Registry of Probate at Plymouth, the INDEPENDENT is enabled today to give a digest of the will of the late Samuel P. Gates. The will contains twenty-two items besides the introduction and instructions in relation to the executors, and was drawn December 21, 1911. Although the usual legal phraseology common to such instruments is used to a certain degree, the meaning and evident intention of the testator are very clearly stated, and it would seem almost impossible to place any different construction upon them than what Mr. Gates desired.

As will be seen below, Mr. Gates has been very generous in his public bequests and has well remembered his co-workers with whom he has been associated for years. His native town of Ashby will receive generous amounts for public uses, and the American Unitarian Association is given a large sum as a memorial to Mr. Gates's father and mother. As would naturally be expected, Mrs. Mary E. Shaw, Mr. Gates' sister, is the principal legatee.

The will occupies several pages of legal cap paper, closely written, and would take more than four columns of this paper. A digest, omitting the legal verbiage, follows, and is taken separately.

First. The executors are directed to pay all debts and funeral expenses as soon as may be after the decease of the testator.

Second, to his sister, Mary E. Shaw, he bequeaths the sum of \$20,000, all furniture, wearing apparel, books, pictures, watches, jewelry and all other household effects, absolutely.

Third, to his sister, Mary E. Shaw, he bequeaths, for and during her life, the homestead place on School street in Bridgewater (which is fully described in the will), "and at the decease of my said sister, I give and devise the same real estate unto the Commonwealth of Massachusetts absolutely, presuming, without imposing any legal obligations, that the same will be used by the State in connection with the Normal School, adjacent from which institution I am a graduate, and am much interested therein."

Fourth. The town of Ashby, Middlesex county, is given \$20,000, in trust, to hold and kept in a separate fund, the income to be used and applied for and toward the support of the public schools.

Fifth. Charles A. Lowe, George H. Lowe, Emma B. Gifford, Anna J. Worcester and Gustavus J. Lowe are each bequeathed \$5000.

Sixth. Hattie P. McKown, former wife of the testator's brother, George, Gates, is given \$5000, and her daughter, Ethel McKown Parker, \$1000.

Seventh. Fannie E. Reed, a cousin is given \$3000, and her daughter, Mary Burr Reed, named for Mr. Gates' mother, is bequeathed \$5000.

Eighth. Dr. John Albert Hayward is given \$3000.

Ninth. The testator directs that gifts comprising two to eight, inclusive, shall take precedence, to the full amount, before all following bequests.

Tenth. The sum of \$10,000 is bequeathed to the American Unitarian Association of Boston, as a memorial to his father, Pearly Gates, and his mother, Mary Burr Gates, in trust, "to hold and keep the same in a separate fund, and to use and apply the income thereof, annually, for and toward the support of the ministry of the first Unitarian parish or Society in the town of Ashby, in the county of Middlesex, so long as said Parish or Society continues to exercise the Unitarian form of religious worship in said town." If the parish or Society shall cease to exercise the Unitarian form of worship, the American Unitarian Association is to apply the income to general purposes.

Eleventh. The trustees of the Bridgewater cemetery are given the income of \$1000 for the perpetual care of the testator's lot therein, the excess, if any, to be applied to general purposes.

Twelfth. The Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church Society is bequeathed \$3,000, in trust, for general purposes.

Thirteenth. The town of Bridgewater is bequeathed the sum of \$3000, in trust for the general purposes of the Public library.

Fourteenth. The sum of \$10,000 is bequeathed to the town of Bridgewater, in trust, the income to be applied to the general purposes of the public schools.

Fifteenth. The town of Plymouth is given \$2000, in trust, as a memorial to his late wife, the income to be used for the general purposes of the Public library.

Sixteenth. The town of Ashby is

given \$1000, in trust, the income to be used for the perpetual care of the cemetery lot where the testator's father, mother and brother are buried, the surplus, if any, to be applied for general purposes.

Seventeenth. The Massachusetts New Church Union of Boston is bequeathed \$5000.

Eighteenth. The American Unitarian Association of Boston is bequeathed \$3000.

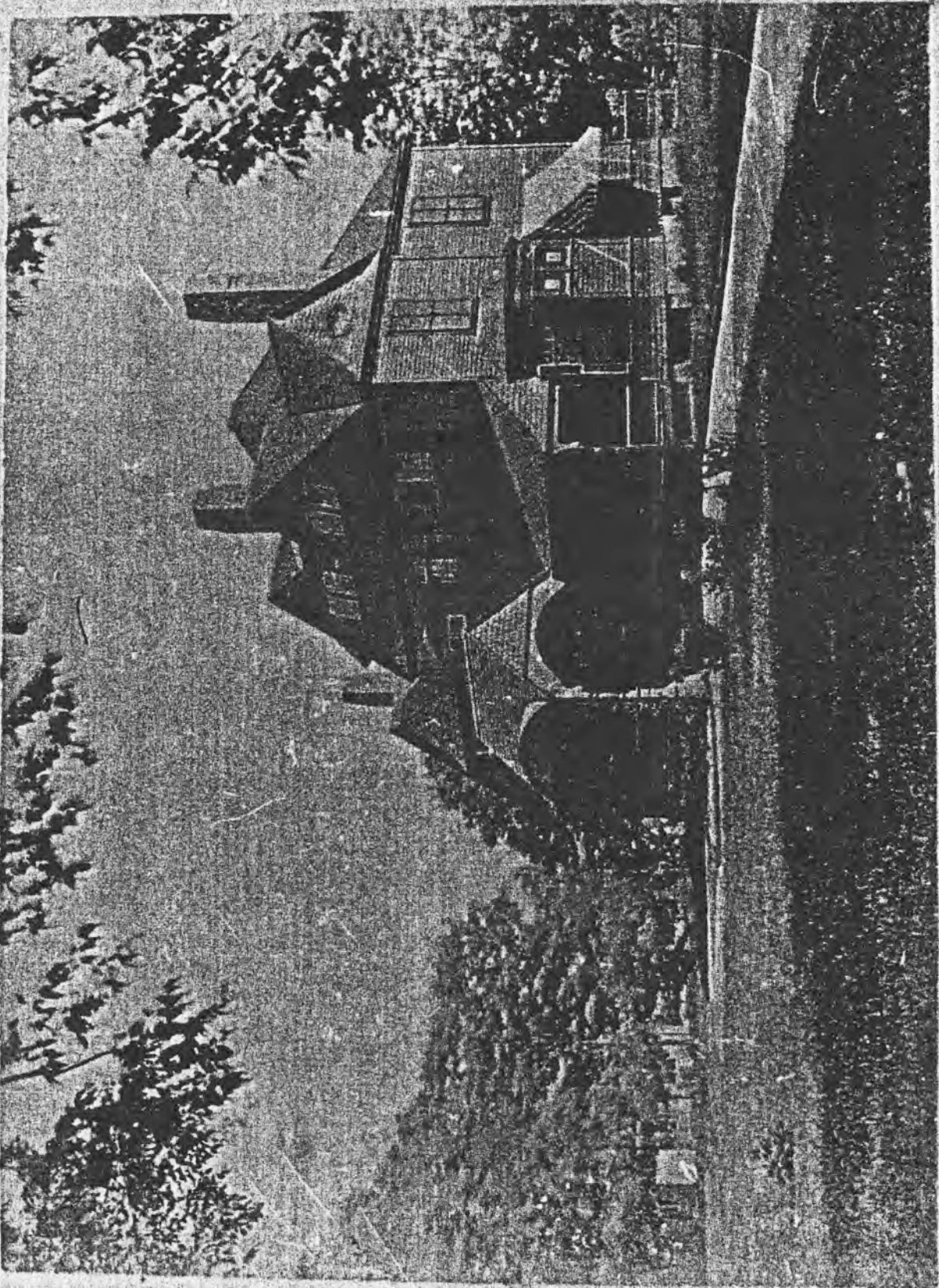
Nineteenth. The First Unitarian Parish of Ashby, Bradford Jones, Ellen Simpson, Justin Turner, S. Lorin Keith, James Bragdon, Jane C. Keith, Julia K. Gates, Mary C. Wilder, Susan H. White, Joel A. Hayward, Florence K. Gates, Emma G. Burr Starkweather, Estella Kendall, Mary E. Bennett, Georgianna E. Bemis, Carrie L. Wood, Emma L. Rogers, Jennie L. Menzell, and Elizabeth C. Fobes are each bequeathed \$1000.

