

Bridgewater State University

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**Ryder-Howe Collection,
1890
(MSS-032)**

*Finding Aid Compiled by
Orson Kingsley, April 2020*

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Volume: .2 linear feet (1 document box)

Acquisition: All items in this manuscript group were acquired by Bridgewater State University in 1890.

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Biographical Sketch

Mary Wyman Howe was born in Shrewsbury, MA in 1870 and attended Shrewsbury High School prior to enrolling at Bridgewater State Normal School in February 1888. Helen Freeman Ryder was born in Provincetown, MA in 1869 and attended Provincetown High school before enrolling at Bridgewater State University in February 1888.

In January 1890, a week before Howe and Ryder were to graduate from the two year program at Bridgewater State, a fellow female student of the same class told school administration these two women, “early in their course,” had violated school regulations by going for a Sunday walk with two young men who were not students of the school. The unnamed student who initiated the complaint told administration the entire class agreed these two women should not be given diplomas the following week. After vetting other students, Principal Albert G. Boyden and the entire faculty agreed to expel the students for “continued violations of the regulations of the school.” The class originally had 29 students, 2 men and 27 women. Out of the 29, 15 would graduate, and only 6, all women, graduated in January 1890 when Ryder and Howe were supposed to have graduated. Another female student in the class was expelled for “kleptomania.”

After interviewing fellow students Principal Boyden interviewed community members from the town. He found “that there was much severe comment upon the freedom of their actions.” Opinions of fellow students, faculty and administration, and the community all were used as evidence to expel Ryder and Howe. On January 28, 1890 Reverend S.M. Burney of Provincetown wrote a letter to Albert Boyden asking for information and clarification of the decision. Both Ryder and Howe felt it was a few, and not all, of their classmates who didn’t like them. A letter on behalf of Howe, to Boyden, went as far to ask the principal if the girls had been expelled “because the jealous gossip of a country village have carried to you their vile exaggerations?” A letter of Helen Ryder from late February 1890 to faculty member Emma Bowler indicates that Bridgewater faculty were telling the students to never associate with the two girls again even after the term was over and they had been removed from the premises. The girls wanted another investigation to clear their name, but as Ryder states to Bowler, “It looks as if now the faculty did not want an investigation made.” Ryder and Howe were never reinstated.

Scope and Content Note

This small collection had been in University Archives with material collected by Albert G. Boyden, principal of the Bridgewater State Normal School from 1860-1906. It contains only material created or acquired by school employees during January and February 1890.

Box and Folder List

Box 1

Folder

1. Statement concerning the case of Helen F. Ryder and Mary W. Howe, Jan. 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
2. Expulsion letter for Ryder and Howe signed by faculty, Jan. 21, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
3. F.W. Brigham to Albert Boyden, Jan. 23, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
4. Rev. S.M. Burney to Albert Boyden, Jan. 28, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
5. F.C. Gammons to Albert Boyden, Jan. 30, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
6. Franklin W. Brigham to Albert Boyden, Jan. 30, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
7. F.W. Brigham to Albert Boyden, Feb. 5, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
8. Helen Freeman Ryder to Emma F. Bowler [faculty], Feb. 24, 1890
[Letter](#) | [Transcription](#)
9. Copies of Ryder and Howe student records from University Archives, 1888, undated
[Ryder Pledge Form](#) | [Howe Pledge Form](#)