Twentieth. To Henry E. Dunphe, Helen K. Burr Starkweather, Henry B. Burr, Alice G. Reed, Nellie Joyce Spaulding, Sarah E. Wilder, Mary Louise Gerry and John D. Burr, is bequeathed \$500 each.

Twenty-first. "All the rest, residue and remainder of my estate of which I am seized, possessed or entitled to, real, personal and mixed, and wherever situated, I give and devise unto my said sister, Mary E. Shaw, absolutely, subject, however to the following, to wit: I hereby authorize and empower my said executors, and the survivors of them, to sell and convey any part or the whole of my property or estate, real or personal, except chattels and real estate hereinbefore disposed of specifically by paragraphs two or three, by public or private sale, if they or he deem it necessary or expedient for the purpose of carrying into effect any of the provisions of this will, including the distribution of my estate, all in their or his discretion, and to make, execute and deliver such instruments as may be necessary to pass good title thereto, without order or license of any court, and the purchaser or purchasers shall not be responsible for the application of the purchase money.

Twenty-second. Sewell A. Faunce of Boston and Gustavus J. Lowe of Bridgewater are named as executors, and it is directed that they shall not furnish surety on their official bonds.

The will is without codicils, alterations or additions, and is witnessed by James Watrop Pickering, Sewell A. Faunce and Cyrus C. Maybury.



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Parker-Gates House  
(Rizer Collection)

was a member of the First (Unitarian) Parish Church in that community. In 1869, Mary E. Gates married the new pastor of this church, Reverend George Stetson Shaw, a native of Bristol, Rhode Island, and eight years younger than his wife. For the next forty-one years, Shaw served as the pastor of this Unitarian church and, in addition, was “largely” responsible for the founding of the Ashby Free Public Library in 1874. While at this point I know little about the relationship between Samuel P. Gates, who left Ashby in the middle 1850’s to attend Bridgewater Normal, and his sister Mary and her husband George during the late nineteenth century, I assume it was a close one. Surely on important occasions, including the funerals for his father Pearly and mother Mary in 1888 and the celebration of Reverend Shaw’s twenty-fifth anniversary at the Ashby church in 1893, Samuel returned to his home town to which he remained loyal throughout his life. In particular, however, two events appear to have brought Gates and his sister Mary closer together. One was Gates’s purchase of the Parker House in 1899, affording him the opportunity of entertaining friends and family members at his beautiful and spacious School Street dwelling, just a stone’s throw (depending on one’s pitching arm) from the common of historic Bridgewater. The other was the death of Mary’s husband in 1909, perhaps reminding her of the almost forty years her brother had lived alone following the deaths of his wife Marcia and infant daughter Marcia in 1873. No other guest spent as much time at Gates’s house during the last fourteen years of his life than his sister Mary. No other person was as close to him during this decade and a half.<sup>62</sup>

The transition from being her brother’s confidante and travel companion and sharing more time with him at his Bridgewater residence to becoming the owner and sole occupant of what could begin in 1914 to be labeled the Parker-Gates-Shaw House was not, I suspect, always easy. Unlike her brother, who had lived close to sixty years in his adopted community, Mary was relatively a newcomer to Bridgewater at the time of acquiring Gate’s house and grounds of over two acres. Never known for the hustle and bustle of family life, this large residence must have been a lonely place for Mrs. Shaw in the months following her brother’s death, funeral service, and burial beside his wife and daughter in “beautiful Mount Prospect” cemetery. Receiving a copy of the town’s tribute to her brother, “whom all recognized as the first citizen of the community,” was undoubtedly of some solace. Aware of his unique place in fifty years of Bridgewater’s history, she gave in May several gifts, including a copy of the Gates family genealogy, to the Memorial Library. In the fall, she offered to the town’s public schools the “money to finance a plan for temperance essay contests” which had been “successfully tried in a number of cities and towns of the country.”<sup>63</sup>

Despite spending a great deal of time in Bridgewater during the years in which her brother

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<sup>62</sup> BI, May 19, 1888, Jan. 23, 1914; “Review of the Year 1925,” BI, Jan. 8, 1926; I am much in debt to a website entitled A History of the First Parish Church (Ashby, Massachusetts) by Dorothy T. Wilder; pictures of Rev. George Stetson Shaw and his wife Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Shaw are most appreciated (see the accompanying insert to my text); I might add that Wilder’s history has yet to be scanned on the church’s website; “Ashby Free Public Library,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashby\\_Free\\_Public\\_Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashby_Free_Public_Library); I am particularly grateful to the Clerk of the Town of Ashby who provided me with valuable information about George and Mary Shaw via telephone and mail; particularly helpful was her list of birth and death dates, excerpts from the History of Ashby covering the years 1890 to 2,000 (pages 35, 138-139, and a picture of the Gates family plot in the Ashby Glenwood Cemetery.

<sup>63</sup> BI, Jan. 23, March 6, May 8, Oct. 2, 1914.

# A History of the First Parish Church

by Dorothy T. Wilder

Rev. and Mrs. George S. Shaw



Rev. and Mrs. George S. Shaw  
Newly Weds — 1869



Rev. George S. Shaw's 25th Year  
at our Church



Rev. George Stetson Shaw



Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Shaw  
Daughter of Pearly Gates, Ashby

owned the impressive house next door to the Normal school, Mary Shaw probably had mixed feelings about remaining in her adopted community after Samuel's death. Perhaps out of loyalty to her brother's memory, she felt compelled to continue living in the beautiful house willed to her. One wonders if the Shaws had reared a family (I believe they had lost their one child in infancy), Gates would have left his sister the School Street estate without stipulating it would go to the Normal School after her death. While these matters are speculative, Mrs. Shaw, who was in her middle sixties at the time of her brother's death, had more than ample means to maintain the house and grounds, pay considerable property taxes, entertain out-of-town friends, and, perhaps giving her the most joy, visiting friends in her hometown, Ashby, sometimes for weeks at a time.<sup>64</sup>

During her visits to Bridgewater prior to the deaths of her husband in 1909 and brother in 1914, Mary Shaw on occasion attended Sunday morning services at the Unitarian Church, the plain but beautiful Greek Revival style 1845 wooden meetinghouse, located on School Street, a few minutes' walk from Gates's house. Commonly known as the First Parish Church since its founding in 1717, it continued to adhere to its original Trinitarian theology and Congregational organization until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. By Mrs. Shaw's time, while the church still considered itself to be the First Congregational Church of Bridgewater, its basic theology had been Unitarian rather than Trinitarian for well over a half century. Having been raised a Unitarian and married to a minister of that denomination for forty years, it is not surprising that her ties to the Bridgewater church became more formal after making the School Street house her official residence following the death of her brother. From 1914 to the early 1920's, while not playing a leading role in the life of this church, Mrs. Shaw agreed to serve on several committees of its Women's Alliance, including those dealing with matters of benevolence, visitation, and social activities. She also assisted more than once as one of the hostesses of the Alliance's all-day sewing meetings, social gatherings to be sure, but whose primary aim was "to aid those in dire need." Perhaps in recognition of her many years as a pastor's wife, she was asked in 1916 to join Reverend Herbert Leslie Buzzell, who had replaced Reverend Alfred D. K. Shurtleff as the pastor of the church earlier in the year, and Miss Evelyn Holmes as a representative to the annual May meetings of the American Unitarian Association in Boston.<sup>65</sup>

As had the three previous occupants, Mrs. Shaw during her residency of the School Street house probably noticed with some interest major changes which took place in her neighborhood. Whatever her thoughts about the building of the brick junior high school in 1918-1919, directly across School Street from her elegant dwelling, the visual impact must have been initially dramatic, as she exited her front door, leading to an impressive portico, and then gazed across the estate's circular drive and front lawn. After vigorous debates at town meetings between October and December of 1917, which had clearly

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<sup>64</sup>BI, May 8, 29, June 5, 19, July 17, 1914, Jan. 1, March 26, July 30, Aug. 13, 1915, May 5, 1916, July 12, 1918, Aug. 19, 1921, Sept. 5, 1924.

<sup>65</sup>BI, April 10, 1914, April 19, March 26, 1915, Jan. 7, April 21, May 26, 1916, March 5, 1920, March 11, 1921; Crane, pp. 774-781; Townscape Institute, Form 201, pp. 473-474; Morwick and Wright, "Social Life of the Community," HH, p. 203; for more about the Unitarian Church see pages 1-5, 27-36, in my essay on churches in Bridgewater through 1910.

revealed sharp differences on how to solve overcrowding in the McElwain and High Schools, it had been voted to build a junior high school at the cost of \$85,000. Having made her brother's home her permanent residence only in 1914, Mrs. Shaw most likely was not overwhelmed with nostalgia as several old houses across School Street were removed to ready the Stetson lot on which the new school was to be built. She might have been aware, especially if she had adopted her brother Samuel's habit of reading the weekly Independent, that Frank Irving Cooper, a Bridgewater boy who had become a well-known architect, was chosen to design this new educational facility. She might have also seen the laying of the school's cornerstone on June 8, 1918; although an "elaborate ceremony" had been ruled out since the nation was involved in what later would be labeled the First World War. The following week, Mrs. Shaw, along with other interested citizens, probably read about the items put in a copper box which in turn was placed in the cavity of the school's cornerstone. Originally bearing the name of the street on which it was built, this new school was ready for occupancy in September of 1919. I have no idea how Mrs. Shaw reacted to the increased weekday foot traffic in front her house as Bridgewater's scholars between the ages of twelve and fourteen began walk to and from this new hall of learning.<sup>66</sup>

Two other changes associated with Bridgewater Normal greatly altered the appearance of School Street during Mrs. Shaw's occupancy of the house built by the Parkers and subsequently owned by her brother Samuel. One was the demolition and replacement of the first Normal Hall, a wooden structure erected in 1869, on the corner of School and Summer Streets. Having the historical distinction of being the institution's original student residential facility and for over twenty years the home of Principal Albert G. Boyden and his first wife Isabella Whitten Clarke, it was, nevertheless, declared a "fire trap and a menace," after being inspected by a Committee on Education of the General Court in 1914. It could be that Mary Shaw was too occupied adjusting to her brother's death and being the sole occupant of the School Street house to pay close attention to the failure of the state legislature in May of 1915 to appropriate the necessary funds to erect a modern brick structure to replace the original Normal Hall. Perhaps more town residents, including herself, became aware of the matter a year later when Governor Samuel W. McCall signed an appropriation bill of \$237,000 for a new Normal Hall to house a "refectory building, with the administration offices and reference library on the first floor, and the large dining room on the second floor, a service building, and a dormitory." During the two years it took to tear down the old hall and complete the construction of the new one, Mary Shaw might have taken an occasional short stroll down School Street to take a look at the construction project. But I very much doubt that it provided her with a steady source of entertainment as it surely did for the retired men living in and around

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<sup>66</sup> BI, March 16, June 15, Sept. 28, Oct. 5, 12, 19, Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 1917, Jan. 4, 18, 25, Feb. 1, June 7, 14, Aug. 2, 1918, Feb. 14, Aug. 1, Sept 5, 19, 1919; "Reports of the School Committee and Superintendent of Schools," Annual Town Reports, 1917, 1918, 1919 (Bridgewater, Mass.: A. H. Willis, Printer, 1918, 1919, 1920), pp. 3, 13-17; 12-13; 187-188, 196-199; Townscape Institute, Form 200, pp. 471-472; "Hunt, Albert F. (M. D.), 1875 to 1963--Physician," HH, p. 266; the School Street School was renamed in honor of Albert F. Hunt, following his death in 1963; not only was he a medical doctor in Bridgewater for over fifty years, carrying on his practice in his home located next to the junior high school, he was a noted community leader, serving on the School Committee for thirty-five years and the Board of Health for forty-five years; the former Hunt School is now part of Bridgewater State University, which might wish to retrieve in 2018 the copper box placed in its cornerstone one hundred years earlier.

Bridgewater's center. Bridgewater men of working age also witnessed the undertaking's progress since it was the policy of J. W. Bishop Co. of Worcester, the contractors, to hire all the local men they could. One other observation -- Mrs. Shaw, whose house was among those closest to the building site, might not have enjoyed the sound of explosions in January of 1917 as "dynamite was used in excavating to tear up the frozen ground."<sup>67</sup>

By far the most dramatic event that changed the part of School Street closest to the Parker-Gates-Shaw property occurred on December 10, 1924. Shortly after five o'clock on that cold, late fall, Wednesday morning, Henry Geyer, night watchman, "smelled smoke in a room on the second floor" of Bridgewater Normal's main structure, erected thirty-three years earlier when the Parkers still occupied the Queen Anne style house. For a detailed and vivid primary account of how a conflagration soon engulfed and destroyed a major portion of the institution, there is no better one than that found in the Bridgewater Independent two days later. Despite gallant efforts of Bridgewater's fire department, led by Frederick Waite, and the firefighting forces of Brockton, Middleboro, West Bridgewater, and Whitman, this intense fire left in ruins the Normal School building, Tillinghast Hall, and the Cottage, the original Woodward Hall which by the 1920's was being "used as a dormitory principally by members of the faculty." Fortunately for the future survival of the institution, Boyden Gymnasium (1905), across School Street, and the new Woodward Hall (1911), across Grove Street, went unscathed. Perhaps even more important, "strenuous efforts" had saved the new Normal Hall (1917) and the adjoining boiler room. Nonetheless, with "a loss estimated at \$1,000,000," this fire was characterized at the time as the "most disastrous" to ever visit Bridgewater. "No definite cause of the fire was ever determined," Normal's Principal Arthur Clarke Boyden wrote in 1933, "but the utterly inadequate water supply made the loss complete." At the same time, subsequent developments in the eight years following the fire permitted him to take a more sanguine view of an event that could have put an end to Bridgewater Normal's eighty-four year old mission of preparing teachers to staff the Commonwealth's public schools. "Every institution," he opined, "is apt to meet a crisis in its history which means vital changes in its development."<sup>68</sup>

That the Queen Anne style house and its accompanying two-acre lot on School Street, owned by Samuel Pearly Gates between 1899 and 1914, would "eventually become the property of the state," was common knowledge. But no one could have predicted its role in the development of Bridgewater

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<sup>67</sup> BI, May 28, 1915, Feb. 25, May 26, June 30, July 21, Aug. 25, Oct. 6, Dec. 15, 26, 1916, Jan. 26, June 15, Sept. 7, Oct. 19, Dec. 14, 1917; A. C. Boyden, Albert Gardner Boyden, p. 96; Townscape Institute, Form 248, pp. 571-572; Fiore and Wilson, Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are, 1840-1976, p. 30; the new facility was also called Normal Hall until acquiring the name Tillingham Hall after the disastrous fire of December 10, 1924, destroyed the original Tillinghast Hall erected in 1895.

<sup>68</sup> BI, Dec. 12, 19, 1924, Feb. 6, 1925; "Review of 1924," Jan. 9, 1925; "Review of the Year 1925," BI, Jan. 8, 1926; A. C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School, p. 147; "Waite, Frederick, 1875 to 1949--Fire chief," HH, p. 279; Fiore and Wilson, Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are, 1840-1976, pp. 16, 21, 26-27, 31-33; Ralph S. Bates, "Seventy-fifth Anniversary," HH, p.119; we are much in the debt of Professors Fiore and Bates for their research and writings on the history of Bridgewater State College and to David K. Wilson for his contributions to the history of the college, both in his writing and photographic work; we also look with great anticipation to the upcoming history of Bridgewater State University by Dr. Thomas Turner, recently retired after



Normal's new campus. I don't know for sure whether or not Mrs. Shaw, who acquired her brother's estate in 1914, was in Bridgewater at the time of the great fire. A short piece in the Independent of April 3, 1925, about a week after her death, suggests she had returned to her home town of Ashby in the fall of 1924. Since autumn technically lasts until December 21, there is also the possibility of Mrs. Shaw still being at the School Street house as the flames began sweeping through the three late nineteenth century campus buildings. In which case, it is more than reasonable to assume her seeking safer quarters. Fortunately, the Parker-Gates-Shaw House was spared since the wind direction was not conducive to sparks being carried towards the town's center. The estate's barn did not fare as well, however. As the accompanying photograph clearly shows, this structure was situated just across Maple Street from the first section of Bridgewater Normal's main building. Concluding a brief discussion of general efforts by volunteers to protect roofs of nearby houses from being set on fire by sparks, the Independent's reporter wrote: "The barn on the Gates estate, occupied by Mrs. Mary Shaw, which will eventually become the property of the State, was badly scorched, but escaped further damage."<sup>69</sup>

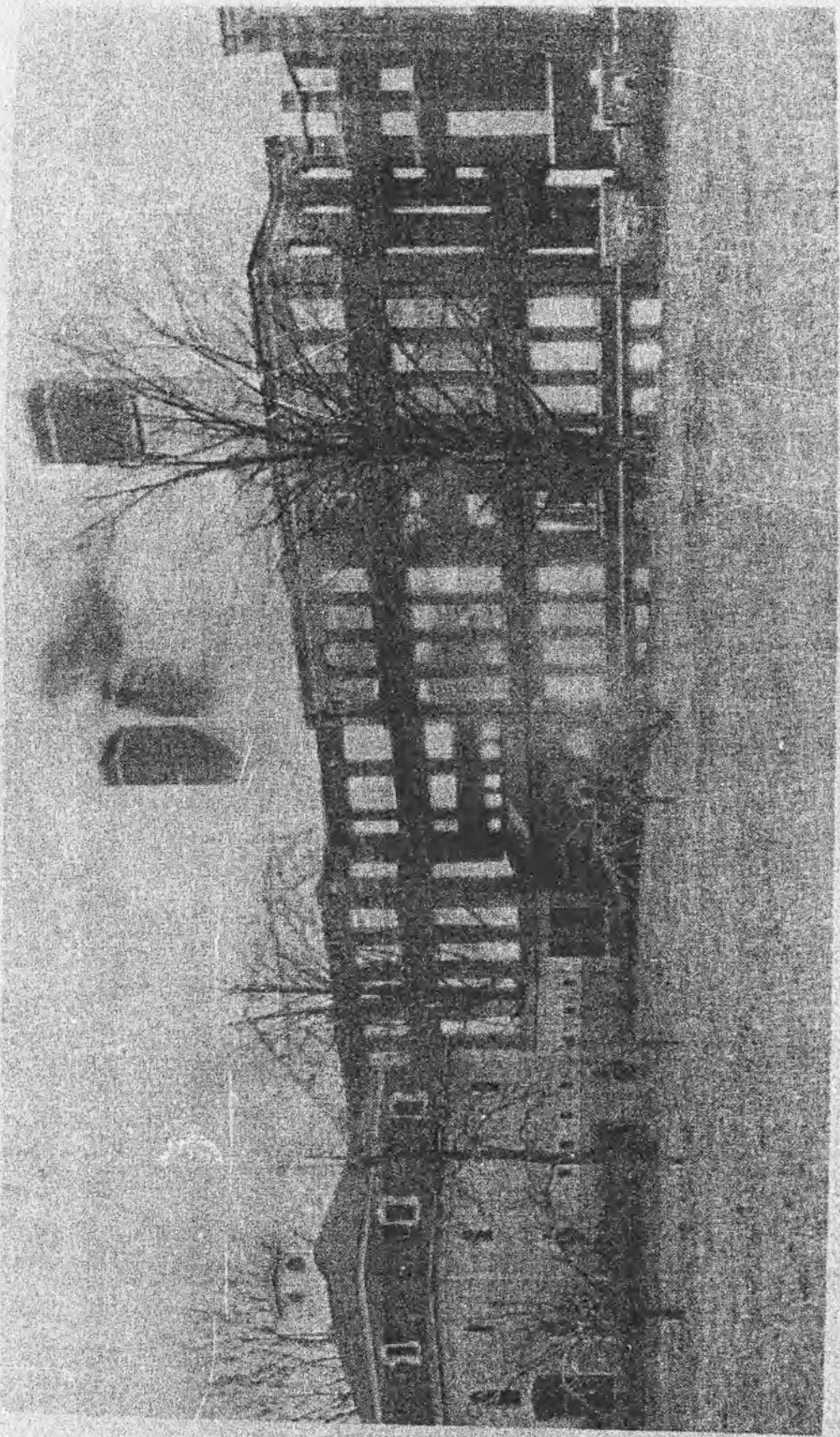
### **The Parker-Gates-Shaw House and Bridgewater Normal School**

Between the catastrophic event of December 10, 1924, and late March of the following year, as Bridgewater Normal School diligently continued to function on a make-shift basis, and the state began its decision-making concerning the future of the institution, we read almost nothing in the Independent about the Parker-Gates-Shaw House and its fourth owner, Mary E. Shaw. I have found no evidence of her being in Bridgewater immediately following the fire to get a first-hand look at the damage to her estate's sizable barn. What would she have thought about the scene of devastation just east of her property and the estimated 20,000 or more people, many of whom were Normal graduates, who on the weekend after the blaze came to view what it had wrought? "Sunday was the big day," it was reported, "when automobiles were parked on every street within a half-mile of the ruins and moving for more than a mile on all the streets leading into town." I suspect, furthermore, that after Mrs. Shaw arrived in Ashby in the fall of 1924, poor health prevented her from ever again traveling to Bridgewater to take up residence in her beautiful house on School Street. A few days before her death on March 26, 1925, however, the past and future of her neighbor, Bridgewater Normal, was in her thoughts. Shortly before her passing, she had had delivered to Principal Arthur C. Boyden a portrait of Nicholas Tillinghast, the school's first principal, 1840-1853, which had been the property of her brother Samuel. At the same time, but of greater import, was her decision to turn over to the state the Bridgewater house and its grounds of two acres. While Gates's will had stipulated that such a transfer was to be made following the death of his sister, her move helped set the stage for erecting a new main building for the Normal School, which, as things turned, involved the relocation of the forty-year old Queen Anne house to its present site on the

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many years as a Professor of History at this institution.

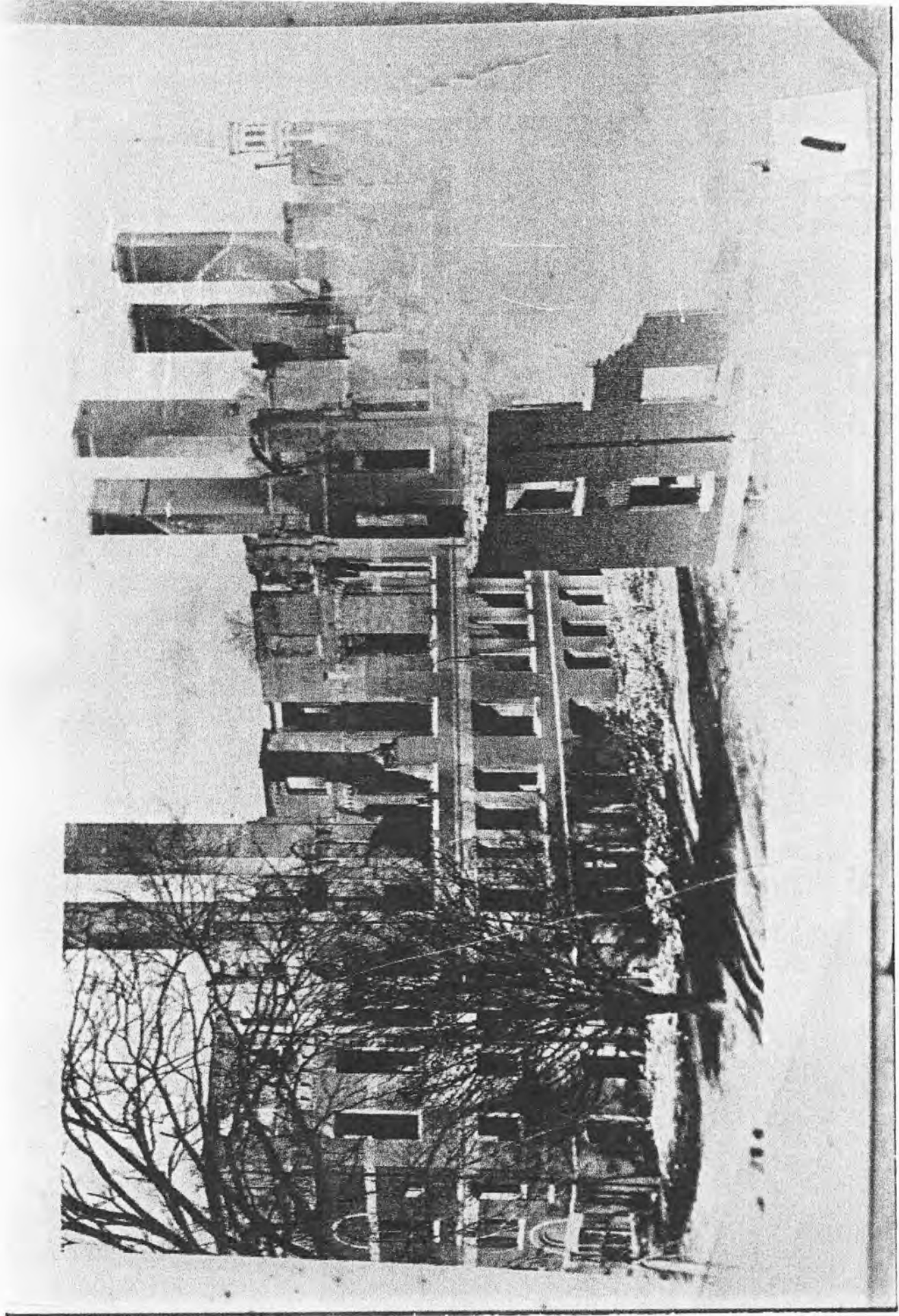
<sup>69</sup> BI, Dec. 12, 1924, April 3, 1925, Jan. 8, 1926; "Fire at Normal School," Rizer Collection, picture number 175.



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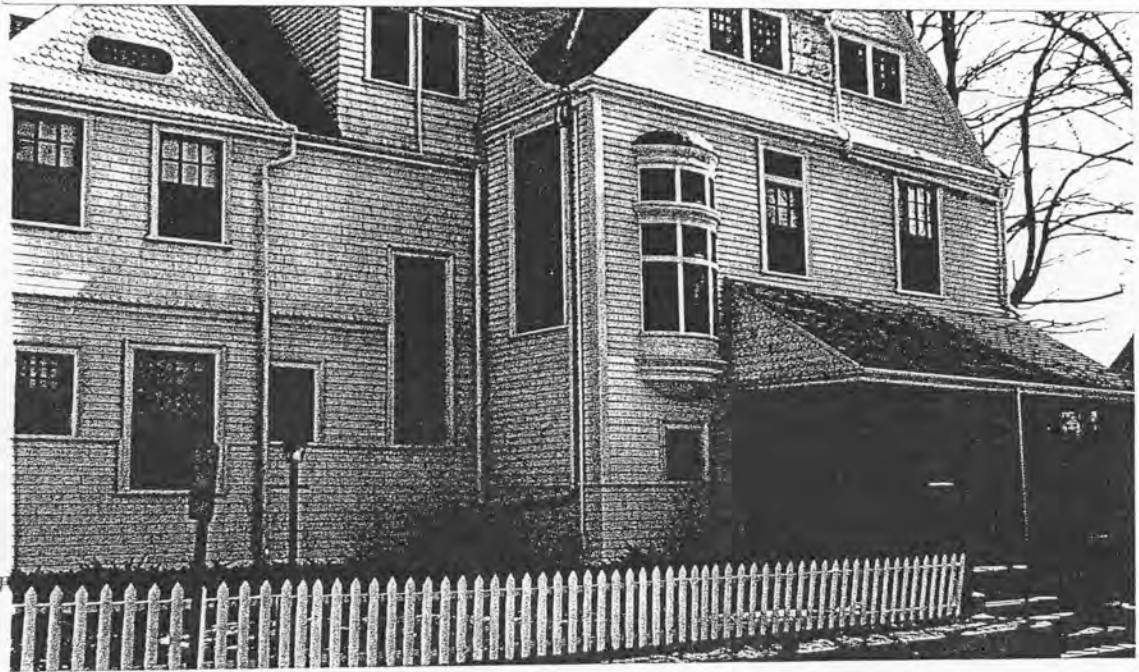
Fire at Normal School

TEI



View from Grove Street of the ruins of Bridgewater Normal  
Fire of December 10, 1924  
Rizer Collection

1927 Gates House opened as a dormitory; 1933 became the  
Home of the President (19)



A. C. Boyden, The History of the Bridgewater Normal School

corner of Cedar and Grove Streets. While Mrs. Shaw's will itself left nothing to Bridgewater Normal, two of the town's churches were beneficiaries of her largesse. As a memorial to herself, The First Congregational, Unitarian, Church was bequeathed \$5,000. A like amount was left to the "Bridgewater Church [Society] of the New Jerusalem," as it had become officially known in 1914, as a memorial to her beloved brother Samuel P. Gates.<sup>70</sup>

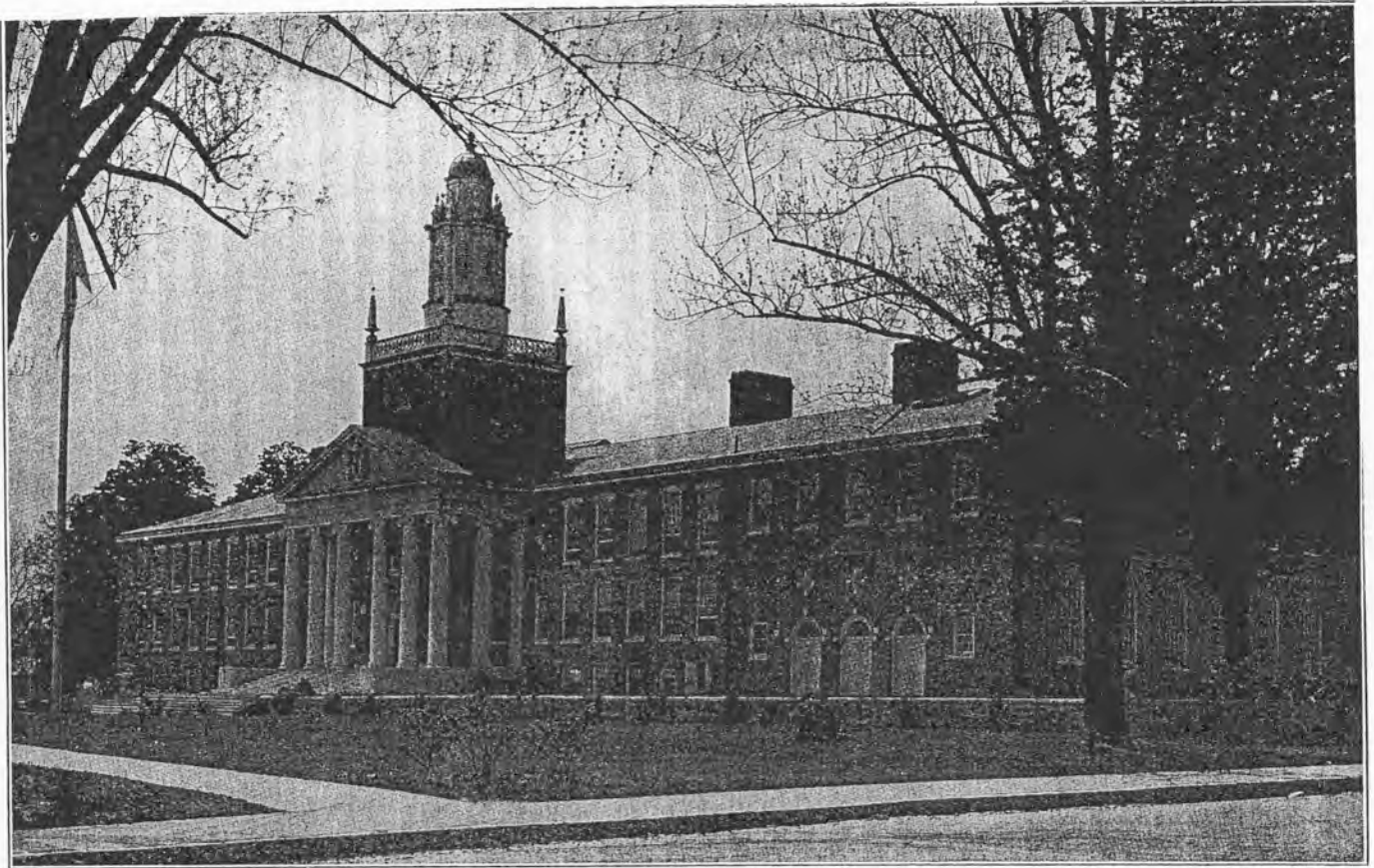
Several days after Mrs. Shaw's death, even though the General Court and Governor Alvan T. Fuller had not yet resolved all their difference on legislation to rebuild Bridgewater Normal, including the construction of a new Training (Model) School, the state was already planning to use part of the Gates property, facing Summer Street, along with Maple Street, as the site of the institution's new main building. During the ensuing weeks, several things happened, including state approval, Bridgewater's support for purchasing bonds to help finance the new training school and water department loans, and final settlement of the Gates estate, to allow the building projects to get underway. Before construction of the Normal school building began, however, a decision was made to move the Gates house "to the corner of Grove and Cedar streets" and to use it "as a dormitory." What would the emotional reactions of Edgar and Frances A. Parker, Samuel P. Gates, and Mary E. Shaw have been had they witnessed their 1884-1885 Queen Anne style house being taken off its original foundation on School Street and moved to a new one, a feat financed from the \$425,468 bid by George Howard & Son of Brockton for the contract to build the new Normal building and Training School. Perhaps they would have noticed that the new setting, compared to the old one, hardly did justice to the grandeur and beauty of this late nineteenth century residential dwelling. Would these former owners of the house have been amused or indignant on hearing about the new foundation initially being three inches too short on one end to accommodate their former home. Since none of them had used the estate's sizable barn to house horses or automobiles, perhaps their reactions would have been muted on learning of it being split, one section placed on the corner of Maple and School Streets, the other toward Grove Street, but both being used either for storage or office space by the contractors.<sup>71</sup>

Compared to the construction of the new administration building, which would be named Boyden Hall, and the new training school, located on a good portion of the South Field on Grove Street, the moving of the Gates House and turning it into a cottage dormitory was not a major project. Despite initial miscalculations on the measurements of the new foundation, the Queen Anne style house, after facing School Street for forty years, was situated in its more cramped site on the corner of Grove and Cedar Streets by the middle of July 1925. (While Principal A. C. Boyden correctly pointed out in 1933 that the "gift of a lot of two acres of adjoining land by the will of Samuel P. Gates ('57) furnished the opportunity to place all the new buildings in an unusual setting around a beautiful quadrangle," those who

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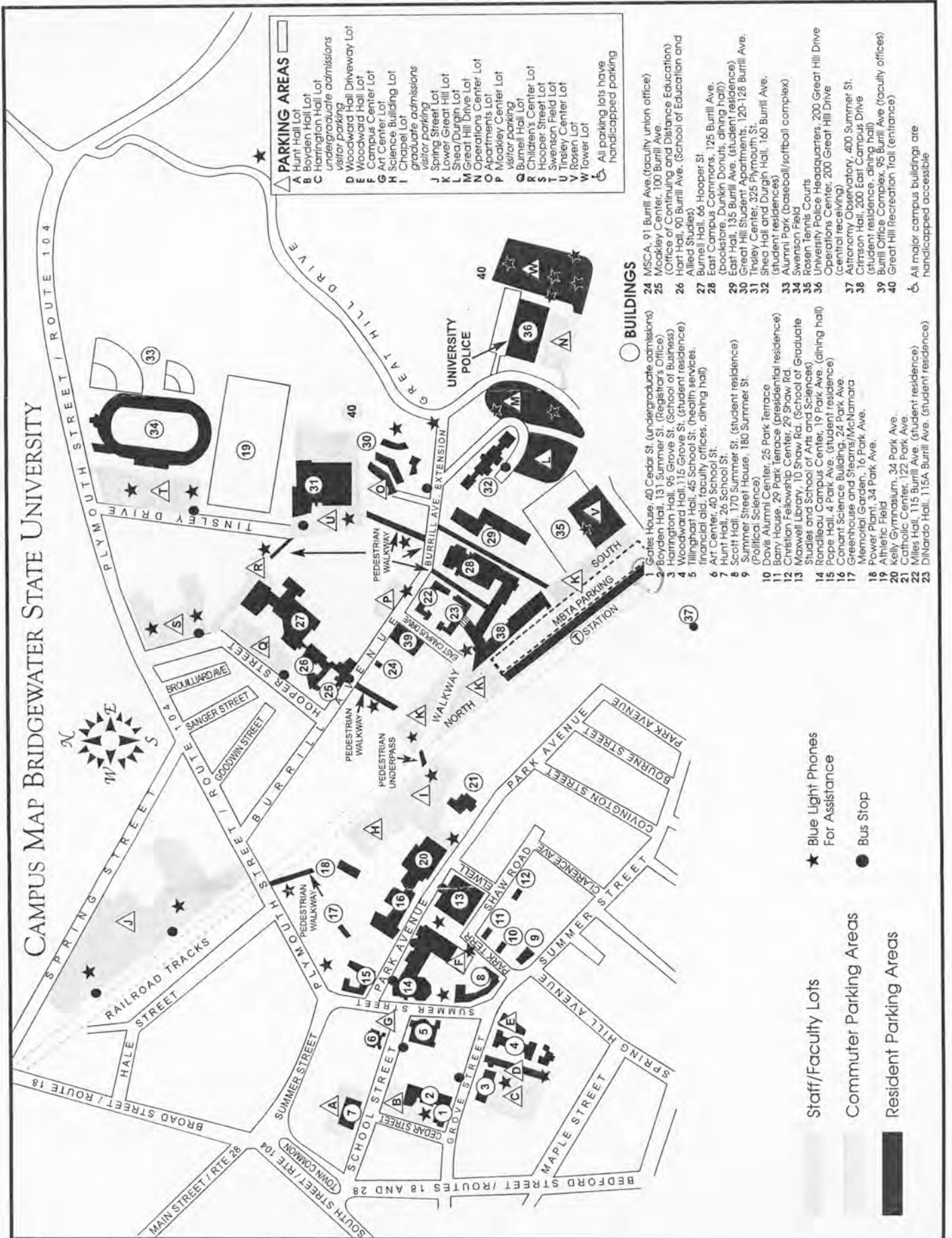
<sup>70</sup> BI, Jan. 15, 1915, Dec. 19, 1924, April 3, 17, 1925; "The Bridgewater Society of the New Jerusalem Church 1821," HH, p. 71.

<sup>71</sup> BI, April 3, 24, May 1, 8, 15, June 5, 12, 19, 26, July 17, 1925; "Review of the Year 1925," BI, Jan. 8, 1926; A. C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School, p. 147; Townscape Institute, Form 32, pp. 127-128; Fiore and Wilson, Bridgewater State College: As we were...as we are. 1840-1976, p. 35; Town of Bridgewater, "Accepted Streets," p. 9; Maple Street was officially discontinued on April 30, 1925.



Boyden Hall-Horace Mann Auditorium, 1926  
Arthur C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School, 1933.

# CAMPUS MAP BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY



- ### PARKING AREAS
- A Hunt Hall Lot
  - B Boyden Hall Lot
  - C Harrington Hall Lot
  - D Woodward Hall Driveway Lot
  - E Woodward Hall Lot
  - F Campus Center Lot
  - G Art Center Lot
  - H Science Building Lot
  - I Chapel Lot
  - J Spring Street Lot
  - K Lower Great Hill Lot
  - L Shea Durgin Lot
  - M Great Hill Drive Lot
  - N Operations Center Lot
  - O Apartments Lot
  - P Mockley Center Lot
  - Q Burrill Hall Lot
  - R Children's Center Lot
  - S Hooper Street Lot
  - T Swenson Field Lot
  - U Tinsley Center Lot
  - V Rosen Lot
  - W Lower Lot
- All parking lots have handicapped parking

- ### BUILDINGS
- 1 Gates House, 40 Cedar St. (Undergraduate admissions)
  - 2 Boyden Hall, 131 Summer St. (Registrar's Office)
  - 3 Harrington Hall, 95 Grove St. (School of Business)
  - 4 Woodward Hall, 115 Grove St. (student residence)
  - 5 Tillinghast Hall, 45 School St. (health services, financial aid, faculty offices, dining hall)
  - 6 Art Center, 40 School St.
  - 7 Hunt Hall, 26 School St.
  - 8 Scott Hall, 170 Summer St. (student residence)
  - 9 Summer Street House, 180 Summer St. (Political Science)
  - 10 Davis Alumni Center, 25 Park Terrace
  - 11 Barry House, 26 Park Terrace (presidential residence)
  - 12 Christian Fellowship Center, 29 Shaw Rd.
  - 13 Maxwell Library, 10 Shaw Rd. (School of Graduate Studies and School of Arts and Sciences)
  - 14 Rondeau Campus Center, 19 Park Ave. (dining hall)
  - 15 Pope Hall, 4 Park Ave. (student residence)
  - 16 Conant Science Building, 24 Park Ave.
  - 17 Greenhouse and Stearns/McNamara Memorial Garden, 16 Park Ave.
  - 18 Power Plant, 34 Park Ave.
  - 19 Athletic Field
  - 20 Kelly Gymnasium, 34 Park Ave.
  - 21 Catholic Center, 122 Park Ave.
  - 22 Miles Hall, 115 Burrill Ave. (student residence)
  - 23 Dinardo Hall, 115A Burrill Ave. (student residence)
  - 24 MSCA, 91 Burrill Ave. (faculty union office)
  - 25 Mockley Center, 100 Burrill Ave. (Office of Continuing and Distance Education)
  - 26 Hart Hall, 90 Burrill Ave. (School of Education and Allied Studies)
  - 27 Burnell Hall, 86 Hooper St. (bookstore, Dunkin' Donuts, dining hall)
  - 28 East Campus Commons, 125 Burrill Ave. (student residences)
  - 29 East Hall, 85 Burrill Ave. (student residence)
  - 30 Great Hill Student Apartments, 120-126 Burrill Ave.
  - 31 Tinsley Center, 325 Plymouth St. (Shea Hall and Durgin Hall, 100 Burrill Ave. (student residences))
  - 32 Alumni Park (baseball/softball complex)
  - 33 Swenson Field
  - 34 Rosen Tennis Courts
  - 35 University Police Headquarters, 200 Great Hill Drive (Central receiving)
  - 37 Astronomy Observatory, 400 Summer St.
  - 38 Burrill Office Complex, 95 Burrill Ave. (faculty offices)
  - 39 Burrill Office Complex, 95 Burrill Ave. (faculty offices)
  - 40 Great Hill Recreation Trail (entrance)

- Staff/Faculty Lots
- Blue Light Phones For Assistance
- Commuter Parking Areas
- Resident Parking Areas
- Bus Stop

All major campus buildings are handicapped accessible

have lived or worked in the Gates House at some time or other since 1927 have not been particularly blessed aesthetically in looking out of their windows in any direction.) In a more pragmatic and optimistic vein, by early September, nine months after the tragic fire had destroyed much of the Normal campus, many “changes” were “being made in the interior of the Gates House to make it available for a dormitory.” No one was surprised to see, “among other things,” fire escapes . . .being placed on the outside of the building.” Evidently the needed renovations were not completed in time for the opening of school that fall, however. By the time the new administration building and training school were dedicated on October 22, 1926, “with unusually interesting exercises,” the Gates House was ready to join Woodward Hall and the newly named Tillinghast Hall in providing residential accommodations for some students of Bridgewater Normal. One can only speculate if the scholars who made the Gates House their home during the years from 1927 to 1933 knew much about the history of this Queen Anne style house built in 1884-1885 and that of its four occupants, before it became part of a public institution devoted to training teachers.<sup>72</sup>

#### **A Note to my Readers**

As I was finishing this essay, Bridgewater State College achieved university status. Hopefully, this account of the early years of the Parker-Gates-Shaw House in a small way will add to the appreciation of the institution’s and the Town of Bridgewater’s long and rich heritage. Certainly, Professor Thomas Turner’s much anticipated account of how Bridgewater Normal School evolved into Bridgewater State University will accomplish this in a far more comprehensive way.

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<sup>72</sup> BI, July 10, 17, September 11, 1925; A. C. Boyden, The History of Bridgewater Normal School, p.147; Townscape Institute, Form 32, pp. 127-128; the new Training or Model School was named in honor Martha Burnell in 1938, following her retirement as its principal.



## Appendix

The following appendix includes two interrelated items:

1. A Chronology of Bridgewater Normal School from the 1820's to 1933
2. Vignettes of the buildings and other facilities of Bridgewater Normal from 1840 to 1926

I submitted both of these pieces to a one-day symposium entitled “Bridgewater State College: Now and Then,” held in the Heritage Room of the Maxwell Library on April 13, 1907; subsequently, I added them to my essay on education in Bridgewater through 1910. Two reasons prompted me to include the dates and descriptions at the end of this essay on the Parker-Gates-Shaw House. It allowed me, first of all, to correct some errors, particularly in the paragraph dealing with the Gates House. Secondly, since most of the Normal buildings are cited briefly in the present essay, both the chronology and list of facilities might serve as useful references for my readers.

## **History of Bridgewater Normal, 1820's-1933**

### **A Chronology**

**Benjamin A. Spence**

(Symposium sponsored by the Friends of Bridgewater State College Friends)

- 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.
- 1860 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.

- 1861-1865 Twelve men of Bridgewater Normal gave their lives in the Civil War.
- 1861 The original building was enlarged by the addition of wings.
- 1864 In September, George Henry Martin became an instructor at the school.
- 1865 Beginning in March, an attendance of two years at the school was required for a diploma.
- 1869 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.
- 1870 Francis H. Kirmayer began almost a half-century of service to Bridgewater Normal as an instructor in Latin and Modern Languages.
- 1871 A third floor was added to the main Normal building.
- 1873 Normal Hall was enlarged to accommodate one-hundred and forty-eight students.
- 1875 Isabelle S. Horne joined the Normal faculty as an instructor in reading and vocal culture.
- 1876 The first "Alumni Record" was prepared in conjunction with the nation's centennial celebration.
- 1879 Arthur C. Boyden and Clara C. Prince joined the Normal faculty.
- 1880 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 ...."
- 1881 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.
- 1881-1886 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.
- 1883 William D. Jackson began his long career at Bridgewater Normal as an instructor in science and mathematics.
- 1885 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.
- 1890 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 88<sup>th</sup> 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 three's 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.

**Building and other Facilities of the Bridgewater Normal School  
1840-1926**

Benjamin A. Spence

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 18<sup>th</sup> and completed on the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 premier 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.